

## Backgrounder # 24

### Targeting the Diyala Suicide Bombing Network

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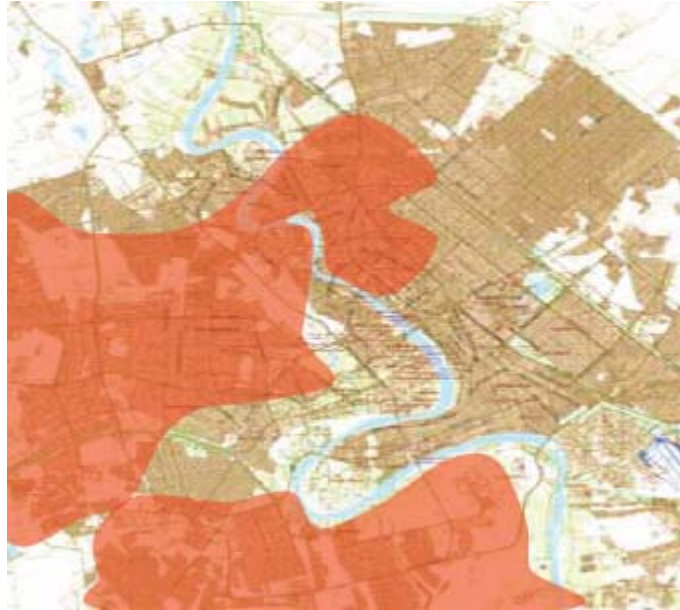
Coalition operations have significantly degraded the Al-Qaeda in Iraq (AQI) network over the last year, particularly in central Iraq. One of the main successes was the dismantling of AQI's vehicle-borne improvised explosive device (VBIED) network. As the VBIED network was rolled up, AQI shifted to conducting more suicide bombings. A major component of the suicide bombing network was located in the Baqubah-Khan Bani Saad corridor in Diyala province, which lies northeast of Baghdad. In January and February Coalition and Iraqi forces set about dismantling this network. This backgrounder details AQI's shift to suicide bombings and the operations to dismantle the Diyala suicide bombing network. A number of conclusions are drawn about how AQI continues to operate throughout Iraq, the increasing capacity of the Iraqi army, and the relationship between kinetic and non-kinetic aspects of counterinsurgency.

#### **Trying to Remain Spectacular**

The execution of spectacular attacks has been a hallmark of AQI's strategy in Iraq. Spectacular attacks aim to gain media attention by killing a large number of people or striking symbolic individuals or targets in important cities. AQI has largely achieved these aims by using its signature weapon, VBIEDs, and suicide bombers in and around Baghdad. VBIEDs have been successful for AQI because they are large, mobile weapons that can be emplaced strategically to achieve maximum effect. Suicide bombings are not as powerful in terms of explosive power, but are often as lethal because of the ability for suicide bombers to detonate their devices in the middle of large crowds of people.

By the end of 2006, AQI's VBIED network was rather sophisticated. AQI needed sanctuary in order to have established factories for VBIED assembly. To that end, the group developed VBIED factories in the belts ringing Baghdad and then used lines of communication to regularly funnel these weapons into the capital. In Baghdad, AQI

relied on cells that were specifically tasked with helping to take those VBIEDs that were constructed in the belts and detonate them in strategic locations around the city.



Map 1: Areas of AQI Control in Baghdad in December, 2006  
(Source: MNF – Iraq)

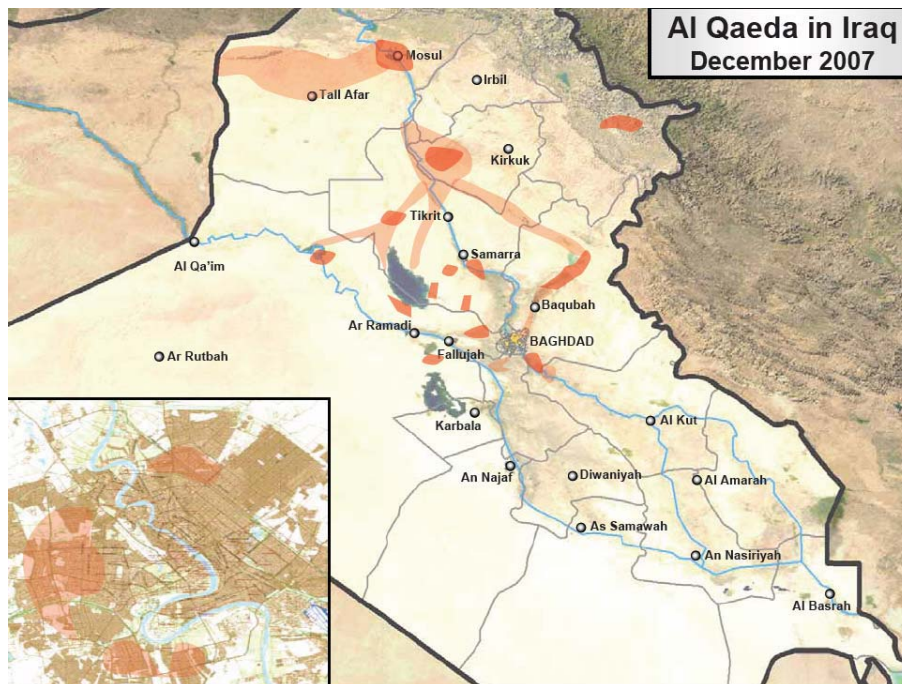
AQI not only used the belts to project force into Baghdad, but also south of the capital into northern areas in Babil and Wasit provinces. This system allowed AQI to maintain a steady tempo of spectacular VBIED attacks throughout central Iraq.



Map 2: Areas of AQI Control in the Baghdad Belts  
in December, 2006. (Source: MNF – Iraq)

In the last year, AQI's VBIED network in central Iraq has been all but destroyed by Coalition operations that have cleared AQI from Baghdad, the Baghdad belts, and the Diyala River Valley. In Baghdad, Coalition and Iraqi forces constructed a barrier system around neighborhoods prone to VBIED attacks while making marketplaces and the areas surrounding mosques off-limits to cars. These efforts disrupted AQI's movement of VBIEDs across the city and shrank the list of potential targets. At the same time, Coalition forces cleared contested neighborhoods, dismantled multiple VBIED cells –

particularly in the Karkh security district – and cut off the remnants of other cells from lines of communication in the belts. Outside Baghdad, Coalition Forces cleared AQI’s support areas and sanctuaries pushing the network increasingly further away from the capital. One of the last VBIED construction sanctuaries was north of Muqdadiah in Diyala province, which was cleared in December and January.<sup>1</sup> By rooting out AQI’s network both inside and outside Baghdad, VBIEDs have become rare in central Iraq. The VBIEDs that are still employed have been mainly limited to attacking checkpoints and other peripheral targets because of the present difficulty of striking targets like marketplaces and mosques. VBIED attacks have also increasingly been executed by suicide attackers instead of being detonated remotely.



Map 3: AQI’s Presence in Iraq and Baghdad in December, 2007  
(Source: MNF – Iraq)

As a result of the Coalition success against AQI’s VBIED network, AQI has come to rely increasingly on suicide bombings in central Iraq.<sup>2</sup> According to Major General Jeffrey Hammond “Al Qaeda has discovered that because a great job has been done, they just cannot drive their VBIEDs like they used to...we see an adjustment that is the suicide vest attack.”<sup>3</sup> Suicide bombings have become the preferred choice both tactically to evade the security adjustments that have made VBIEDs so difficult to employ and to attract widespread media attention. Tactical adjustments have also been made in how suicide bombings are conducted. Women have become a popular choice for conducting attacks because they are less likely to be searched and can more easily hide explosives under bulky garb. AQI has even gone as far as using children, mentally disabled individuals, and handicapped individuals confined to wheelchairs.<sup>4</sup> These individuals are also less likely to be searched and may not even be aware that they are walking or wheeled weapons.

While VBIEDs are still used to attack security checkpoints and infrastructure, the shift towards suicide bombings has coincided with increased targeting of Sons of Iraq (SoI) groups.<sup>5</sup> Suicide bombs have become particularly effective for targeting SoI offices and leaders. Attacks against SoIs increased from 26 per month last October to 100 in January and February, many of which were conducted by suicide bombers who got positioned themselves near SoI leaders prior to detonation.<sup>6</sup> On January 7<sup>th</sup>, a suicide bomber killed Colonel Riyadh al-Samarrai, a founder of the Adhamiyah Awakening Council, as he exited the offices of the Sunni Endowment in Baghdad.<sup>7</sup> On January 20<sup>th</sup>, a teenage boy walked into a tent in Albo Issa, a village near Fallujah, and detonated his explosive vest at a tribal gathering of Awakening members killing four including Hadi Hussein al-Issawi, a mid-level leader in the Awakening movement in Anbar. The boy's intended target was Sheik Aeifan, the leader of the Issawi tribe and an early adversary of AQI, who had not yet arrived.<sup>8</sup>

The use of suicide bombings in spectacular attacks has increased because the al-Qaeda can no longer use VBIEDs in central locations. On Friday February 1<sup>st</sup>, two women detonated themselves in popular markets in Eastern Baghdad. At the walled-off Ghazil pet bazaar in the central market area of Shorja, the first bomber killed 46 people and wounded 100. Fifteen minutes later and four miles away at the New Baghdad bird market, 27 more people were killed and 67 wounded by the second bomber.<sup>9</sup> On February 24<sup>th</sup>, a suicide bomber detonated his explosive vest in a refreshment tent for pilgrims traveling to Karbala to celebrate Arbaeen. 40 people were killed and 60 were wounded.<sup>10</sup> In total, a steady flow of suicide bombings have targeted SoI offices and leaders, security checkpoints, markets, and mosques across central Iraq in the last few months even as overall levels of attacks and violence have declined.

Compared to VBIED production, which requires more infrastructure (factories) and resources (cars and explosives), assembling suicide bombs is fairly simple. Suicide bombs require a small amount of explosives combined with ball bearings or some other type of projectile packed inside a vest or belt and wired to a switch. These materials can be acquired easily and can be assembled quickly and almost anywhere. The most important component of suicide bombs are the actual people who carry them out. AQI has relied mostly on foreigners to conduct suicide attacks in Iraq. Multi-National Force – Iraq (MNF-I) estimates a preponderance of the suicide attacks in Iraq are carried out by foreigners. In order to facilitate foreign bombers to central Iraq AQI relies on lines of communication that run from northern Iraq. Since the formation of the Anbar Awakening Council in late 2006, AQI mainly relies on lines of communication that run from the Syrian border through Mosul and down the Tigris River Valley and along the Hamrin Ridge to Diyala province.<sup>11</sup> Both of these lines meet up in southern Diyala, which in turn has been a major center of operations for AQI in the last few years and a strategic line Baghdad.

Not surprisingly, Coalition Forces uncovered a major suicide bombing network in Diyala province in the last few months. This network has been operating in the area spanning from just north of Baqubah down east of Khan Bani Saad and all the way out to the Turki village area. This area is important because it is a nexus where east-west and



north-south lines of communication meet. The east-west axis connects Diyala province to the Lake Tharthar and the Tigris River Valley networks. From the Tigris River Valley this line runs through the Khalis corridor, Baqubah, Buhriz, and out to Kan'an and Balad Ruz. In this area the east-west axis meets up with north-south lines of communication that run along the 2/3 Highway connecting Kirkuk to Baghdad and the 4/5 Highway that runs from upper Diyala down along the river valley through Muqdadiah and Baqubah to Khan Bani Saad and eventually Baghdad. An important road leads from Kan'an through Nahrwan and connects to eastern Baghdad. The Diyala suicide bombing network regrouped in the Baqubah-Khan Bani Saad corridor where they are able to link to lines of communication from Mosul and project force north into Baqubah as well as south into Baghdad. Beginning in December, Coalition Forces began to develop intelligence about this network. In January and February, Coalition and Iraqi Security Forces moved to dismantle it.



Map 4: Central Iraq (Philip Schwartzberg, Meridian Mapping)

### Operations in the Baqubah-Khan Bani Saad Corridor

After conducting major clearing operations in Diyala in the summer and fall of 2007 Coalition Forces continued to dismantle the AQI network in the province as part of Operation Iron Reaper in late November and December.<sup>12</sup> During Iron Reaper, Coalition Forces conducted a series of operations between Baqubah and Khan Bani Saad targeting an AQI cell active near Khan Bani Saad and associated with several AQI leaders throughout Diyala. Operations on November 28<sup>th</sup> and December 5<sup>th</sup> led to the arrest of two associates of a Khan Bani Saad AQI cell; this, in turn, helped lead to the arrest of the cell leader on December 9<sup>th</sup>.<sup>13</sup> These operations were conducted by the 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion, 1<sup>st</sup> Cavalry Regiment (2-1), a Reconnaissance, Surveillance, and Target-Acquisition (RSTA) squadron. RSTA squadrons are designed specifically to develop intelligence about the enemy before larger operations, which are usually conducted by brigade combat teams. During these operations and other reconnaissance in force in the area the 2-1 RSTA

began to develop intelligence about how the remaining AQI elements in southern Diyala continued to operate. In addition to Baqubah, more isolated areas near Buhriz and further south, and towns and villages like al-Abarra, Gailibiyah, and Muridiyah were assessed to be areas where AQI fighters had fled and continued to conduct operations.<sup>14</sup>

Beginning in the second week of January, Multi-National Division-North began Operation Raider Harvest in Diyala province. Raider Harvest built on the intelligence developed about AQI in December and primarily targeted a region known as “the Breadbasket” north of Muqdadiyah, which was the last remaining AQI sanctuary in Diyala.<sup>15</sup> At the same time that Coalition Forces cleared the Breadbasket, two sub-operations conducted further south targeted the network operating in the Baqubah-Khan Bani Saad corridor that the 2-1 RSTA had probed in December.

The first operation, Operation Viking Harvest II, was carried out by Iraqi Security Forces (army, police and local SoI) and U.S. soldiers from the 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion, 12<sup>th</sup> Field Artillery (2-12 FA) and targeted the al-Abarra and Imam Ways villages of the Buhriz district south of Baqubah. This operation ran from January 14<sup>th</sup> – 16<sup>th</sup> with Iraqi Security forces clearing the villages and the 2-12 FA providing support with blocking positions around the villages to prevent enemy fighters from escaping. One enemy fighter was killed and 53 suspects were detained. 30 IEDs, five house-borne IEDs (HBIEDs), and two weapons caches were cleared. Also, in the process of clearing the villages, 375 previously displaced individuals were able to return to their homes. Coalition and Iraqi Security Forces immediately moved to organize SoIs, set up checkpoints, and establish a permanent Iraqi Army checkpoint to make sure that insurgents who fled the area could not return.<sup>16</sup>

The second and larger operation was the brigade-level offensive Operation Blackhawk Harvest, which was designed and led by the 2<sup>nd</sup> Brigade, 5<sup>th</sup> Iraqi Army Division.<sup>17</sup> Along with this Iraqi Army brigade, the 2-1 RSTA helped conduct operations from Khan Bani Saad to the southern stretches of Baqubah while elements of the 4<sup>th</sup> Battalion, 9<sup>th</sup> Infantry Regiment, 4<sup>th</sup> Stryker Brigade Combat Team, 2<sup>nd</sup> Infantry Division (4-9, 4<sup>th</sup> SBCT, 2<sup>nd</sup> ID) helped conduct operations in Baqubah.<sup>18</sup> Blackhawk Harvest began in early January and was conducted over the course of the month. The operation centered on the main road between Baqubah and Khan Bani Saad, known as Sabbah Nissan. Sabbah Nissan is a key road that links Baqubah to Baghdad. It had been closed for the previous 16 months because of the persistent threat of IEDs along the road as well as crater damage from previous attacks.<sup>19</sup> Iraqi and Coalition Forces focused on reopening Sabbah Nissan by clearing more than 30 IEDs and repairing craters that prevented cars from passing. At the same time that Sabbah Nissan was cleared, many of the surrounding villages were cleared and targeted raids were conducted in Baqubah and Khan Bani Saad. Blackhawk Harvest resulted in the death of 48 AQI fighters and capture of eight more. In addition to the more than 30 IEDs that were cleared, 12 HBIEDs, 11 VBIEDs, and 6 weapons caches were also cleared.<sup>20</sup>

While Operation Blackhawk Harvest targeted the area south of Baqubah to clear and control the corridor that ran through Khan Bani Saad down to Baghdad, a series of

operations targeted the suicide bombing network in around Baqubah and then a related network operating east of Khan Bani Saad along the Kan'an-Nahrwan road. That road is an alternate route to Sabbah Nissan.

On January 16<sup>th</sup>, Coalition Forces detained a suspected IED and suicide bombing cell leader during a targeted raid in Baquba. This individual was tied to a number of attacks in Diyala and was directly linked to a Syrian suicide bombing facilitator. Intelligence reports indicated that he had recently requested suicide bombers from Mosul.<sup>21</sup> Three days later, Coalition Forces captured three more individuals, one of whom had direct ties to AQI leaders in Baghdad and the Baghdad car bombing network.<sup>22</sup> On January 22<sup>nd</sup> and 28<sup>th</sup>, Coalition Forces again targeted individuals in Baqubah associated with the AQI suicide bombing network in Diyala.<sup>23</sup> These operations focused on a number of AQI cells operating in old Baqubah that were connected to the larger suicide bombing network that spans all the way from Mosul through Diyala to Baghdad.

At the same time that Coalition Forces worked Baqubah they also targeted what was assessed to be a local AQI headquarters and operating area north of the city. This headquarters was connected to the suicide bombing network in the province and was tied directly to the cells operating in Baqubah, likely helping to coordinate suicide bombing operations in northern Diyala. On January 22<sup>nd</sup>, three individuals responsible for the facilitation of IEDs and suicide vests in the province and connected to several senior AQI leaders were targeted in the area north of Baqubah. The following day, Coalition Forces targeted other members of the same group in the same location. In these two days of operations, fifteen enemy fighters were killed and multiple weapons caches were cleared, which included, among other items, suicide vest materials.<sup>24</sup> On January 29<sup>th</sup> Coalition Forces targeted this same area detaining another six individuals linked to the suicide bombing network.<sup>25</sup> These operations appear to have cleared this local headquarters.

In February, Coalition Forces continued to target the suicide bombing network in Baqubah. On February 8<sup>th</sup>, they sought an associate of the AQI leadership responsible for the suicide network operating in Diyala and connected to the suicide network throughout Iraq. Coalition Forces killed four other enemy fighters, after which the targeted individual killed himself by exploding a bomb inside a building.<sup>26</sup> This is a common practice, as many AQI leaders wear suicides vests and will detonate them when engaged by Coalition Forces. On February 11<sup>th</sup>, an Iraqi Special Operations Forces (ISOF) contingent detained an individual in Baqubah suspected of supplying explosive vests for use in suicide bombing attacks and working as part of a cell involved in smuggling explosives.<sup>27</sup> And on February 16<sup>th</sup>, another group of individuals associated with the suicide bombing network was captured in Baqubah.<sup>28</sup>

Around this time, operations began near Khan Bani Saad targeting another group associated with the suicide bombing network in Baqubah. Khan Bani Saad is the largest city between Baqubah and Baghdad. Coalition and Iraqi forces assessed that this was another area where leaders associated with the Baqubah network had tried to regroup. The area west of the city connects with the Tigris River Valley and the facilitation

network from Mosul. The area to the west of the city connects to the Kan'an-Nahrwan highway and the Turki village area, which have been problematic areas in the past.<sup>29</sup> This eastern area funnels into eastern Baghdad and AQI has used it as a sanctuary from which to project VBIEDs and suicide bombers into the capital. This area east of Khan Bani Saad was the main focus of February's operations.

On February 17<sup>th</sup>, Coalition Forces killed Arkan Khalaf Khudayyir, also known as Abu Karrar, near Khan Bani Saad. Abu Karrar was a senior intelligence leader for AQI in Baqubah and was a terrorist facilitator for the suicide bombing network in Diyala. Coalition Forces also identified Karrar and the Diyala suicide bombing network as responsible for recent suicide bombs in Baghdad to include those by female bombers.<sup>30</sup> On February 22<sup>nd</sup> and 24<sup>th</sup>, Coalition Forces continued to pursue this network with operations targeting associates of Abu Karrar, who were likewise members of the suicide bombing network in Diyala.<sup>31</sup> While targeting this group on the 25<sup>th</sup>, Coalition and Iraqi forces were ambushed while maneuvering toward a suspected AQI building. They killed seven enemy fighters and captured two, including the targeted individual.<sup>32</sup> On February 29<sup>th</sup>, Coalition and Iraqi forces again conducted an operation against the Baqubah IED and suicide bombing network east of Khan Bani Saad and once more were attacked as they approached a suspected AQI building. The operation resulted in five enemy fighters killed and eight detained.<sup>33</sup>

At the same time that the area east of Khan Bani Saad was squeezed, Coalition Forces also targeted areas north and west of Khan Bani Saad associated with the same network. In one of these operations on February 28<sup>th</sup>, Coalition Forces captured the leader of the suicide bombing cell operating in Ghailibiyah. This individual was responsible for recruiting women to carry out suicide bombing attacks and was in the process of equipping his wife and another woman to carry out attacks in the near future.<sup>34</sup>

On March 1<sup>st</sup> the area east of Khan Bani Saad was again targeted with a larger Iraqi-led operation based on the intelligence developed in the previous two weeks. A joint Iraqi Army and Iraqi Police force launched Operation Foxhunt near the Kan'an-Nahrwan road. The Kan'an-Nahrwan road is an important north-south route that cuts through an area where AQI has found safe haven in the past. It serves as an alternate route to Sabbah Nissan for connecting AQI's operations in Baqubah to eastern Baghdad. This area is also important because it connects Diyala province to the al-Qaeda's network in the southern belts of Baghdad through the town of Salman Pak. In the first 48 hours of Operation Foxhunt, Iraqi forces swept through 20 villages along the road. Ten suspected AQI gunmen were killed and another twelve were detained. Iraqi forces also seized 37 IEDs in addition to a large amount of arms and ammunition during the raids. The commander of Diyala operations, Major General Abdul-Kareem al-Rubaie, indicated that this was one of the most important battles fought by Iraqi forces in Diyala and that clearing AQI from this area would go a long way toward defeating AQI in the province.<sup>35</sup>

As Operation Foxhunt was ongoing, Coalition Forces detained an individual on March 2<sup>nd</sup> just east of Baghdad who was involved in the facilitation network supplying explosive materials to an AQI network in central Baghdad. This individual was the



brother of the leader of the network operating east of Khan Bani Saad, which was identified as the “Bizayz” terrorist network. In addition to this individual, Coalition Forces detained nine other suspected terrorists on site.<sup>36</sup> Two days later, intelligence reports led Coalition Forces to the actual leader of the Bizayz terrorist network. He was described as being responsible for the large terrorist group operating east of Khan Bani Saad and was connected to his brother and other AQI facilitators along the Diyala-Baghdad line of communication. Coalition Forces attempted to capture this individual, but killed him and two others when his vehicle did not stop.<sup>37</sup>

Diyala province and specifically the city of Baqubah have been critical for AQI. Beyond the group’s attempts to control the province, Diyala has been an important line of communication and support area for operations in Baghdad. After major Coalition operations in Baqubah in the past year, many AQI insurgents fled the city. One area where they regrouped was north of Baqubah, where they operated from a local command and control headquarters. Another group moved south to the area stretching from Buhriz to the east of Khan Bani Saad and further out to the Turki village area. At the same time, multiple cells remained and operated in the old Baqubah section of the city. Operations against this network have targeted all three of these areas and were described by Coalition Forces as part of “efforts to disrupt the al-Qaeda in Iraq suicide network operating in Diyala, Baghdad, Mosul and other areas of Iraq.”<sup>38</sup> Essentially, foreign terrorists and weapons moved down the Tigris River Valley from Mosul to Diyala and the Bizayz terrorist network. From Diyala, suicide bombers, IEDs and weapons were funneled into Baghdad. Coalition operations in January and February were successful in dismantling the remaining elements of AQI’s network in southern Diyala and will hopefully halt the flow of suicide bombers and weapons from Diyala to Baghdad. Nevertheless, al-Qaeda will likely remain interested in this area and will continue to contest it.

## Conclusions

There are a number of conclusions to draw from AQI’s shift to suicide bombings and the efforts to target the network that supports those operations. First, AQI has tried to adapt at to the tighter security environment by shifting from VBIED attacks to suicide bombings as well as shifting how some of those bombings are carried out. This has allowed AQI to continue conducting spectacular attacks, albeit at a lower lethality and frequency. It seems clear that AQI will continue to shift its tactics as needed in the future.

Second, after being pushed out of its former urban strongholds, AQI relocated, regrouped, and attempted to reconstitute its operational capabilities. The network was able to fall back on support areas in more rural locations and use its lines of communication in order to maintain communications and continue conducting operations, even if in a significantly degraded state. AQI’s efforts to maintain a presence and operational capability in central Iraq after major Coalition operations show that Baghdad is still of primary interest to the network; it also shows that the terrain in the belts remains

a fundamental part of AQI's efforts to project force into the capital. The Coalition's primary priority in combating AQI will therefore be to maintain control over the terrain in central Iraq as troop withdrawals occur. At the same time, the Coalition will continue to conduct offensive operations to uproot AQI elements that attempt to regroup in the rural areas around the capital.

Third, AQI's lines of communication are vital for the network to operate as a system. The Diyala network relied on the lines that run from Mosul to supply their operations. That network in turn relied on lines of communication to project force into Baghdad. In the last six months, Coalition Forces have simultaneously conducted major clearing operations in central Iraq while also targeting AQI's lines of operation up and down the Tigris River Valley, along the shores of Lake Tharthar, and along the Hamrin Ridge north of Diyala. While holding terrain in central Iraq, Coalition Forces will need to continue to disrupt AQI's lines of operation further north.

Fourth, the Iraqi Army is becoming more competent in carrying out operations. Operation Blackhawk Harvest, an Iraqi-designed and Iraqi-led brigade-level offensive, was an important step forward for the 5<sup>th</sup> Iraqi Army Division operating in Diyala. As Coalition Forces withdraw to pre-surge levels and beyond over the next year, the Iraqi Security Forces must be able to ensure security in places like Diyala. Capacity building remains a problem, but with all of the joint operations conducted with Coalition Forces in the last year the Iraqi Army in particular is making significant improvements.

Fifth, the operations in the Baqubah-Khan Bani Saad corridor again demonstrate the synergy between kinetic and non-kinetic operations in counterinsurgency. While conducting operations, Coalition and Iraqi forces were able to reopen Sabbah Nissan, one of the most important roads leading to Baghdad. During operations in Baqubah one of the main roads connecting north and south Baqubah, Kharesan Street was also reopened.<sup>39</sup> These efforts will hopefully have lasting effects in making travel between Baqubah and Baghdad, and travel within Baqubah, allowing continued economic growth and commercial activity. As Lieutenant General Ray Odierno stated upon returning from Iraq, Iraq's economic development will be the ultimate determinant of success going forward.<sup>40</sup> Securing infrastructure like Sabbah Nissan is an important part of that process. Additionally, operations around Buhriz allowed dislocated Iraqis to return to their homes and helped establish the conditions for improved local security and better governance.

The operations in the Baqubah-Khan Bani Saad corridor are hopefully the last major operations needed to secure Diyala province and will lead to a reduction in suicide bombings throughout central Iraq. A window of opportunity now exists to establish more durable security, governance, and economic gains that can outlast the presence of Coalition Forces. It is imperative that the Iraqi government and Coalition work together to take full advantage of that opportunity.

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<sup>1</sup> Eric Hamilton, “December Operations in Muqdadiyah,” Backgrounder #18, Institute for the Study of War, January 8, 2008; Eric Hamilton, “Operation Raider Harvest: Establishing Lasting Security in Northern Diyala,” Backgrounder #19, Institute for the Study of War, January 18, 2008.

<sup>2</sup> Richard Tomkins, “Female Suicide Bomber No Surprise,” *Emerging Threats Analysis*, *United Press International*, January 17, 2008.

<sup>3</sup> Sam Dagher, “Female Suicide Bombers Shatter Baghdad Calm,” *Christian Science Monitor*, February 1, 2008.

<sup>4</sup> “US Claims Qaeda is Using Children as Iraq Suicide Bombers,” Agence France-Presse, January 27, 2008; Alissa J. Rubin, “Suicide Bomber Kills 17 at Ceremony Near Capital,” *New York Times*, January 22, 2008; Steven R. Hurst, “Mentally Disabled Women Used in Bombings,” *Associated Press*, February 1, 2008; Tina Susman and Alexandra Zavis, Wheelchair Bomb Kills Officer in Iraq,” *Los Angeles Times*, February 26, 2008.

<sup>5</sup> Sons of Iraq were previously called Concerned Local Citizens.

<sup>6</sup> Sudarsan Raghavan and Amit R. Paley, “Sunni Forces Losing Patience with U.S.,” *Washington Post*, February 28, 2008.

<sup>7</sup> Richard A. Oppel and Mudhafer al-Husaini, “Suicide Bomber Kills Key Sunni Leader,” *New York Times*, January 7, 2008.

<sup>8</sup> Richard A. Oppel and Qais Mizher, “Bomber Kills Sunni Allies of the U.S.,” *New York Times*, January 21, 2008; Alissa J. Rubin, “Suicide Bomber Kills 17 at Ceremony Near Capital,” *New York Times*, January 22, 2008.

<sup>9</sup> Sam Dagher, “Female Suicide Bombers Shatter Baghdad Calm,” *Christian Science Monitor*, February 1, 2008; Stephen Farrell and Mudhafer al-Husaini, “Two Bombing Wreak Carnage in Iraqi Capital,” *New York Times*, February 2, 2008.

<sup>10</sup> Habin al-Zubaidi, “Suicide Bomber Kills 40 in Iraq: Police,” *Associated Press*, February 24, 2008.

<sup>11</sup> Eric Hamilton, “Developments Fighting Al Qaeda in Iraq,” Backgrounder #21, Institute for the Study of War, January 29, 2008.

<sup>12</sup> See Operation Arrowhead Ripper, Operations Lightning Hammer I & II, Operation Iron Hammer, and Operation Iron Reaper in the Operations section at the Institute for the Study of War website [www.understandingwar.org](http://www.understandingwar.org).

<sup>13</sup> Multi-National Force – Iraq Press Release A071128b, “Twelve Detained as Coalition Forces Target al-Qaeda Terrorist Operations,” November 28, 2007; Multi-National Force – Iraq Press Release A071209a, “Al-Qaeda Networks Disrupted,” December 9, 2007.

<sup>14</sup> *Aswat al-Iraq*, “National Reconciliation Council Chief Wounded in Shooting,” Translated from Arabic, January 13, 2008; Amit R. Paley, “US: 60 Insurgents Killed in Offensive,” *Washington Post*, January 15, 2008; *Aswat al-Iraq*, “3 Civilians Wounded in IED Blast in Diyala,” Translated from Arabic, March 3, 2008.

<sup>15</sup> Eric Hamilton, “December Operations in Muqdadiyah,” Backgrounder #18, Institute for the Study of War, January 8, 2008; Eric Hamilton, “Operation Raider Harvest: Establishing Lasting Security in Northern Diyala,” Backgrounder #19, Institute for the Study of War, January 18, 2008.

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<sup>16</sup> Multi-National Corps – Iraq Press Release 20080119-04, “ISF, CLCs Take Lead in AQI Clearing Operation,” January 19, 2008.

<sup>17</sup> Multi-National Corps – Iraq Press Release 20080124-07, “Iraqi Army, MND-North Soldiers Open Key Route Between Baghdad and Baqubah,” January 24, 2008; Pfc. Kirby Rider, “U.S., Iraqi Commanders Discuss ISF Success in Diyala Province,” *Northwest Guardian*, February 14, 2008.

<sup>18</sup> Wesley Morgan, *Multi-National Force – Iraq, Order of Battle*, Institute for the Study of War, January 2008.

<sup>19</sup> Pfc. Kirby Rider, “U.S., Iraqi Commanders Discuss ISF Success in Diyala Province,” *Northwest Guardian*, February 14, 2008.

<sup>20</sup> Multi-National Corps – Iraq Press Release 20080124-07, “Iraqi Army, MND-North Soldiers Open Key Route Between Baghdad and Baqubah,” January 24, 2008; Pfc. Kirby Rider, “U.S., Iraqi Commanders Discuss ISF Success in Diyala Province,” *Northwest Guardian*, February 14, 2008.

<sup>21</sup> Multi-National Corps – Iraq Press Release 20080119-03, “MND-North Soldiers Capture Baqubah Extremist Cell Leader,” January 19, 2008.

<sup>22</sup> Multi-National Force – Iraq Press Release A080119a, “Coalition Disrupts al-Qaeda Networks Across Iraq,” January 19, 2008.

<sup>23</sup> Multi-National Force – Iraq Press Release A080128b, “Coalition Forces Target al-Qaeda in Central Iraq,” January 28, 2008.

<sup>24</sup> Multi-National Force – Iraq Press Release A080123a, “Coalition Disrupts al-Qaeda in Iraq Operating in Diyala,” January 23, 2008.

<sup>25</sup> Multi-National Force – Iraq Press Release A080129b, “Coalition Forces Target al-Qaeda in Iraq Networks,” January 29, 2008.

<sup>26</sup> Multi-National Force – Iraq Press Release A080208c, “Coalition Disrupts al-Qaeda in Central Iraq,” February 8, 2008.

<sup>27</sup> Multi-National Corps – Iraq Press Release 20080213-17, “ISOF, SOF Detain Extremists in Baghdad, Baqubah,” February 13, 2008.

<sup>28</sup> Multi-National Force – Iraq Press Release A080217c, “Coalition Forces Target Weapons Facilitation Networks,” February 17, 2008.

<sup>29</sup> Kimberly Kagan, “From ‘New Way Forward’ to New Commander,” Iraq Report #1, Institute for the Study of War, March 1, 2007.

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