

# Iraq Situation Report: November 20 - December 2, 2015

**1 Kurdish factions vie for control of Sinjar.** KDP forces attempted to evict PKK from government buildings in Sinjar on November 24. Meanwhile, there were growing signs of Kurdish fighters refusing re-entry to Arabs with suspected ISIS connections. Apart from the PKK, the five major Iraqi Kurdish political parties agreed on the general notion of Sinjar becoming a province of Iraqi Kurdistan, though a prominent Yazidi leader denounced the suggestion.



**2 ISF and "Popular Mobilization" repel an attack by ISIS on Tikrit oil fields.**

"Popular Mobilization" and the ISF repelled an ISIS attack on the Alas and Ajil oil fields 40km east of Tikrit. The attack resulted in significant casualties on both sides. ISIS may increase probing attacks against proxy militia positions in Baiji and northern Salah al-Din as Iranian proxy militias refocus on Syria



**3 Ethnic tensions remain high between Peshmerga and "Popular Mobilization" in disputed territory.** Kurdish Asayish claimed to disarm a VBIED planted by the "Popular Mobilization" in Tuz Khurmato, east of Tikrit, and arrested three "Popular Mobilization" members. A Badr Organization official denied the accusations and called for the release of the vehicle and the detainees.



**4 Sunni leaders form new coalition in the CoR.**

The new group, announced on November 23 by 13 Sunni Etihad members, would contest elections and formally announce its formation in early December. The group was formed to unify Sunnis in the CoR, achieve key legislation, and remove suspected tribal members who collaborated with ISIS and popular demonstration leaders. Shi'a parties generally welcomed the announcement.

**5 ISF reports gains in Ramadi amid heavy Coalition airstrikes.**

ISF continued clearing operations in the Glass Factory and 5 Kilo areas southwest of Ramadi, reportedly securing them. ISF seized the Palestine Bridge spanning the Euphrates River on November 25. At least 50 Coalition airstrikes supported ISF operations, and at least three VBIEDs were destroyed from November 20 to December 2. The ISF dropped leaflets over Ramadi urging civilians to flee the city towards the south and west.



**6 Defense Secretary announces deployment of additional U.S. forces to Iraq.**

Defense Secretary Ashton Carter stated that additional U.S. Special Operations Forces (SOF) would deploy as a "specialized expeditionary targeting force" tasked with targeting ISIS leaders, conducting raids, collecting intelligence, and freeing hostages. The force would be authorized to conduct operations in Syria as well.



**7 Russian cruise missiles force airlines to suspend flights.**

Iraqi Civil Aviation suspended flights for 48 hours to and from Arbil and Suleimaniyah on November 22 due to Russian cruise missiles crossing Iraqi airspace from the Caspian Sea into Syria. Sweden and Egypt Air followed suit on November 27 and 28.

**8 Prominent Arab political leader assassinated in central Kirkuk city.**

Unidentified gunmen shot and killed Arab Bloc leader Muhammad Khalil al-Juburi in front of his home on December 1. PM Abadi ordered an immediate investigation.

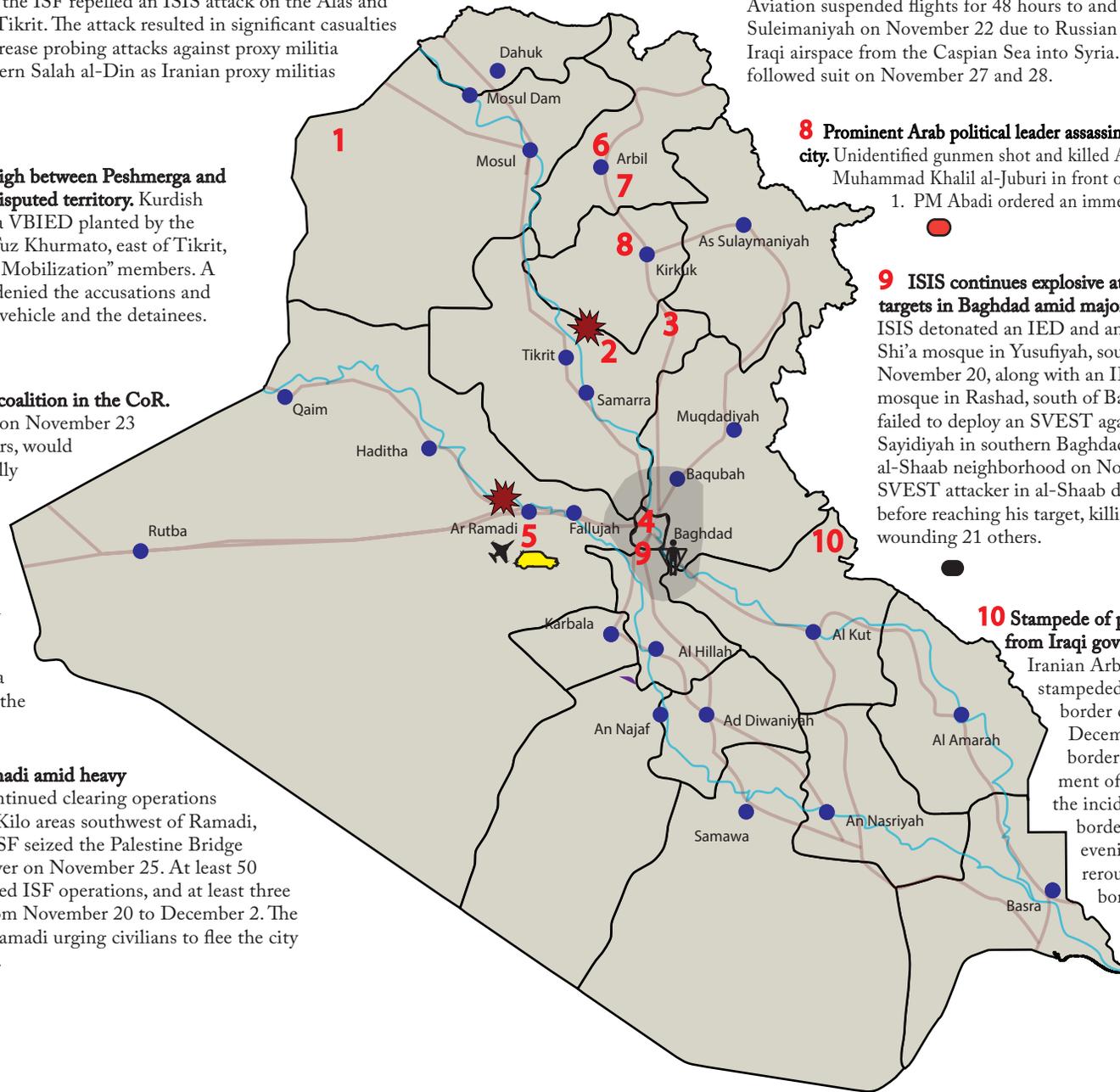


**9 ISIS continues explosive attacks against Shi'a targets in Baghdad amid major Shi'a ritual Arbaeen.**

ISIS detonated an IED and an SVEST exploded near Shi'a mosque in Yusufiyah, south of Baghdad on November 20, along with an IED targeting a Shi'a mosque in Rashad, south of Baghdad. ISIS attackers failed to deploy an SVEST against Shi'a pilgrims in Sayidiyah in southern Baghdad and an SVEST in al-Shaab neighborhood on November 30, though an SVEST attacker in al-Shaab detonated his SVEST before reaching his target, killing nine people and wounding 21 others.

**10 Stampede of pilgrims draws outcry from Iraqi government.**

Thousands of Iranian Arbaeen pilgrims stampeded at the Zurbatiyah border crossing with Iran on December 1, injuring several border guards. Iraqi government officials blamed Iran for the incident. Iran closed the border crossing for the evening of December 1 and rerouted pilgrims to other border crossings.



- Major Cities
- Failed S/VBIED
- Coalition
- SVBIED
- SVEST
- Anti-ISIS Iraqi Sunni Tribes
- Major Clash
- PKK
- Unknown Gunmen
- Airstrikes
- ISF
- Iraqi Shi'a militias
- ISIS
- Peshmerga

Content: Patrick Martin and ISW Iraq Team  
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The U.S. intensified its activities in Iraq and Syria by deploying additional Special Forces to Iraq. The deployment of reportedly up to 200 Special Operations Forces (SOF) with authority to engage in raids in both Iraq and across the border in Syria follows an intensification in U.S. activity under advise and assist in support of the Peshmerga in Iraq, including U.S. SOF accompanying Kurdish Special Forces on a raid on an ISIS prison near Hawija in Kirkuk province on October 22 and U.S. advisers assisting Kurdish forces recapture Sinjar, west of Mosul, from ISIS on November 12 and 13. The modest increase in U.S. activity comes as the ISF lay the groundwork for an eventual assault on Ramadi city. ISF recaptured the Palestine Bridge northwest of Ramadi, cutting off ISIS's supply routes over the Euphrates River amid an increase in Coalition airstrikes. ISF also secured areas near major bridges and called on civilians to flee the city. These moves indicate that the Iraqi government is still intent on recapturing Ramadi and is resisting pressure from Iranian proxy actors to delay such operations. PM Abadi is under significant pressure from Iranian proxy militias on several fronts, including amending the 2016 federal budget in order to increase the budget allocations to the "Popular Mobilization." However, the ISF has thus far prevented proxy militias from participating in the Ramadi operation. Meanwhile, Iranian proxy militias have deployed significant assets to Aleppo in Syria, and Iranian proxy operations in Iraq have slowed following the recapture of Baiji on October 23, indicating a shift in Iraqi priorities.