

Iraq Situation Report: August 28 - 31, 2015

1 ISIS detonated an IED near the Trebil crossing with Jordan. An IED exploded near the Trebil border crossing and killed five Iraqi border guards on patrol on August 29.

2 Reports of anti-ISIS demonstration in ISIS-held city. On August 31, "hundreds" of residents of Rutba in western Anbar reportedly protested the killing of a local resident. ISIS responded by detaining 200 locals, executing between 70 and 100 and hanging them from telephone poles in the town. Exact circumstances regarding the incident remain unclear.

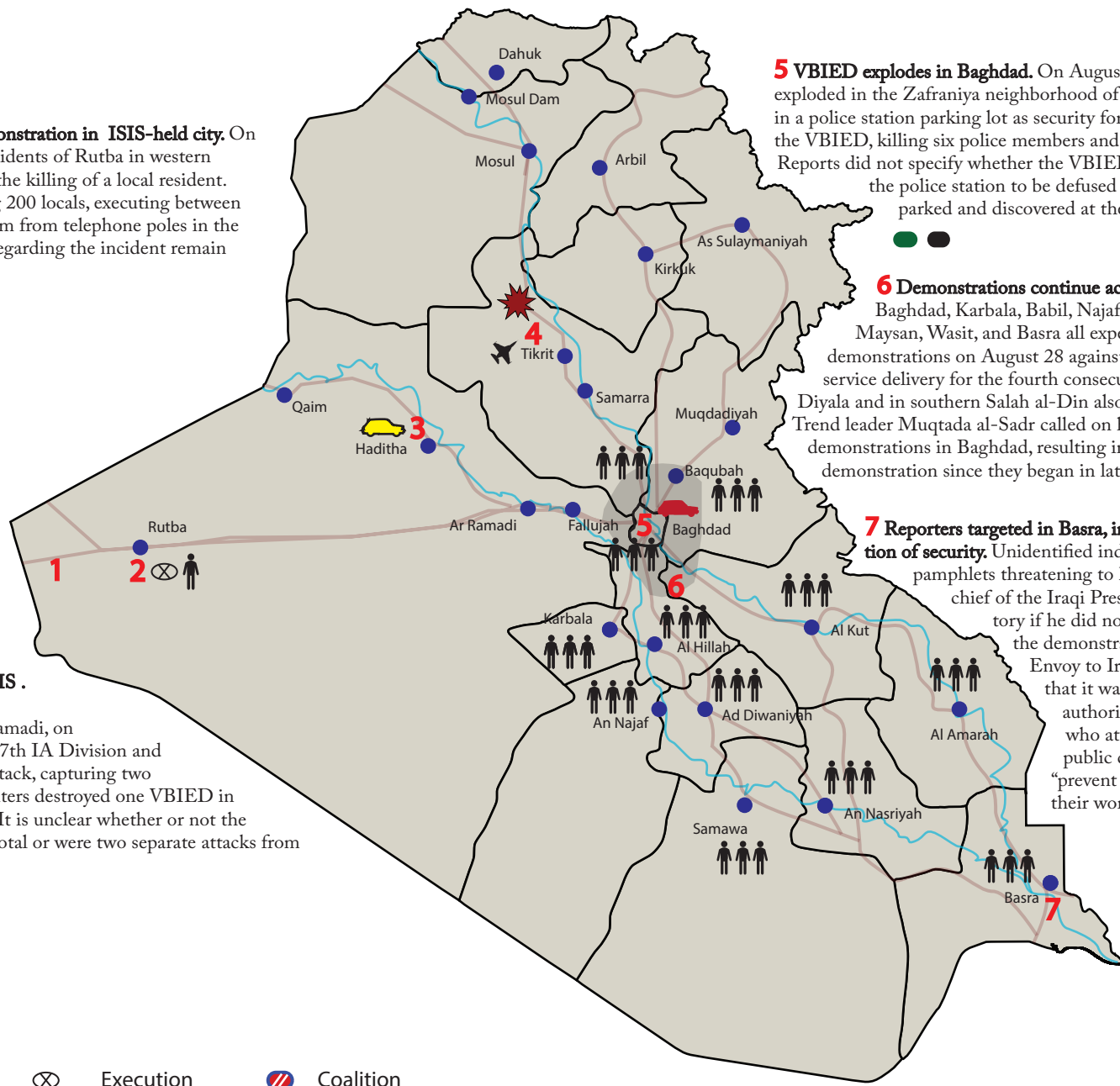
3 ISF defenses in Haditha and Baghdadi are holding against ground attacks by ISIS. ISIS attacked Haditha and Baghdadi, located west of Ramadi, on four axes on August 31. The 7th IA Division and tribal fighters repelled the attack, capturing two VBIEDs. ISF and tribal fighters destroyed one VBIED in Barwana, south of Haditha. It is unclear whether or not the attack came from four axes total or were two separate attacks from four axes.

4 Baiji remains contested. ISF, CTS, and "Popular Mobilization" forces reportedly launched operations in al-Asri neighborhood of western Baiji while Federal Police repelled several attacks by ISIS against Malha, Mazraa, and Hajjaj areas south of Baiji. DoD reported eight airstrikes "near Baiji" between August 28 and August 30.

5 VBIED explodes in Baghdad. On August 28, a VBIED exploded in the Zafraniya neighborhood of southeastern Baghdad in a police station parking lot as security forces were dismantling the VBIED, killing six police members and wounding ten others. Reports did not specify whether the VBIED was transferred to the police station to be defused or whether it was parked and discovered at the police station.

6 Demonstrations continue across southern Iraq. Baghdad, Karbala, Babil, Najaf, Dhi Qar, Diwaniya, Maysan, Wasit, and Basra all experienced large Friday demonstrations on August 28 against corruption and poor service delivery for the fourth consecutive week. Towns in Diyala and in southern Salah al-Din also held protests. Sadrist Trend leader Muqtada al-Sadr called on his supporters to join demonstrations in Baghdad, resulting in the city's largest demonstration since they began in late July.

7 Reporters targeted in Basra, indicating the deterioration of security. Unidentified individuals distributed pamphlets threatening to kill the Basra branch chief of the Iraqi Press Freedoms Observatory if he did not cease participation in the demonstrations. The UN Special Envoy to Iraq, Jans Kubis, stated that it was necessary for the authorities to prosecute anyone who attempted to "derail" public demonstrations or "prevent journalists from doing their work."



- Major Cities
- ✂ Execution
- ✈ Airstrikes
- ☀ Major Clash
- 🚗 VBIED
- 🚚 Failed S/VBIED
- 👤 Kidnapping
- 👥 Demonstration
- 🚩 Coalition
- 🟢 ISF
- 🟡 Anti-ISIS Iraqi Sunni Tribes
- 🟣 Iraqi Shi'a militias
- ⬛ ISIS

Content: Sinan Adnan, Patrick Martin and ISW Iraq Team

Graphics: Evan Sterling

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Indicators are emerging that security is deteriorating in Basra. Recent reports about targeting of journalists and demonstrators in combination with an increase of kidnappings for ransom and armed tribal confrontations constitute a warning that the state is losing control. The targeting of journalists had been a pattern that prevailed in Mosul before its fall to ISIS, leading to a media blackout on the city, which masked other indicators. The threat to Basra is not posed by ISIS, but by organized crime and Iraqi Shi'a militias. Tribal bandits have also been reported in the northern part of Basra province. These actors became entrenched in Basra province after the withdrawal of British forces in 2007, but the ISF and Coalition Forces launched a major operation to restore state-control over Basra in 2008. Conversely, the current deployment of most Basra-based ISF to the front lines against ISIS increases the challenge of maintaining security in Basra. Anti-corruption demonstrations will likely exacerbate the situation given the pressure they add on politicians in the province, who would likely act in their own interests rather than to try to curb security threats targeting journalists and protest organizers.

Meanwhile, ISIS continued its pattern of ground attacks against Haditha and Baghdadi. ISIS last attacked in the vicinity of the Haditha on August 24. The ISF and tribal militias successfully repelled the attacks, but ISIS maintains freedom of movement around these areas. The attacks nonetheless point to ISIS's ability to maneuver in western Anbar despite coalition airstrikes. ISIS also maintained pressure upon Baiji, the target of a separate offensive by ISIS in recent weeks. ISIS likely intends to control both Haditha and Baiji ultimately. These attacks also indicate that ISIS is attempting to divert the ISF from its primary objective at Ramadi and to balance potential gains by the ISF in Ramadi with its own gains elsewhere. Unconfirmed reports that residents of Rutba held a large anti-ISIS protest in Rutba, which ISIS reportedly subdued with a mass execution, may indicate an internal security concern in one of ISIS's assessed rear support areas. The explosion near the Trebil border crossing with Jordan, likely the work of ISIS, serves as a reminder that ISIS maintains interest in and access to the Jordanian border, which ISIS may attack with greater vigor if it fears the loss of its key Turkish border crossings in northern Syria. The presence of the ISF at the border also confirms that ISIS does not control the crossing, but rather maintains freedom of movement in the area from which to continue attacks.