

# Iraq Situation Report: August 14 - 17, 2015

**1 Parliamentary committee names senior officials accountable for fall of Mosul.** The Commission of Inquiry into the Fall of Mosul named former PM Nuri al-Maliki, Ninewa governor Atheel al-Nujaifi, and several former IA senior officers and Sunni officials as accountable for the fall of Mosul. Mutahidun bloc issued a statement strongly denouncing the Commission's results as "completely unacceptable, and SLA members threatened to resign from the CoR if Maliki's name was not removed, though Speaker Juburi refused to remove any names. The CoR referred the report to the judiciary. No legal action has been taken against the named individuals.

**5 ISIS launches complex attack on Baiji.** On August 14, ISIS used at least seven VBIEDs and "more than 200" fighters to attack Baiji, capturing three neighborhoods in western Baiji and shelling Mazraa and Albu Tama villages south of Baiji with mortars. ISF, IA Aviation, Iraqi Shi'a militias repelled additional ISIS attacks after the initial assault, clashing with ISIS in Baiji and west of the city. Between August 14 and 17, DoD reported five airstrikes "near Baiji."

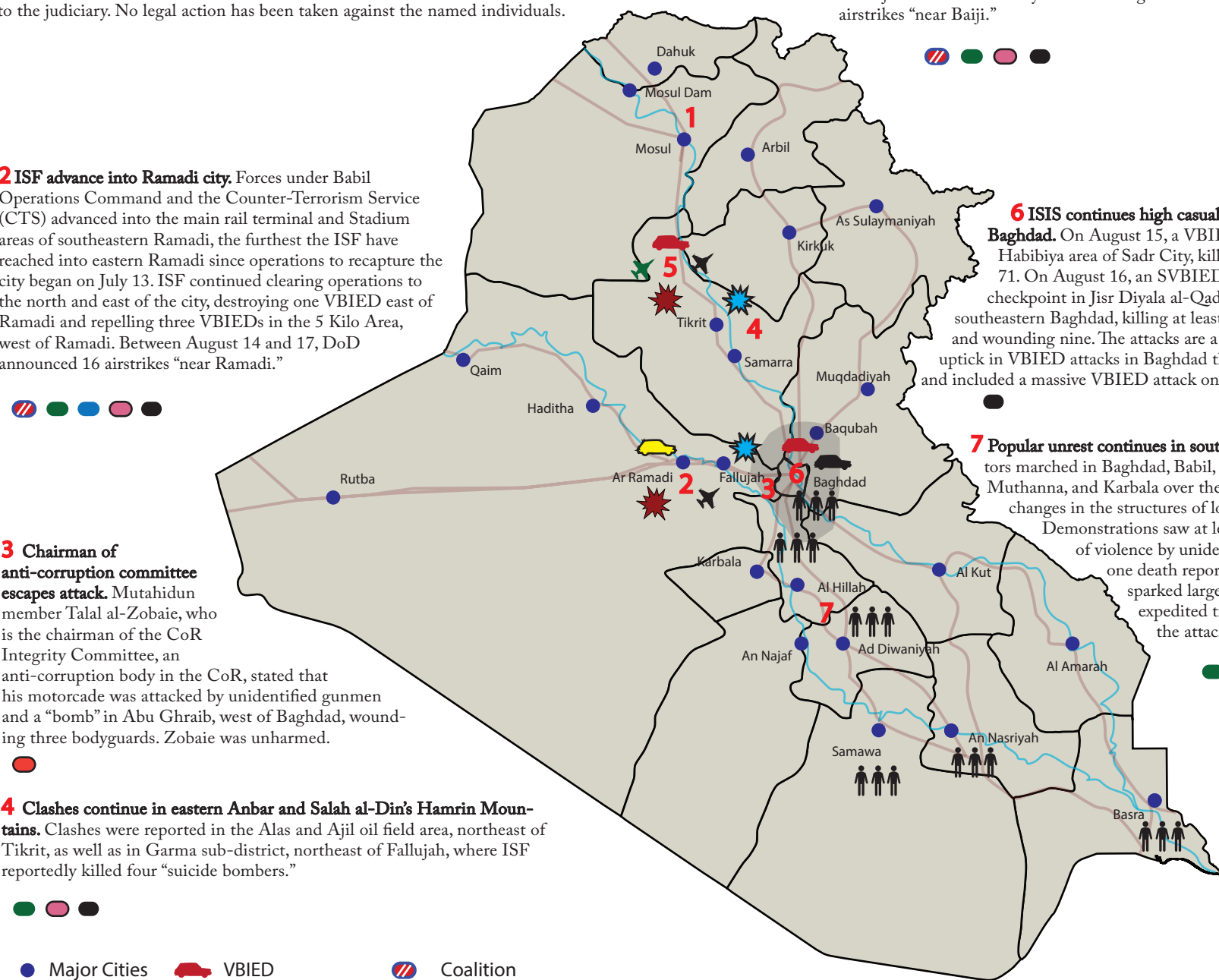
**2 ISF advance into Ramadi city.** Forces under Babil Operations Command and the Counter-Terrorism Service (CTS) advanced into the main rail terminal and Stadium areas of southeastern Ramadi, the furthest the ISF have reached into eastern Ramadi since operations to recapture the city began on July 13. ISF continued clearing operations to the north and east of the city, destroying one VBIED east of Ramadi and repelling three VBIEDs in the 5 Kilo Area, west of Ramadi. Between August 14 and 17, DoD announced 16 airstrikes "near Ramadi."

**6 ISIS continues high casualty VBIEDS in eastern Baghdad.** On August 15, a VBIED exploded in Habibiya area of Sadr City, killing ten and wounding 71. On August 16, an SVBIED detonated at a police checkpoint in Jisr Diyala al-Qadim neighborhood in southeastern Baghdad, killing at least one police member and wounding nine. The attacks are a continuation of an uptick in VBIED attacks in Baghdad that started on August 5 and included a massive VBIED attack on August 13.

**3 Chairman of anti-corruption committee escapes attack.** Mutahidun member Talal al-Zobaie, who is the chairman of the CoR Integrity Committee, an anti-corruption body in the CoR, stated that his motorcade was attacked by unidentified gunmen and a "bomb" in Abu Ghraib, west of Baghdad, wounding three bodyguards. Zobaie was unharmed.

**7 Popular unrest continues in southern Iraq.** Demonstrators marched in Baghdad, Babil, Diwaniya, Dhi Qar, Muthanna, and Karbala over the weekend, calling for changes in the structures of local government. Demonstrations saw at least three occurrences of violence by unidentified assailants, with one death reported in Basra that sparked large protests calling for the expedited trial and punishment of the attackers.

**4 Clashes continue in eastern Anbar and Salah al-Din's Hamrin Mountains.** Clashes were reported in the Alas and Ajil oil field area, northeast of Tikrit, as well as in Garma sub-district, northeast of Fallujah, where ISF reportedly killed four "suicide bombers."



- Major Cities
- ✈ Airstrikes
- ✈ Iraqi Airstrikes
- ✳ Major Clash
- 🚗 VBIED
- 🚗 Failed S/VBIED
- 🚗 SVBIED
- 👤 Ongoing Clashes
- 👤 Demonstration
- 🚩 Coalition
- 🟢 ISF
- ⬛ ISIS
- 🟡 Iraqi Shi'a militias
- 🟠 Anti-ISIS Iraqi Sunni Tribes
- 🔴 Unknown Gunmen

Content: Patrick Martin and ISW Iraq Team  
 Graphics: Evan Sterling  
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KT: ISIS launched a large complex attack against ISF and Iraqi Shi'a militia positions in Baiji district on August 14, recapturing several parts of the city in an offensive that involved between 7-10 VBIEDs, direct and indirect fire, and up to 200 gunmen. The attack was ISIS's largest in the area since its complex attack on the Baiji Oil Refinery, north of the city, on April 14. ISIS exploited the ISF campaign to recapture Ramadi in Anbar by launching this offensive in northern Salah ad Din, a typical maneuver used by ISIS when one of the cities under its control comes under heavy counter-attack. By attacking on another front, ISIS not only diverts attention away from its main defenses, but it also maximizes its opportunity to make new gains while the ISF is massed elsewhere. ISIS also deployed VBIEDs in Baghdad and Diyala as continuous diversionary efforts. ISF and Iraqi Shi'a militias continue to clash with ISIS in Baiji and west of the city. The ISF has maintained pressure on ISIS in Anbar, however, advancing into southeastern Ramadi for the first time since operations to recapture the city were announced on July 13. Clearing operations continued north, east, and south of Ramadi. Continued successes near Ramadi will strengthen PM Haidar al-Abadi's independence from the Iranian-backed Iraqi Shi'a militias only if those successes do not coincide with simultaneous security failures in other parts of the country, such as Baiji.

PM Abadi introduced additional major reforms to the central government as part of a fundamental restructuring of the central government approved by the Council of Representatives last week. On August 16, he eliminated four ministerial positions and merged several ministries to reduce the size of the Council of Ministers (CoM) from 33 to 22 members. The reforms coincided with the release of the final report of the Commission of Inquiry into the Fall of Mosul, which named former PM Nuri al-Maliki, Ninewa governor Atheel al-Nujaifi, and several former IA senior officers and Sunni officials accountable for the fall of Mosul. Nujaifi's Mutahidun bloc responded vehemently, and Maliki's State of Law Alliance threatened to boycott the CoR in response. These negative responses will potentially make Abadi's future reforms more difficult to pass through the CoR, and it may impede the current momentum of the reform movement, though PM Abadi will likely be able to overcome opposition by working to avoid prosecution of major figures or making concessions to the political parties of the accused. With the names of the accused sent to the office of the Public Prosecutor, a senior judiciary member who can order investigations of government officials, it will be important to see what form of punishment is assigned, if any is prescribed at all. The popular demonstrations that sparked the reform movement witnessed at least three cases of violence against demonstrators by unidentified assailants over the weekend, as well as several cases of demonstrators threatening to storm provincial government buildings. Violence and increased unrest among the demonstrators, as well as sustained calls for reform despite Abadi's ongoing changes, are indicative of a potential source of pressure on Abadi if the reforms run into significant obstacles. However, the demonstrations remain popular for the most part, with the bulk of the demonstrators avoiding affiliation with a political party or figure.

The Kurdistan Shura Council, an advisory body attached to the Kurdish Justice Ministry, announced that Kurdistan Regional President Masoud Barzani would stay in office and retain full powers until the next elections in 2017. The Shura Council gave no decision on the Regional Presidency Law, which the main opposition parties, Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK) and Gorran (Change), are disputing. Both opposition parties have been attempting to change the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) from a presidential system to a parliamentary one since June. Accordingly, the Speaker of the KRG Parliament, senior Gorran member Yusuf Muhammad Sadiq, rejected the Council's decision to keep Barzani in office until 2017 in a statement made on August 17. It will be important to watch if a compromise can be reached between Barzani's Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP) and his opponents before August 20, when Barzani's term officially expires. Despite the dispute, it remains likely that Barzani's term will be extended for two more years.