

**1 Coalition partners extend and expand mission in Iraq.** The Netherlands announced on September 10 that it will extend its mission in Iraq until the end of 2017, past its current end date of October 1. The Netherlands will continue to train ISF and Peshmerga units and provide aircraft fueling and security for Belgian fighter jets. Belgium announced on September 12 that it will deploy an additional 30 troops to Mosul in support of the operation before the end of the year. Meanwhile, Finland announced on September 15 that it would send an additional 50 advisors to the Kurdistan region to train the Peshmerga, for a total of 100, after a visit from a Peshmerga delegation.

**10 U.S. forces arrive to Qayyarah airbase.** Four hundred of the 560 U.S. forces announced by U.S. Defense Secretary Ash Carter on July 11 arrived at Qayyarah airbase on September 17 to provide logistical support for the airbase for its use in impending Mosul operations.

**9 ISIS launches major attack against ISF south of Qayyarah.** ISIS launched a major attack, "The Battle of Death," against the ISF stationed in various areas south of Qayyarah on September 12. The attack was launched out of al-Hawd, north of Qayyarah and still under ISIS control, against ISF units in Qayyarah city and south and east of the city. ISF units from the 71st and 72nd Brigades of the 15th Iraqi Army (IA) Divisions, 92nd Brigade of the 16th IA Division, and Ninewa police repelled the attack with Coalition air support and without reporting casualties.

**8 Security forces reinforcements deploy to western Anbar.** Rutba mayor Imad Meshal al-Dulaimi stated on September 9 that an Iraqi Army battalion and a Federal Police battalion with armor and vehicles arrived in Rutba in western Anbar to clear the western desert areas of Anbar. The deployment follows increased ISIS attacks on security headquarters in western Anbar.

**7 IDPs begin return to Fallujah amid heavy screening process.** The Fallujah Provincial Council announced on September 16 that 500 families would return to Fallujah's cleared northeastern neighborhoods on September 17, as directed by security forces. A *Wall Street Journal* article reported, however, that only 21 families had return as of September 19 amidst orders to prevent the return of families of suspected ISIS members. The orders reportedly aimed to obstruct extrajudicial punishment against these families carried out in accordance with tribal laws.

**6 IRGC-QF commander visited ISCI-linked militia commander.** Iranian Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) – Quds Force commander Qassem Suleimani visited the home of Jalal al-Din al-Saghir, the commander of Saraya Ansar al-Aqida, an Islamic Supreme Council of Iraq (ISCI)-linked Popular Mobilization group on September 7. They discussed the Popular Mobilization, upcoming operations, and the situation in Syria.

**2 ISIS attacks Peshmerga positions east of Mosul, resulting in casualties.** ISIS launched attacks against Peshmerga positions in Bashiqa, Gwer, and Khazar, in Ninewa Province, on September 18. The Peshmerga repelled the attacks, however an ISIS member detonated a Suicide Vest (SVEST) in Zahra Khatoon on the Khazar axis, east of Mosul, killing two Peshmerga soldiers and injuring three others.

**3 U.S. Deputy Secretary of State, U.S. delegation meets with senior Iraqi officials.** On September 14, U.S. Deputy Secretary of State Antony Blinken along with Presidential Envoy Brett McGurk, U.S. State Department Deputy Assistant Secretary for Iraq Joseph Pennington, new U.S. Ambassador Douglas Silliman, and CJTF-OIR commander General Townsend, met with Prime Minister Haidar al-Abadi to discuss the fight against ISIS and the Mosul operation. Islamic Supreme Council of Iraq (ISCI) and National Alliance chairman Ammar al-Hakim also met with Blinken and discussed political and security developments, the Mosul operation and post-ISIS security, and the participants of the operation. On September 15, Blinken arrived in Arbil to meet with senior Kurdish officials and Regional President Masoud Barzani to discuss political and security affairs and the Mosul operation. Blinken also visited the home of President Fuad Masoum in Arbil.

**4 ISIS launches spectacular attacks in central Baghdad.** ISIS detonated a Suicide Vehicle-Borne IED (SVBIED) shortly before midnight outside of the garage of Nakhil Mall in central Baghdad on September 9, followed shortly after by a VBIED near the mall. The attacks killed 15 people and injured 41 others. An ISIS attacker also detonated a Suicide Vest (SVEST) near the Allawi Bus Station in central Baghdad around midnight on September 9, injuring eight people, though police reported they thwarted the attack. ISIS claimed both attacks.

**5 Security forces deploy to Maysan Province to reduce tribal violence.** The Maysan Provincial Council reported that a brigade of the Emergency Response Division (ERD) deployed to Maysan Province, in southern Iraq, to control the "security vacuum" caused by tribal conflict over land on September 13. The deployment came after the Council requested additional security forces in a meeting with PM Abadi in Maysan on September 1. A Council member reported that a second ERD brigade will deploy after Eid al-Ahda, which ends September 14. Security forces reportedly clashed with protesters in Qalay Saleh, south of the provincial capital of Amarah, on September 19, when security forces tried to remove medium and heavy weaponry.



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Security forces are overextended across Iraq due to increased ISIS attacks and provincial security issues. ISIS continues to strategically open offensives in northern and western Iraq in order to stretch ISF forces thin and reduce their ability to retake terrain. ISIS continues to attack ISF positions around Qayyarah and its airbase, rebuffing ISF attempts to advance northwards, and near Rutba in western Anbar, which required the ISF to deploy additional forces on September 9. Meanwhile, ISIS continues to launch spectacular attacks in central Baghdad, despite the ISF's concentration in the capital and surrounding belts. Ongoing tribal conflict up in southern Iraq has further tied up the ISF, recently requiring ISF units to deploy to Maysan Province on September 13. ISIS's ability to stretch the ISF thin across Iraq weakens the ISF's ability to focus on recapturing remaining ISIS-held terrain and also magnifies the burden of providing ad hoc security in the southern provinces. These forces in Baghdad and western Anbar will continue to be tied up by ISIS attacks or held in reserve for force protection, making them unavailable for efforts in Mosul.

The Coalition continues to proceed on a schedule that assumes the Mosul operation will launch before the end of the 2016. U.S. troops arrived at the Qayyarah airbase on September 17 in order to provide logistical support to rehabilitate the base as a launching pad for Mosul. Coalition partners Netherlands, Belgium, and Finland announced that they would expand or extend their mission in Iraq to support the Mosul operation. However, the shortage of Iraqi security forces will prevent this timeline if security forces cannot leave their posts in western Anbar or Baghdad in order to participate in Mosul. This shortage could leave openings for unsavory actors, such as Iranian-backed Shi'a militias, to join the operation. The Coalition will need to rapidly generate a sizeable and effective force if it wishes to stay on track to retake Mosul in 2016 with forces it can rely on to hold the city afterwards.