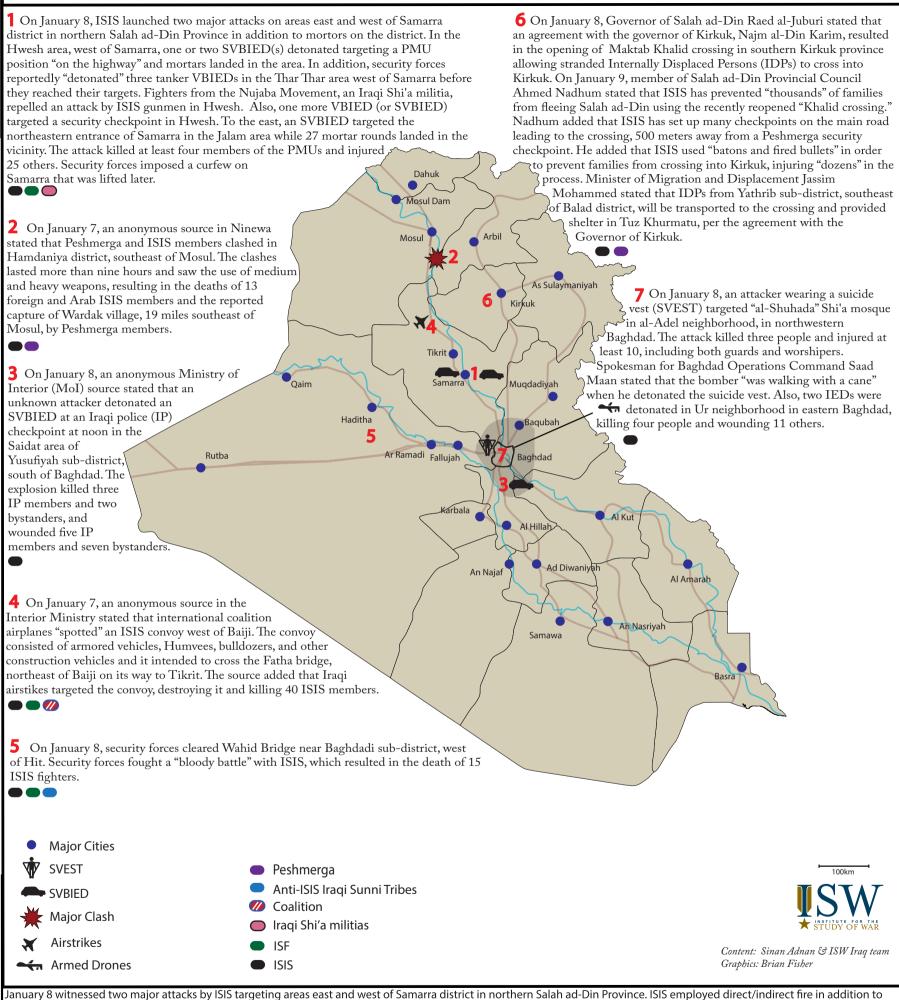
## Iraq Situation Report: January 8-9, 2015



Suicide Vehicle-Borne Improvised Explosive Devices (SVBIEDs) in the attacks. The attacks took place in Jalam, east of Samarra and Hwesh, west of Samarra. Jalam area used to be a staging ground for ISIS and a threat to Samarra. This threat spurred the Saraya al-Salam [Peace Brigades], an Iraqi Shi'a militia previously known as Jaysh al-Mahdi, to carry out extensive operations in this desert area to prevent an ISIS incursion on the district that houses the important Imam Askari Shrine. This is the first significant attack originating from Jalam since Saraya al-Salam handed control over its security to the Iraqi Army (IA) in October of 2014. Although the security configuration in Jalam is unclear at this time, this attack indicates that ISIS has, at least, re-established a minimum presence in the area. These attacks come at a time when ISF and militias have initiated military operations to clear ISIS from areas north of Samarra where the group had previously been unchallenged such as Dour district. Therefore, it is likely that ISIS aims to divert ISF and militias from these operations protecting Samarra. Militias and ISF will likely reinforce the environs of Samarra following these attacks. Moving north, on November 25, 2014 the local government of Kirkuk decided to block the only crossing into areas under the control of the Peshmerga in Kirkuk province from ISIS-held areas, for security reasons. This has stranded families fleeing military operation and ISIS at the crossing, generating a humanitarian crisis that finally prompted the local government of Kirkuk to re-open the crossing.