

Iraq Situation Report: September 11 - 14, 2015

1 CoR Speaker Salim al-Juburi on official foreign visits. On September 3, Juburi met in Doha with the Qatari Prime Minister, the Qatari Foreign Minister, and the UN Special Envoy to Iraq. Juburi also visited Tehran on September 11 and London on September 14.

2 Baath Party and Sunni opposition leaders attend “national reconciliation” conference in Doha. Sunni Etihad bloc leaders reportedly received invitations to a “national reconciliation” conference with the reported attendance of Baath Party and Sunni opposition leaders, such as Tariq al-Hashimi, held on the same day as Juburi’s visit to Doha. Etihad CoR bloc leader Ahmed al-Masari was also present in Doha at the time of the conference although it is not confirmed whether or not he attended. The conference sparked calls by Shi’a political figures for Juburi’s removal. The Baath Party representative denied the presence of any Iraqi government official at the conference, and Juburi denied involvement.

3 Proxy group directs proxy supporters to suspend participation in demonstrations. The Kata’ib Hezbollah spokesperson cited foreign interference in the demonstrations, including the U.S. Embassy, and stated that the demonstrations created “sedition and chaos.”

4 Clashes continue east and northeast of Ramadi. ISF clashed with ISIS east of Ramadi on September 11 and destroyed three SVBIEDs northeast of the city. DoD announced six airstrikes “near Ramadi.”

5 Video of Turkish hostages released. An anonymous armed group released a video on September 11 showing the 18 Turkish hostages kidnapped on September 2 and listing demands directed at Turkey and Turkey’s foreign policy in Syria. The nature of the demands and the location of the kidnapping indicate that the kidnappers were likely an Iranian-backed Iraqi Shi’a militia, most likely Kata’ib Hezbollah. Both the office of Grand Ayatollah Ali al-Sistani and Sadrist Trend leader Muqtada al-Sadr denounced the kidnapping.

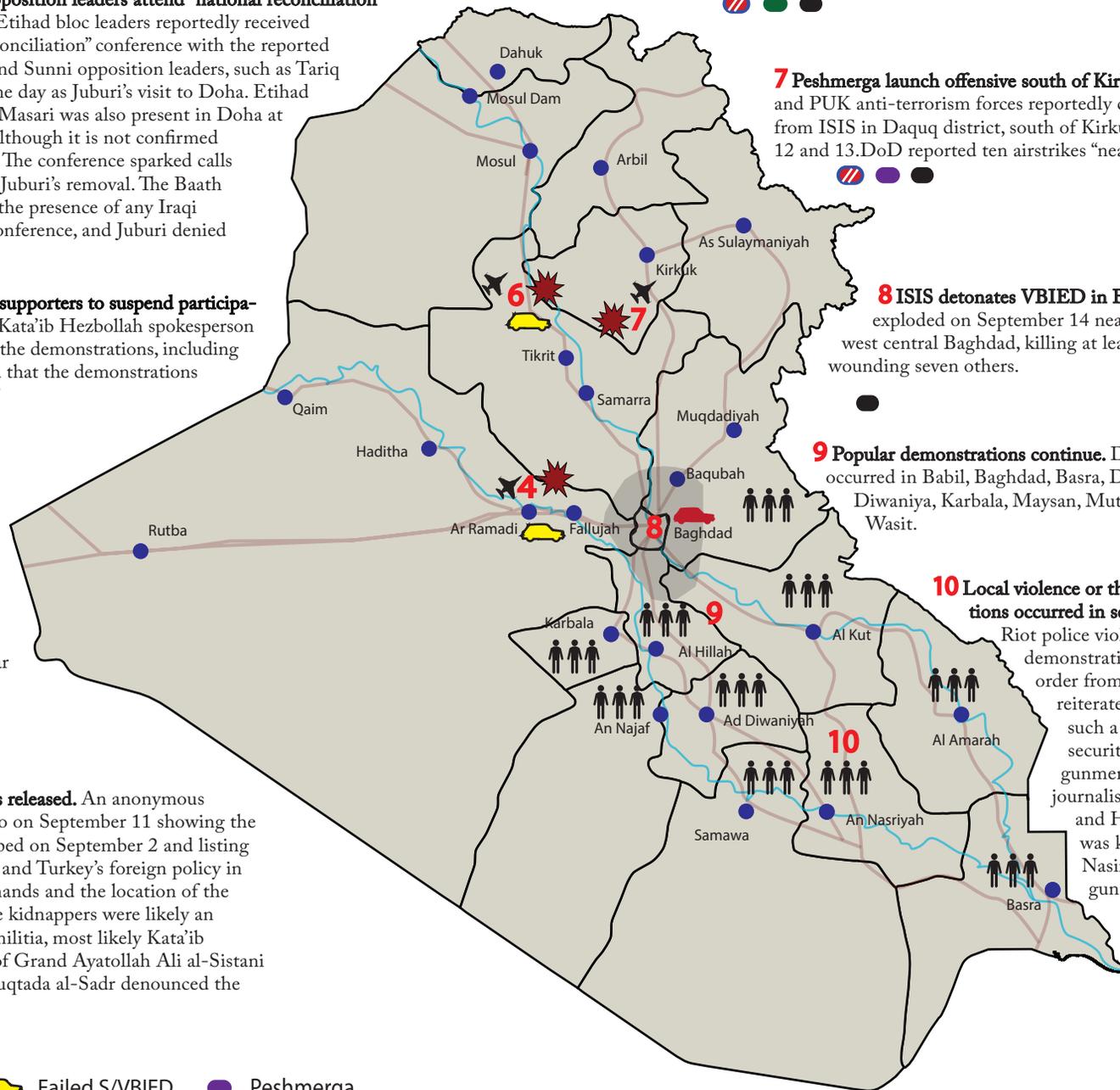
6 ISIS attacks against security forces in Baiji repelled. On September 12 and 13, ISIS attacked ISF, Counter Terrorism Service (CTS), and Popular Mobilization in Baiji, north and west of Baiji district, and “in the vicinity of” the Baiji oil refinery. Security forces repelled the attack, reportedly destroying five SVBIEDs and two SVESTs. DoD reported three airstrikes “near Baiji.”

7 Peshmerga launch offensive south of Kirkuk. PUK Peshmerga and PUK anti-terrorism forces reportedly captured seven villages from ISIS in Daquq district, south of Kirkuk. Between September 12 and 13, DoD reported ten airstrikes “near” Tuz Khurmatu.

8 ISIS detonates VBIED in Baghdad. The VBIED exploded on September 14 near the Ma’mun tower in west central Baghdad, killing at least two people and wounding seven others.

9 Popular demonstrations continue. Demonstrations occurred in Babil, Baghdad, Basra, Diyala, Dhi Qar, Diwaniya, Karbala, Maysan, Muthanna, Najaf, and Wasit.

10 Local violence or threats to demonstrations occurred in several provinces. Riot police violently dispersed a demonstration in Babil, citing an order from PM Abadi. His office reiterated that he never issued such a directive. Local security forces or unidentified gunmen also threatened journalists in Basra, Umm Qasr, and Hilla, while a blogger was kidnapped and killed in Nasiriya by unknown gunmen.



- Major Cities
- ✳ Major Clash
- 👤 Demonstration
- 🚗 VBIED
- 🚛 Failed S/VBIED
- ✈ Airstrikes
- 👤 Coalition
- 🟢 ISF
- 🟡 Peshmerga
- 🔴 Unknown Gunmen
- 🟡 Iraqi Shi’a militias
- ⬛ ISIS

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Popular demonstrations continued across southern Iraq while Iranian proxy groups escalated against the Iraqi government by denouncing protests and releasing an anonymous video of the Turkish hostages kidnapped in Baghdad, demanding adjustments to Turkey’s policies in the region. Violence against demonstrators in Babil province by local security forces and continued death threats against journalists may require PM Abadi to deploy the IA to southern provinces if violence continues, as he did in Hilla in Babil province following a similar violent dispersion of protesters on August 24. Local security forces threatened journalists with arrest in Basra province and beat a journalist in Babil province, indicating that local governments have an interest in reducing media coverage of the demonstrations. Death threats against demonstrators, however, have additionally been made against journalists come from unidentified gunmen in several provinces. The gunmen could represent political parties, local governments, or proxy militias, all of whom have interest in reducing the momentum of local demonstrations. While the demonstrators remain supportive of PM Abadi, threats to their security will put pressure on PM Abadi to ensure their protection. Meanwhile, ISIS continued to deploy mobile defenses around Ramadi against the ISF and attacked security forces in depth near Baiji, preventing the ISF from making any noticeable progress in either area. Peshmerga also launched an offensive with Coalition airstrikes south of Kirkuk, following up on a ground operation to clear ISIS from the same area on August 26. The operation shows that Peshmerga are willing to go on the offensive against ISIS in Kirkuk. It may also indicate that ISIS will soon surge against Kurdish positions elsewhere in northern Iraq, at Sinjar or other contested locations. Members of the Baath Party and leaders in the Sunni opposition also met at a “national reconciliation” conference in Doha on September 3. The conference was likely an effort by Baath Party members in exile to remain relevant and to reiterate their political positions; the Baath party held a similar conference in mid-July of 2014. However, because CoR Speaker Juburi was in Doha at the same time to visit with Qatari and UN officials, claims of his participation in the conference have generated ammunition by Juburi’s Shi’a political opponents to denounce him.