

Iraq Situation Report: August 25 - 27, 2015

1 ISF maneuvers to secure Haditha district. Anbar Operations Command (AOC) forces launched an operation near Baghdadi sub-district, south of Haditha, on August 25 and reportedly dislodged ISIS from Jubba near Baghdadi and destroyed two VBIEDs targeting the ISF. This attack follows two foiled ISIS attacks comprised of three SVESTs and four SVBIEDs on Haditha on August 24. These attacks demonstrate that ISIS retains a presence in the area and that Haditha district remains an ISIS operational priority.

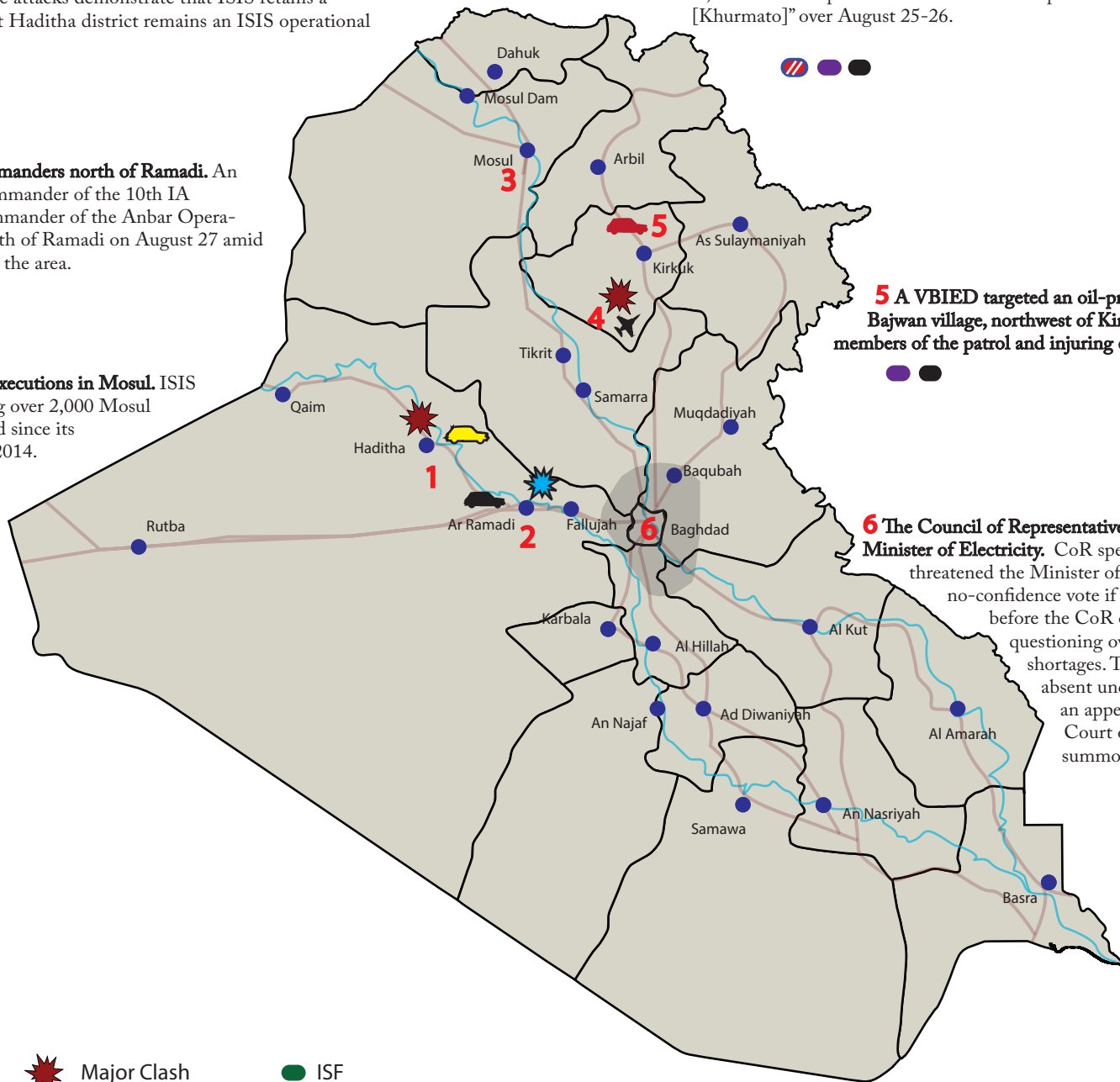
2 ISIS kills senior ISF commanders north of Ramadi. An ISIS SVBIED killed the commander of the 10th IA Division and the deputy commander of the Anbar Operations Command (AOC) north of Ramadi on August 27 amid ongoing ISIS-ISF clashes in the area.

3 ISIS publicizes a year of executions in Mosul. ISIS posted lists in Mosul naming over 2,000 Mosul residents that it had executed since its takeover of the city in June 2014.

4 Peshmerga clear villages south of Daquq. Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK) Peshmerga and anti-terrorism forces launched an offensive south of Daquq district and west of Tuz Khurmato in Salah ad-Din on August 26 to reassert control over strategic oil-rich areas in the province from ISIS. The Kirkuk governor, who convened a provincial security committee meeting the previous day to discuss the offensive, declared the operation successful. DoD reported 19 airstrikes “near Tuz [Khurmato]” over August 25-26.

5 A VBIED targeted an oil-protection patrol in Bajwan village, northwest of Kirkuk, killing three members of the patrol and injuring eight others.

6 The Council of Representatives (CoR) summons the Minister of Electricity. CoR speaker Salim al-Juburi threatened the Minister of Electricity with a no-confidence vote if he fails to appear before the CoR on August 29 for questioning over current power shortages. The minister has been absent under the pretext of filing an appeal with the Federal Court over the legality of the summoning.



- Major Cities
- SVBIED
- VBIED
- Failed S/VBIED
- ★ Major Clash
- ★ Ongoing Clashes
- ✈ Airstrikes
- ☘ Coalition
- ISF
- Peshmerga
- Iraqi Shi'a militias
- ISIS

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The ISIS mobile defense of SVBIEDs around Ramadi affirms ISF reports of advances around the city. Over the past week ISIS responded to ISF advances west of Ramadi by ambushing and targeting ISF forward positions with SVBIEDs. ISIS also managed to kill the commander of the Iraqi Army (IA) 10th Division and the deputy commander of the Anbar Operations Command on August 27 in an attack on a forward ISF position, which was likely a targeted strike. In western Anbar the ISF has responded to this week's surge in ISIS attacks on Haditha by launching a clearing operation in Baghdadi sub-district, partially dislodging ISIS. As the ISF fights to retake urban centers in Anbar, its ability to retain ISF-held terrain, such as Haditha, will remain an important indicator of the viability of clearing operations. The same challenge faces the ISF in northern Iraq, specifically in Baiji, Salah ad-Din. Despite ISIS's recent offensive on Baiji, the ISF has maintained its positions and has reported advances in central Baiji and surrounding villages. The announcement by the commander of the Special Operations Command of a new offensive to clear the environs of the Baiji Oil Refinery, together with PM Abadi's visit to forward deployed forces on August 24, confirms that Baiji remains an ISF priority. In Kirkuk, the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK) Peshmerga cleared ISIS from villages south of the PUK-held Daquq district, expanding control over terrain in the oil-rich region. ISIS has maintained a presence in the area and has launched major assaults on PUK Peshmerga forward positions near Tuz Khurmato and Kirkuk since ISIS seized terrain across northern Iraq in June 2014. PUK clearing operations south of Kirkuk likely seek to strengthen existing PUK control over the Kirkuk-Baghdad road, which also limits ISIS's mobility and access to PUK-controlled regions of Salah ad-Din and Diyala provinces, further east. The August 27 attack by ISIS northwest of Kirkuk may constitute another example of a probing attack along the ISIS-Peshmerga frontline. ISIS may be seeking to exploit a geographic seam between the primary areas of focus for the Peshmerga forces belonging to the Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP) and those belonging to the PUK. ISIS has demonstrated intent to probe the area recently, including the suspected chemical attack on KDP Peshmerga at Makhmur on August 11.

Prime Minister (PM) Haider al-Abadi has retained broad political support for his ongoing reform initiative. There are further indications that PM Abadi's initiative is spurring reforms throughout the federal government. The CoR is implementing Speaker Salim al-Juburi's anti-corruption reforms, which were passed alongside PM Abadi's initial reforms on August 11. Juburi has threatened to hold a no-confidence vote against the Minister of Electricity over his failure to appear before the CoR to face questioning and to dismiss 30 CoR members for excessive absences. Following months of delays, the CoR passed the Political Parties Law on August 27, banning parties from receiving foreign funding and retaining paramilitary wings, among other restrictions. The Minister of Defense announced the cancellation of military contracts worth \$3.4 billion on August 27 on suspicion of corruption. However, despite Ayatollah Sistani's representative's call on August 14 for judicial reform, the controversial head of the Supreme Judicial Council, Mehdad al-Mahmoud, vigorously defended the integrity of the Iraqi judiciary. Mahmoud announced the formation of three committees to "follow up" on reforms – a gesture that unlikely seeks to produce lasting reform. Mahmoud is a long-established ally of Nouri al-Maliki, whose State of Law Alliance (SLA) has so far lost three cabinet seats and the vice presidency in PM Abadi's reforms. During his tenure, Maliki used the courts to block reforms, suggesting that he may pursue a similar course of action against PM Abadi as the reform initiative moves forward.