

# Iraq Situation Report: March 31- April 1, 2015

**1** On March 31, an anonymous source in IA Aviation stated that an IA Aviation airstrike “in coordination with the Kurdistan region” targeted the main checkpoint of eastern Mosul on the primary road to Bashiqa. IA Aviation also targeted two warehouses of arms and IEDs in Tal Afar district, west of Mosul.

**2** On March 31, Salah al-Din tribal council spokesperson Marwan al-Jibara stated that Obeid and Jubur tribal fighters within the “Popular Mobilization” cleared the foothills between Fatha and Rashad sub-district, and the villages of al-Ramal and al-Asfar, southwest of Kirkuk, and that operations were ongoing to clear the Kirkuk-Salah al-Din border areas.

**3** On March 31, ISIS shelled and attacked the former 8th Brigade Headquarters and the former CTS headquarters northwest of Ramadi, as well as the Justice Palace complex in northwestern Ramadi. Security forces and tribal fighters from central Ramadi repelled the attack while clashes remained ongoing west of Ramadi in the Albu Chlib and Tawi areas as ISIS attempted to take control of the Albu Chlib IP station and the house of Albu Chlib tribe leader Ahmed Aboud Ayada. Deputy Head of Anbar security Aziz Khalf al-Timruz stated that the attack involved a Humvee Suicide Vehicle-Borne Improvised Explosive Device (SVBIED). Security forces imposed a curfew on Ramadi and closed entrances to the city to prevent attacks on central Ramadi. On April 1, Anbar Vice Chairman Faleh al-Issawi stated that “large” reinforcements from Baghdad headed by the commander of ground forces arrived in Anbar to recapture the Tawi and Zangura areas, west of Ramadi, and would start operations after a delay caused by bad weather that prevented air cover. A security source stated that “two divisions” of “security forces and Popular Mobilization” had arrived in Habbaniyah base, east of Ramadi, to begin operations in Anbar.

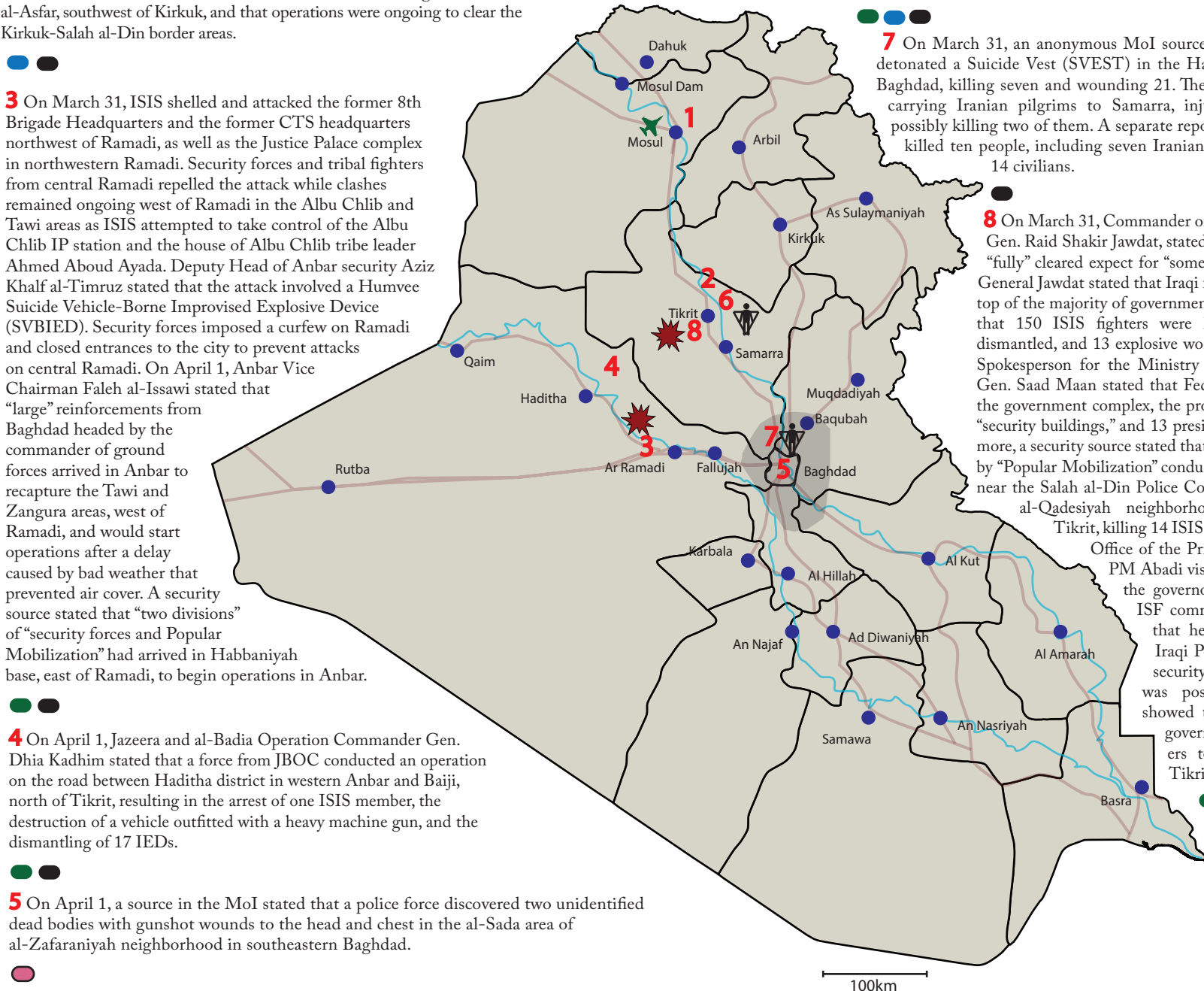
**4** On April 1, Jazeera and al-Badia Operation Commander Gen. Dhia Kadhim stated that a force from JBOC conducted an operation on the road between Haditha district in western Anbar and Baiji, north of Tikrit, resulting in the arrest of one ISIS member, the destruction of a vehicle outfitted with a heavy machine gun, and the dismantling of 17 IEDs.

**5** On April 1, a source in the MoI stated that a police force discovered two unidentified dead bodies with gunshot wounds to the head and chest in the al-Sada area of al-Zafaraniyah neighborhood in southeastern Baghdad.

**6** On April 1, ISIS launched an attack on Iraqi Police (IP) west of Alam and northeast of Tikrit, killing an officer and two policemen while 12 ISIS members were killed in the ensuing clash. The source stated that the attackers “escaped” from Qadisiya, north of Tikrit. Another source stated that the attack was repelled by Federal Police (FP), “Popular Mobilization,” and the Omayya al-Jabara Battalion, and that 14 ISIS fighters were killed. The source added that two “Popular Mobilization” fighters were injured when an ISIS attacker detonated a Suicide Vest (SVEST).

**7** On March 31, an anonymous MoI source stated that an attacker detonated a Suicide Vest (SVEST) in the Hamamiyat area, north of Baghdad, killing seven and wounding 21. The SVEST targeted a bus carrying Iranian pilgrims to Samarra, injuring at least ten and possibly killing two of them. A separate report stated that the attack killed ten people, including seven Iranian pilgrims, and wounded 14 civilians.

**8** On March 31, Commander of the Federal Police (FP), Gen. Raid Shakir Jawdat, stated that the Tikrit has been “fully” cleared except for “some” pockets inside the city. General Jawdat stated that Iraqi flags were being lifted on top of the majority of government buildings in Tikrit and that 150 ISIS fighters were killed, 520 IEDs were dismantled, and 13 explosive workshops were discovered. Spokesperson for the Ministry of Interior (MoI) Brig. Gen. Saad Maan stated that Federal Police (FP) cleared the government complex, the provincial council building, “security buildings,” and 13 presidential palaces. Furthermore, a security source stated that “security forces” assisted by “Popular Mobilization” conducted a clearing operation near the Salah al-Din Police Command headquarters, in al-Qadesiyah neighborhood, located north of Tikrit, killing 14 ISIS fighters. On April 1, the Office of the Prime Minister stated that PM Abadi visited Tikrit and met with the governor of Salah ad-Din and ISF commanders. The PM stated that he ordered that the local Iraqi Police (IP) take charge of security in the city. A video that was posted by Abadi’s office showed the PM along with the governor and ISF commanders touring areas of central Tikrit.



- Major Cities
- ★ Major Clash
- Iraqi Shi'a militias
- ISF
- ISIS
- ✈ Iraqi Airstrike
- ⚡ SVEST
- Anti-ISIS Iraqi Sunni Tribes
- Coalition
- Volunteers

Content: Sinan Adnan, Patrick Martin, and Omar al-Dulimi  
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The ISF and allied forces have reached and cleared the areas of Tikrit where ISIS was believed to be the most thoroughly entrenched. Although pockets of resistance likely still remain, the Palaces Complex and government buildings are key terrain in Tikrit. The fall of these positions from ISIS control deals a significant blow to the organization's presence in the area. This advance against ISIS in Tikrit was most likely made possible by coalition airstrikes. The military success of the ISF is a milestone not only in the fight against ISIS but also for PM Abadi and the U.S.-led coalition in cementing the sovereignty of the Iraqi state and the Iraqi Security Forces. The final stages of the operation were carried out without the presence of Iranian-backed Shi'a militias, making Tikrit the first major urban center cleared independently by the ISF and providing a significant psychological boost for the ISF following the collapse of many ISF units in June 2014. The decisive role of the U.S.-led coalition in this operation increases U.S. leverage in Iraq. In the wake of this operation, it will be important to observe how several factors play out. In particular, in other areas cleared by Iraqi Shi'a militias, Iraqi Sunni residents have largely not been permitted to return to their homes. Allowing residents to return to their homes will have a significant impact on these populations perceptions of the Iraqi government and Iraqi Security Forces. It will also be important to ensure that sufficient forces are left behind to hold terrain following clearing operations. The success of operations in Tikrit has dealt major blow to the rhetoric and narrative of Iranian-backed militias that positioned them as indispensable allies. PM Abadi has hinted that upcoming operations will follow model similar to that of Tikrit, suggesting a prominent role for the ISF and the U.S.-led coalition. As the U.S. rejects the role of these militias, and the militias strongly reject a role for the U.S., it will also be important to observe what future role these militias will play in anti-ISIS operations. Finally, a counter-attack by ISIS is possible, and has the potential to reverse recent gains as occurred in Baiji in late 2014. Tikrit has been a hotbed for insurgency since the fall of the Saddam Hussein regime in 2003 and will most likely exhibit low-level violence. Baathist elements may also attempt to generate an ongoing insurgency. Addressing Iraqi Sunni grievances by the government is key to decreasing such risks.