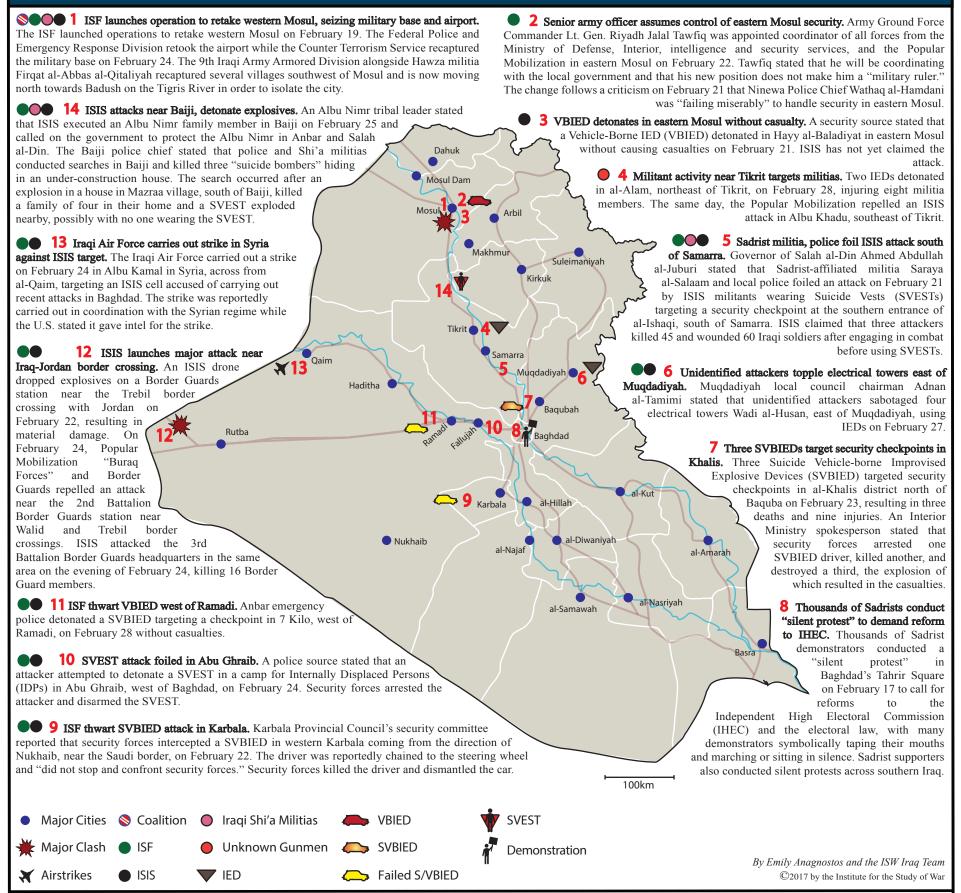


Iraq Situation Report: February 17-28, 2017



ISIS could be facing difficulty coordinating successful attacks in Iraq as losses in Mosul are forcing it to transform from a governing to guerrilla style terrorist organization. ISIS did not carry out the wave of complex attacks predicted to occur in response to the Iraqi Security Forces (ISF) launching operations to retake western Mosul on February 19. The deviation from the expectation may be a result of ISIS losing coordination between cells across Iraq as it takes time to regroup or as the ISF puts pressure on lines of communication in northern Iraq. The ISF may also be improving in its ability to preempt or thwart attacks. ISIS launched a major attack against checkpoints near the Syrian-Jordan-Iraqi border from February 22 to 24 and targeted checkpoints in Diyala Province on February 23. However, these attacks alone do not match the intensity of ISIS's previous responses, in which ISIS either carried out major attacks in generally quiet areas, such as Kirkuk City or Sinjar, or ramped up the frequency or scale of attacks in usual attack zones, such as Baghdad. ISIS may have planned for attacks in Samarra, Karbala, and Abu Ghraib to reach the response threshold, but these attacks were thwarted by the ISF over the course of February 21 to 24. The decline in ISIS's response is not likely a sign of permanent loss of ability to attack, but rather an indication that ISIS may take time to sufficiently regroup its command and logistical hubs as it deals with losses in Mosul and northern Iraq.