

# Iraq Situation Report: January 26 - February 1, 2016

**1 ISIS attacks Peshmerga in Sinjar.** A Peshmerga source stated that six ISIS Suicide Vest (SVEST) attackers attempted to target a Peshmerga checkpoint in Dumiz in Sinjar district on January 26, but Peshmerga repelled the attack.

**2 Concern grows over state of Mosul Dam.** The Council of Ministers agreed on January 26 to form "competent committees" and use international expertise to address overdue structural maintenance of the Mosul Dam. The three presidencies discussed the Mosul Dam with political bloc leaders on January 28 and assured those present that the government was maintaining the dam. Anti-ISIS Coalition leader Lt. General Sean MacFarland stated that Iraqi authorities understood "the potential" that the Mosul hydroelectric dam will collapse and that the U.S. had developed a contingency plan with the Iraqi government if the dam burst.

**3 ISIS targets security forces east of Tikrit.** ISIS detonated an SVBIED in Tel Kusabah east of Tikrit on February 1 wounding two members of Saraya Khorasani, an Iranian-backed Shi'a militia. ISIS claimed the attack east of Tikrit and stated that it killed "dozens" of ISF soldiers, but Federal Police (FP) claimed to have destroyed three ISIS Vehicle-borne Improvised Explosive Devices (VBIEDs) and repelled the attack.

**4 Clearing operations ongoing northeast of Ramadi.** ISIS attacked a headquarters for the 10th Iraqi Army (IA) Division on January 27 in al-Juraishi area, north of Ramadi, using up to 10 VBIEDs. The ISF, supported by Iraqi and Coalition airstrikes, repelled the attack. Meanwhile, militias associated with the Islamic Supreme Council of Iraq (ISCI) continued clearing operations in the Thar Thar area, northwest of Fallujah.

**5 ISIS targets town outside of Ain al-Asad Airbase.** ISIS attacked the Ain al-Asad residential complex, north of Baghdad sub-district, on January 27 using six SVESTs, killing the local police commander and at least 11 local police members. The ISIS attackers briefly entered and controlled part of the complex. Security forces and tribal fighters eventually repelled the attack and imposed a total curfew on Baghdad.

**6 Security forces continue clearing ISIS from Ramadi's eastern suburbs.** Emergency Response Brigade (ERB) and Federal Police (FP) forces clashed with ISIS in eastern Husaybah, east of Ramadi, between January 26 - February 1. Anbar Operations Command (AOC) forces progressed east from Ramadi between January 26 - February 1 and continued clearing operations, recapturing Albu Shalib and Albu Shajal areas and destroying an ISIS Suicide VBIED (SVBIED) on January 27.

**7 Anti-ISIS operations clear ISIS from village southeast of Mosul.** Ninewa Operations Command (NOC) stated on February 1 that forces from the U.S.-trained 1st Battalion, 91st Brigade, 16th IA Division, along with Peshmerga, Ninewa tribal fighters, and Coalition airstrikes, recaptured Karmardi village, southwest of Makhmur district. Anonymous sources reported that the forces recaptured four other villages.

**8 Shooting occurs near Kuridsh intelligence agency in Sulaymaniyah.** A security source stated on January 27 that a shooting occurred near the headquarters of Asayish, the Kurdish security and intelligence agency, in Sulaymaniyah, killing one Asayish employee and injuring three others.

**9 Demonstrations demand government accountability.** Hundreds of protesters near Kirkuk Castle in central Kirkuk demanded on January 26 government accountability, greater local control over oil, and the disbursement of salaries. On January 27, "thousands" of teachers went on strike in Sulaymaniyah and Halabja in protest of delayed salary payments.

**10 Unconfirmed VBIED attack near Iranian border.** ISIS claimed a VBIED attack on January 29 targeting a group of Iranians in Naft Khana area, north of Mandali sub-district. However, a security source reported that an IED targeted Asayish in Naft Khana, killing and wounding an unspecified number of Asayish.

**11 Kurdish and Iraqi officials meet in Baghdad to discuss financial issues.** Kurdish officials from the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK) and the Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP) attended a meeting in Arbil on January 27 chaired by KRG PM Nechirvan Barzani to discuss reform and necessary measures to address the Kurdistan Regional Government's (KRG) financial crisis. Barzani claimed that the KRG had run out of money. A KRG delegation headed by Barzani visited Baghdad on January 31 and met with PM Abadi, President Fuad Masoum, and several political party leaders to discuss cooperation between Baghdad and Arbil on financial issues, promising further regular meetings.



- Major Cities
- Coalition
- Peshmerga
- Unknown Gunmen
- ★ Major Clash
- ISF
- Anti-ISIS Iraqi Sunni Tribes
- Failed S/VBIED
- ✈ Airstrikes
- ISIS
- Iraqi Shi'a Militias
- SVBIED
- Parade

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 Graphics: Emily Anagnostos  
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Financial difficulties stemming from collapsed oil prices, corruption, and the cost of the anti-ISIS fight pose an increasingly dire threat to Iraq that may prove more destabilizing than ISIS. Iraqi Kurdish officials visited Baghdad and met with Prime Minister Haidar al-Abadi and President Fuad Masoum on January 31 to discuss ways to cooperate on reforms and address financial issues. The meeting came ten days after Regional President Masoud Barzani restated his interest in pursuing independence for Iraqi Kurdistan, reflecting desperation by Iraqi Kurdish officials to secure funding from Baghdad. In particular, Iraqi Kurdish officials stressed a strong interest in obtaining a portion of a large World Bank loan that Iraq intends to secure in the future. The loan represents one of the few sources of obtainable outside funding for the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG), which cannot otherwise secure international financial support without Baghdad's consent. The Kurdish financial crisis has devolved to such an extent that Peshmerga have not been paid for months, and thousands of teachers marched in Suleimaniyah and Halabja to protest months of work with no salary payments. Baghdad's ability to alleviate these burdens remains minimal, however, as it suffers from its own financial crisis caused by the same factors. Provinces in southern Iraq suffer from power shortages, deteriorating water and river maintenance, corruption, and stalled provincial government projects, issues that set off popular demonstrations in Baghdad and southern Iraq in August 2015. In addition, Iraq needs to fund repairs for the deteriorating Mosul Dam, neglect of which could cause serious damage to population centers along the Tigris Valley. Continued financial difficulty may be more destabilizing for Baghdad and Arbil than ISIS attacks, as an ongoing financial crisis will both compromise Baghdad and Arbil's abilities to pay their forces and exacerbate ongoing popular discontent. The U.S. will need to intensify its support for its Iraqi allies in order to help prevent the financial difficulties from manifesting into a political crisis. Financial constraints also add justification for additional U.S. military support to ensure the expedient and effective recapture of territory from ISIS and provide important political support for the Iraqi government.