



Weekly Iraq .Xplored report

15 April 2017

Prepared by Risk Analysis Team, Iraq

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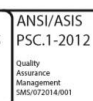
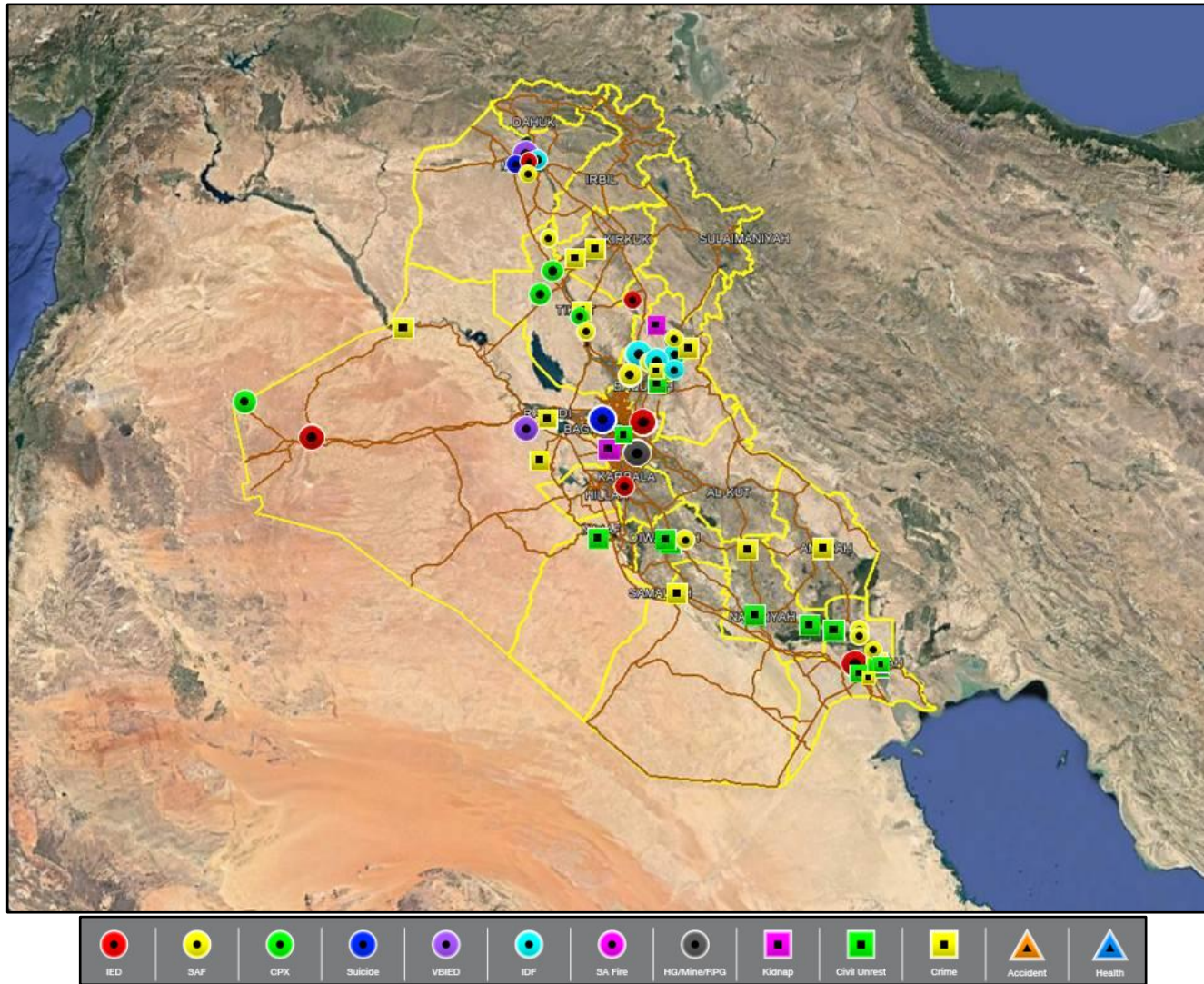


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ACTIVITY MAP



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OUTLOOK**Short term outlook**

- As the Mosul operation continues, there is a heightened risk of high-profile attacks in permissive areas across Iraq including Baghdad, Salah ad Din and Diyala, as IS retains intent to increase sectarian tensions and force a redeployment of ISF resources away from Mosul. This is underlined by recent VBIED attacks in Shia-dominated areas of Baghdad City as well as multiple lower level IEDs, especially in eastern Baghdad. With ethno-sectarian tensions currently heightened in Kirkuk, there is also an increased possibility of high-profile attacks in Kirkuk City, although IS capability to conduct such an attack is assessed as less than in those areas with a majority Sunni demographic. An increase in attacks can also be expected in eastern Anbar, in particular the cities of Ramadi and Fallujah, as evidenced by recent high-profile attacks in the region.
- The security footprint and other local factors in the south, particularly in Baghdad, will severely constrain IS ability to mount sustained complex attacks of the sort seen in the north and the west of the country, though the threat from low-level IED and SAF attacks remains. There may be an increased level of ISF deliberate actions to disrupt and deter insurgent and criminal activity during the Mosul operation, especially in the northern areas of Baghdad province.

Medium to long term outlook

- In the absence of concerted engagement with the Sunni population in areas currently under IS control, it is possible that the post-IS security environment will be characterized by sectarian flash points between radical Sunni tribes and Shia militia groups especially in Nineveh province and western Kirkuk. Limited reporting has already indicated displaced Sunni families being advised or directed to leave Kirkuk. It is almost certain that in areas retaken by ISF, an insurgency will be established by Sunni insurgents including remaining IS affiliates.
- Low-level incidents related to criminality, personal disputes and tribal tensions are likely to continue in Basra and the southern provinces in general. This is assessed to be facilitated by large segments of the security forces currently being involved in operations to retake IS-held areas of the country. In the long-term, there will be tensions driven by the return of Shia militia factions, who will expect material and social rewards for the contribution in the national campaign against IS.
- While the Mosul operation has refocused attention away from Abadi's reform program, the risk of politically motivated demonstrations against corruption in front of government institutions remains extant.

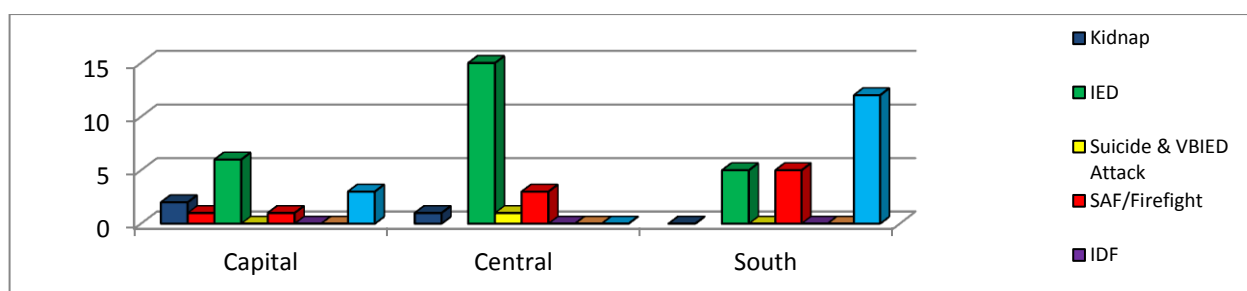
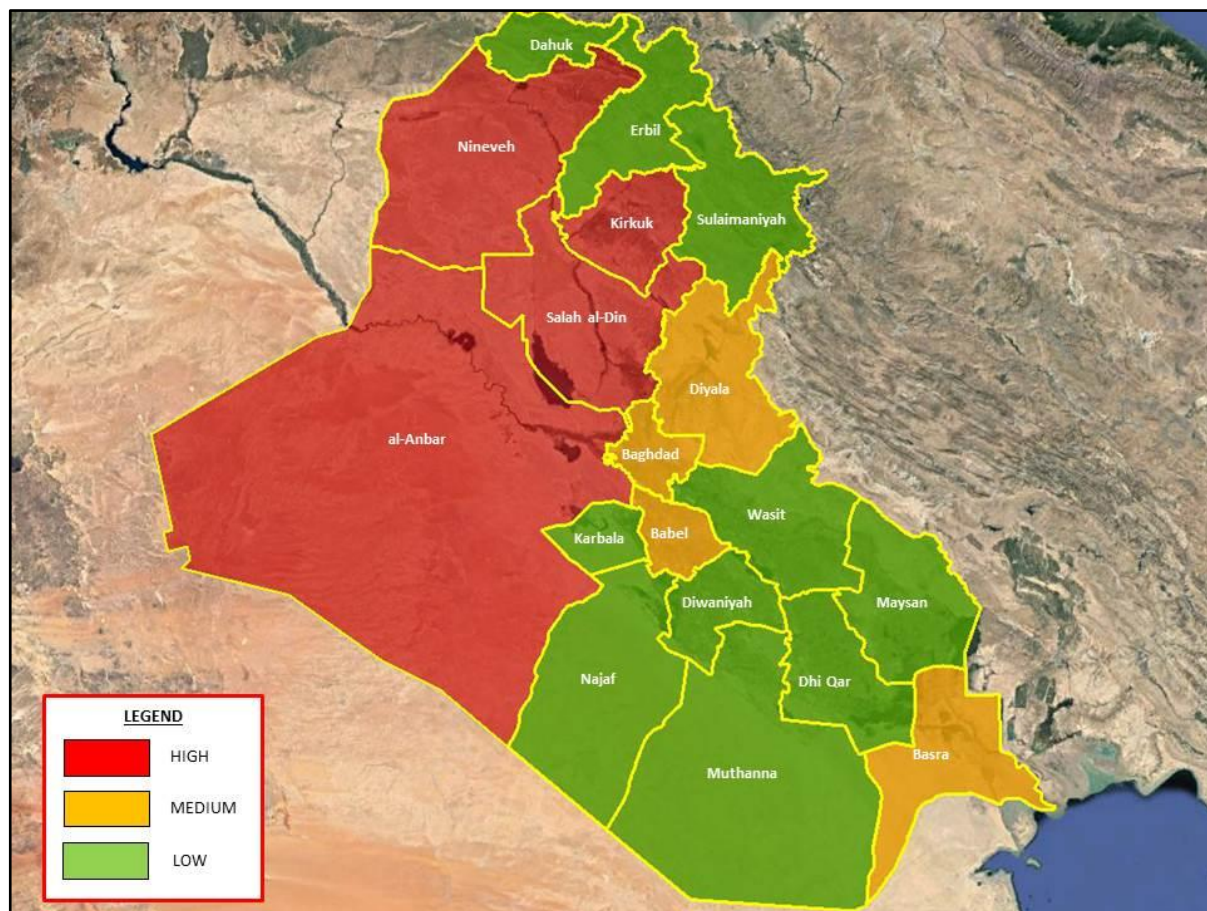
SIGNIFICANT EVENTS**Iraqi Government responds to Turkish Operation Tigris Shield threat**

Sa'd al-Hadithi, spokesman for the office of Prime Minister Haydar al-Abadi, said that "the Iraqi authorities will not allow any foreign party, whether it is Turkey or any other country, to carry out ground operations on Iraqi soil" in response to "recent statements by Turkish Minister of Foreign Affairs Mevlut Cavusoglu on Turkey's plans to launch a military operation against the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) in Sinjar.

Significant senior losses affecting IS command and control in Mosul

In a statement on April 12, an Iraqi police official, Lt-Col Imad Khalaf told reporters that IS's centralised command and control with the areas of Mosul under their control was now severely degraded due to the attrition of senior leaders and commanders during the ongoing battle to liberate the remaining areas of the city. Khalaf reported that the majority of IS's senior leadership within the city have either been eliminated or have fled the city, adding that remaining forces are not being directed by third and fourth tier leaders, whose capability is limited.

THREAT MAP



LATEST DEVELOPMENTS

Mosul Update

Tactical Update

Reporting this week reads similarly to the previous period; Iraqi Federal Police (IFP) and Mol Rapid Response units continue to report advances through Old Mosul to the al-Noori Mosque, while CTS forces have made progress in the west of the city. However, observers have reported that the Old City offensive had stalled amidst heavy casualties, and that a fresh offensive launched on April 11 also effectively ground to a halt in short order.

In the west of what is now effectively the west Mosul enclave, ISF and PMU units have advanced west from Badoush and have captured five towns, almost reaching the west of the city. Further west, airstrikes have continued to target Tal-Afar, and PMU have repelled attacks on positions near Tal Afar, including the PMU-held airbase to the south, reporting three VBIEDs destroyed.

Security

Iraq says 500 IS militants killed in west Mosul so far

More than 500 Islamic State militants have been killed in western Mosul since the start of a military operation to dislodge the group from there, an Iraqi security official said yesterday. Iraqi Federal Police Chief Lt-Gen Raed Jawdat said Iraqi aircraft had killed 512 IS militants, including 77 snipers, since the fresh offensive in the western side of Mosul started on 19 February. Jawdat added that the federal police had recaptured 61 areas in western Mosul, freed 260,000 residents from IS's grip, and returned 12,000 others to their homes. Jawdat also said the federal police had destroyed 256 booby-trapped cars and 162 motorcycles. He noted that his forces had also provided 43,750 food baskets to the displaced people in western Mosul.

UNHCR announce opening of new displaced camp in Hammam al-Alil

On April 12, the United Nations Refugee Agency (UNHCR) announced the opening of a new camp for displaced Iraqis in Hammam al-Alil, some 25 kilometres south of Mosul. The new camp Hammam al-Alil 2 has capacity to shelter more than 15,000 individuals in 2,500 tents. According to the statement, a second phase of the camp should be completed soon increasing capacity to accommodate another 30,000 people.

IS in Mosul cut off militants' ears

In what is being described as an indication of their increased desperation, Beirut-based, Iraq-focused Al-Sumaria TV reported on April 11 that IS has cut off the ears of 33 of its militants after fleeing the ongoing fighting in Mosul. The report commented that this is a new discipline measure used by the group; previously those militants fleeing the battle area have been summarily executed. That IS is resorting to this new form of discipline is indicative of the fact that they have an ever decreasing pool of fighters to call on, according to Al-Sumaria.

US general sees progress by Iraqi forces in Mosul

Iraqi forces are making progress in their offensive to expel IS from Mosul but face a 'very complicated' urban battle as the militants hide in mosques, homes and hospitals, according to an April 12 interview with General Joseph Martin, head of ground forces for the US-led coalition. Martin reiterated that government forces have retaken much of west Mosul since January but have been trying since then to dislodge the militants from the densely populated Old City. He declined to say whether the militants would be defeated within weeks or months.

UN damage assessment shows extensive destruction in western Mosul

The most recent assessment from UN-Habitat, the United Nations Human Settlements Programme, confirms that extensive damage has occurred in western Mosul. More than 1140 housing sites have been destroyed across the city. Using satellite imagery and information from local researches, UN-Habitat confirms that damage to houses is two and a half times greater in western Mosul than in eastern districts. One-third of residential damage is reported in Al Jadeda neighbourhood in western Mosul.

IOHR calls on ISF to establish safe corridors for fleeing civilians from Mosul

The Iraqi Observatory for Human Rights (IOHR) states that civilians trying to flee from IS-controlled areas in and around Mosul, particularly during intense fighting between the ISF and IS, have no safe escape routes, as all corridors out of the city are subject to IS attack. According to IOHR statistics, at least 25 civilians were killed since 1 April 2017 on Abu Zeayan street in the right coast of Mosul, considered one of the 'safe corridors' provided by the Iraqi Government Forces. The IOHR report stated that while ISF are making a concerted effort to help civilians flee from combat zones, they continue to face dangers from IS members who shoot at anyone trying to escape.

ISF report that senior IS religious leader killed in Mosul air strike

One of the most senior religious leaders in IS has been killed in west Mosul, according to a statement released by Iraqi forces on April 14. Abdullah al-Badrani, also known as Abu Ayoub al-Atar, reportedly died in an air strike by the US-led coalition on April 13. Al-Badrani issued many of the group's dictates, leading to the torture, death and sexual abuse of civilians. The statement reported that al-Atar was infamous in Mosul and beyond for the religious decisions edicts (fatwas) he issued that permitted the barbaric treatment of civilians.

Civilian casualties in Iraq and Syria mount amid intensifying airstrikes

While Western media attention has been focused on the tragic deaths of about 85 Syrian civilians killed in a poison gas attack in north-western Syria on April 4, as many as 3,400 civilians are estimated to have died in air strikes in Syria and Iraq conducted by the US-led coalition and Russian forces in March. As the campaigns to oust Islamic State militants from their strongholds in Mosul, in northern Iraq, and Raqqa, in eastern Syria continue to intensify, March saw the highest number of civilian deaths likely attributed to the air campaign over the last three years, according to a new report by Airwars, a UK-based group of investigative journalists and volunteers that tracks the number of civilian casualties in Syria and Iraq.

Political**Iraq cautiously turning against Assad after chemical attack**

In the aftermath of last week's suspected chemical attack on the rebel-held Syrian town, some reports have stated that the Iraqi authorities appear to be distancing themselves from the regime of Bashar al-Assad. The Shia-led Iraqi government issued a carefully-worded statement on April 7, condemning the Khan Sheikhun attack - a first in the six-year Syrian conflict. The statement called for an international investigation to identify the perpetrator but also warned against rushed interventions, likely referring to US President Donald Trump's retaliatory attack on Shayrat airbase.

Iraqi PM's weekly address covers talks with the US and support for displaced

In his weekly news conference aired by state-sponsored Al-Iraqia TV on April 11, Iraqi Prime Minister Haider al-Abadi covered noted that a senior US delegation comprising the national security and counter terrorism advisor and the US chief of staff held talks with the prime minister in Baghdad on April 11, which Abadi said signalled a positive attitude towards Iraq. Asked if both sides agreed on establishing any US bases in Iraq after IS is defeated, the prime minister said no agreement was reached in this regard, and such national issue would be discussed in public.

Abadi also reaffirmed that the Iraqi government was working to serve the needs of the displaced not only in liberated areas but in all parts of Iraq, as well as combating corruption and addressing the financial crisis. He pointed out that more than 100,000 displaced Iraqis have returned to Nineveh and hailed the generous donations by Iraqis as well as the support provided to the Iraqi fighters who battle IS.

Sadr warns that Al-Assad risks the same fate as Muammer Qadhafi

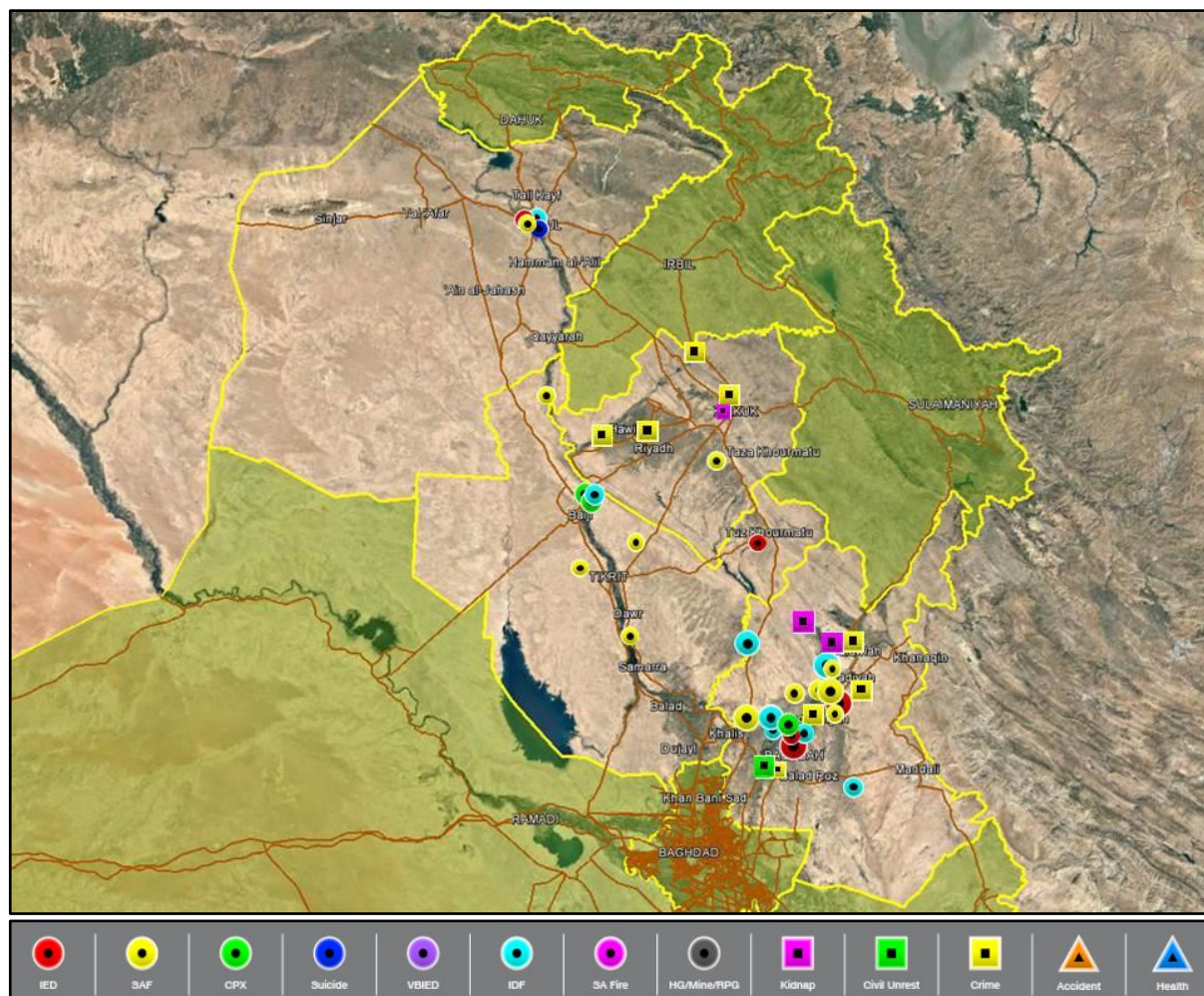
In a statement on April 11, Iraqi cleric Moqtada al-Sadr warned Syrian President Bashar Al-Assad that he risked suffering the same fate as slain Libyan leader Muammer Qadhafi if he did not step down. Sadr who condemned the recent reported use of chemical weapons by Assad's forces against civilians, issued this new statement which again openly challenged the Syrian president's legitimacy. In his statement Sadr reported that he has urged Assad to step down in order to escape the same fate of Qadhafi who was killed by rebels after his capture in 2011.

Foreign Affairs**US approves Iraqi request for pilot training and logistical support**

The US State Department has approved a request from Iraq for pilot and maintenance training, contractor logistical support for trainer aircraft, and base support. According to a statement released by the US Defence Security Cooperation Agency, the Government of Iraq has requested a possible sale of pilot training; maintenance training; and contractor logistical services support for C-172, C-208, and T-6 aircraft for up to five years to include contractor aircraft modification; repair and spare parts; publications; aircraft ferry; and miscellaneous parts, along with training base operation support, base life support, security, construction, and other related elements of program support. The estimated total program value is \$1.06 billion.

Economy**Egypt approves deal to import oil from Iraq**

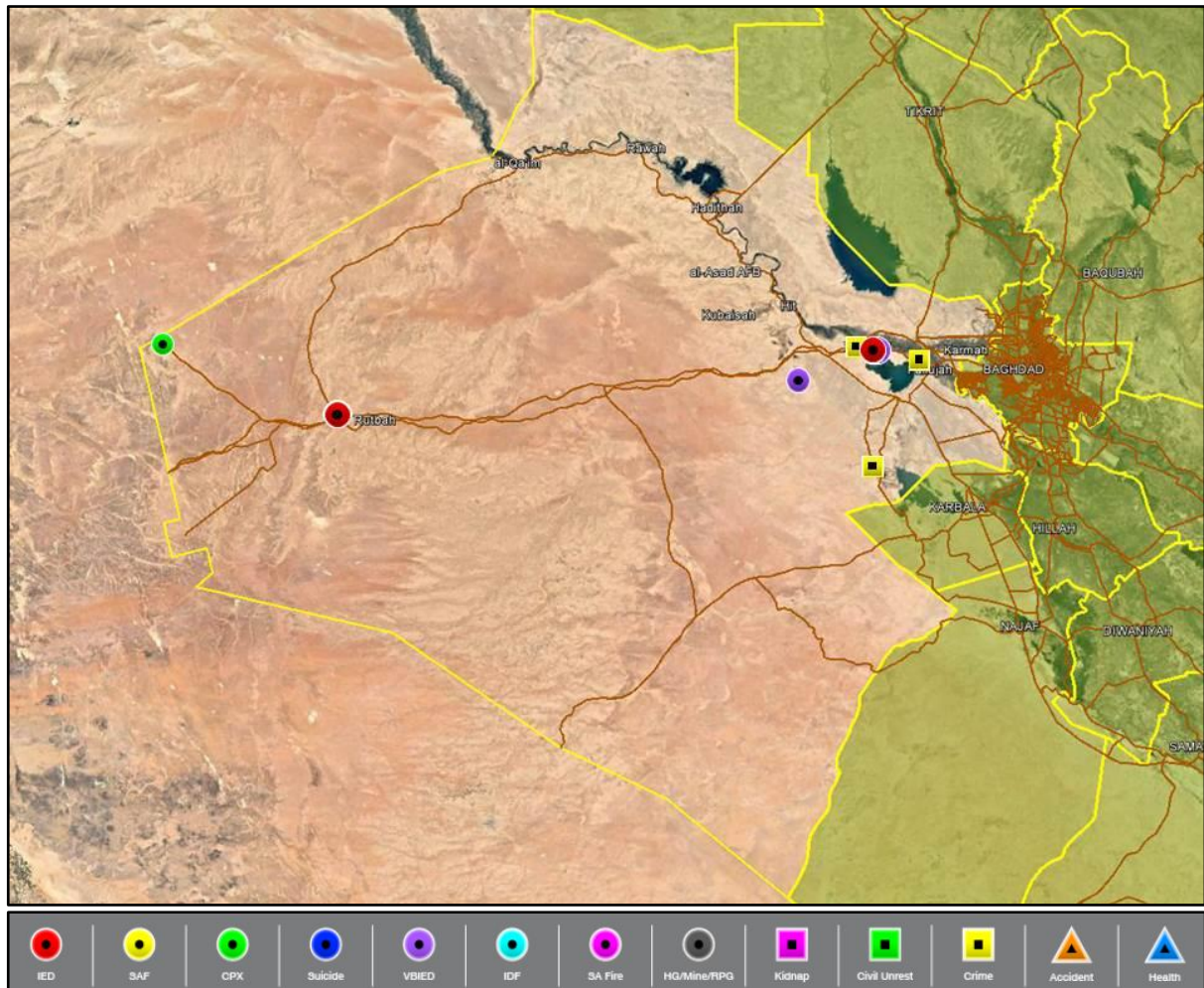
The Egyptian Petroleum Minister, Tareq al-Mulla has stated that the Egyptian cabinet, during its meeting on 10 April under Prime Minister Sherif Ismail, approved buying oil from Iraq and clinching a deal to import about million barrels monthly, with a total of 12 million barrels annually. Mulla added that the first oil shipment is envisaged to arrive by early May. The container ship can accommodate up to million barrels, Mulla said, noting that this is the first cooperation with Iraq in the field of direct importation of crude oil. He added that the contract will be shortly inked by the Egyptian General Petroleum Corporation (EGPC) and Iraq Petroleum Company (IPC). He further said that talks on importing the Iraqi oil started last October during his visit to Iraq.

WEEKLY OPERATIONAL ASSESSMENT**Countrywide Military/Security Situation****Northern Provinces (Kirkuk/Salah al-Din/Diyala)**

Following the high-profile events of last week, activity in Salah ad-Din has returned to its steady pattern of IS conducting harassing attacks against PMU positions along the Hamrin feature and seeking to infiltrate into urban centres. PMU operations have also been relatively subdued following clearance operations in the wake of the preceding week's suicide attacks. However, several IS fighting positions were reportedly destroyed in a PMU rocket bombardment in al- Zawiya near the Makhoul mountains north of Bayji. A coalition strike also targeted IS positions in the area.

In Kirkuk's Hawija province, IS have reportedly killed 12 people for cooperating with ISF. In a separate incident, they are understood to have killed two more people and broken the legs of five others for similar acts of 'collusion'. In what may have precipitated the punishments, a popular reprisal was also reported; three militants reportedly killed and another four abducted by gunmen in the centre of the district.

Activity in Diyala has this week been characterized by IDF and shooting attacks throughout Abu Saida, Muqdadiyah Hamrin and Balad Ruz. Six mortar attacks were reported, totaling approximately 20 rounds. Most resulted in no casualties, though one saw three people including a child injured. An IDF initiated complex attack in Abu Saida also resulted in an ISF member suffering a gunshot wound.

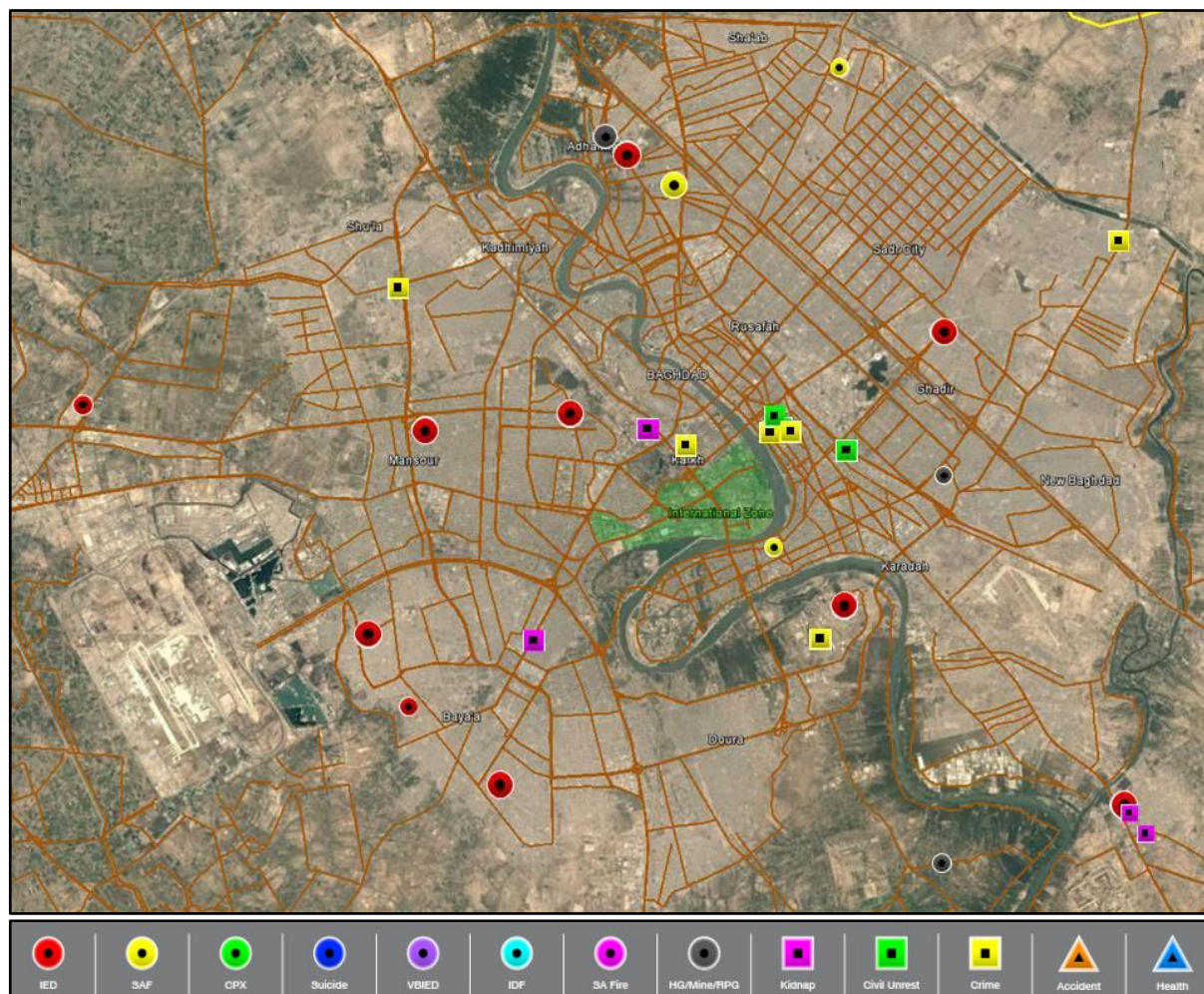
Anbar Province

IS have continued to target urban centres and ISF with IEDs. Stand-out incident in this period include a lorry bomb detonation near Ramadi and a complex attack on the al-Walid border crossing with Syria.

On April 9, Iraqi army and Sunni Tribal Fighters supported by helicopters managed to repel an IS complex attack on the al-Walid border crossing in Anbar province. Two VBIEDs were reported destroyed and 'two dozen' militants killed.

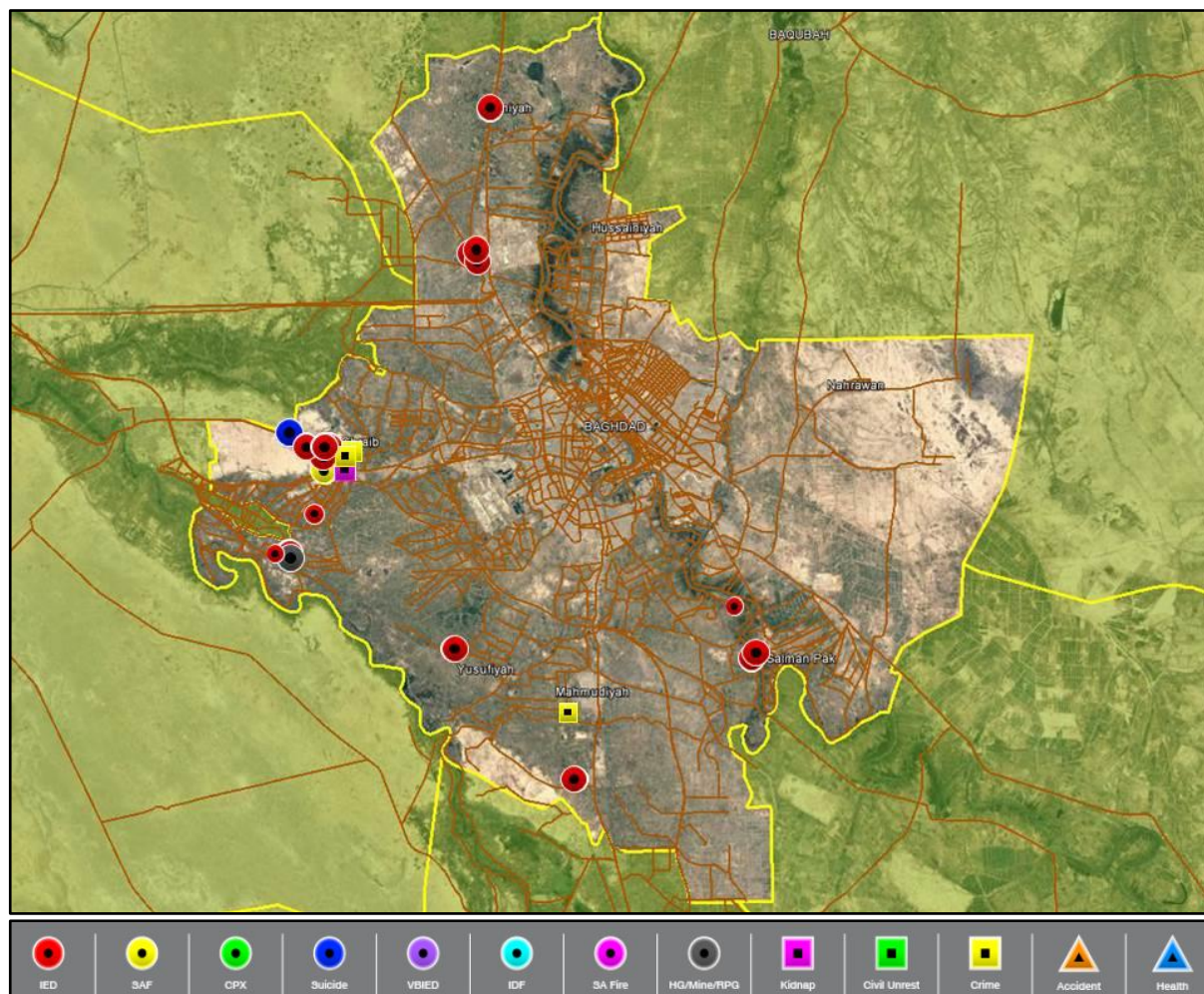
April 12 saw a lorry bomb detonate in Abu Jir village, 35 kilometers southwest of Ramadi, killing seven civilians and injuring four others including women and children. Reporting indicates that the VBIED was intended to target Ramadi and detonated prematurely while static outside a civilian residence.

Two other IED incidents were reported; a device near Rutbah that may have targeted a civilian vehicle injured four people, while what appears to have been a legacy device killed a civilian EOD contractor and wounded two others when it functioned in a hospital in Ramadi.

Capital Region (Baghdad City)

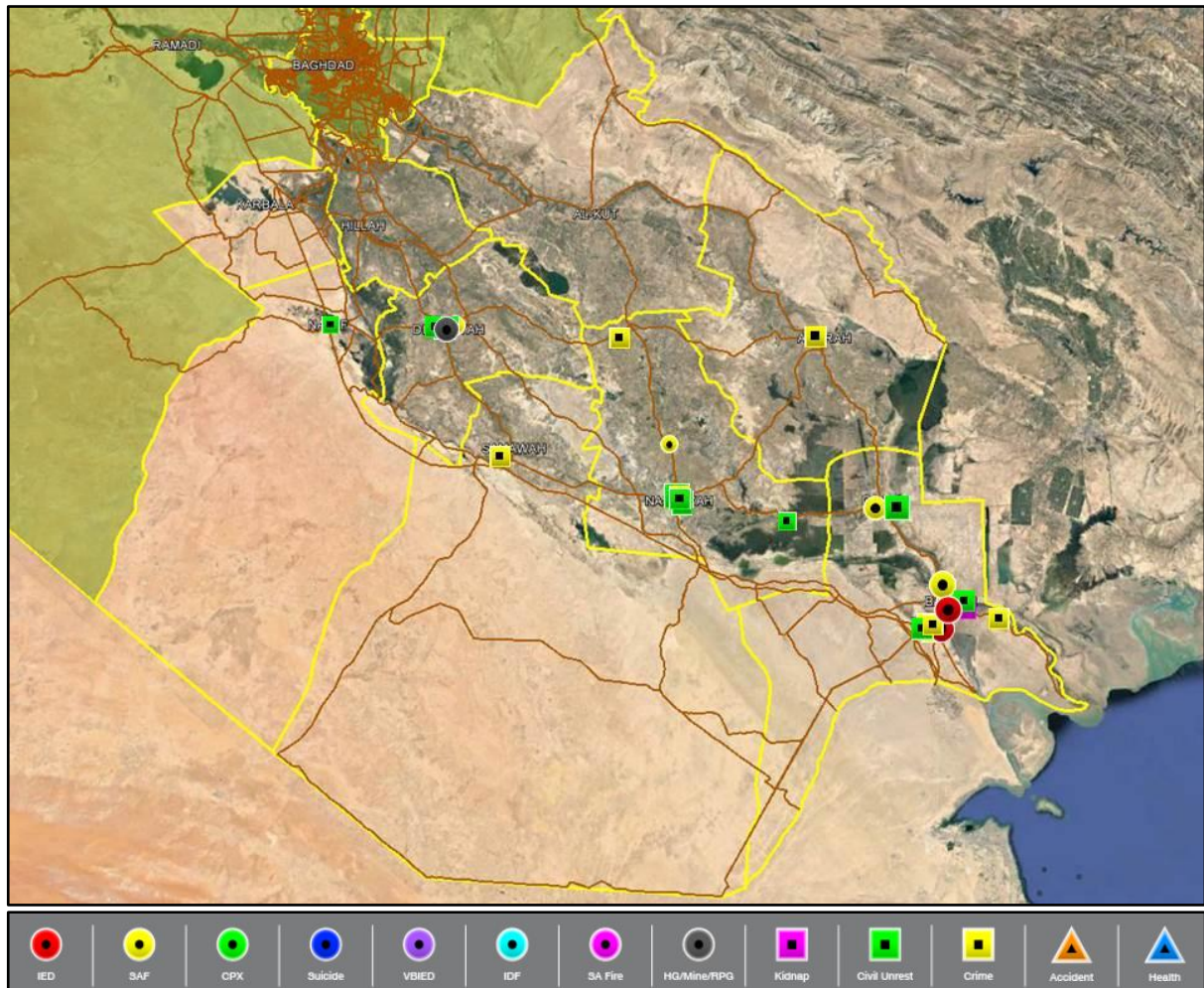
This week was unusually quiet in terms of low-level IED activity, with no IED detonations reported for several days at the start of the week, and only six attacks reported overall throughout the week, four of which were in West Rashid. In total, IEDs in Baghdad city killed three and wounded 20.

Looking ahead, ISF are expected to enact road closures around Khadimiya during commemorations of the anniversary of Imam Must al-Kadhimi's death. Road closures for the pilgrimages will commence on April 17, with the majority of closures completed by April 19. Pilgrims are expected to commence travel to Kadhimiya between 17-19 April, with the anniversary occurring on 22/23 April. Significant disruption is to be expected on remaining routes around the city.

Capital Region (Baghdad Belts)

The wider province saw a higher number of incidents than the capital, but it remained in line with historical trends with only low-level IED activity and criminality reported. Additionally, joint security forces launched a military operation, under the title al-Sayl al-Jaref (The Torrent), in Tarmiyah, north of Baghdad on April 8, stating that the forces also started to close entrances and exits to and from the district. Search operations were also conducted in the areas of al-Hawra and al-Khan, and in Abu Ghraib to the west.

In total, 26 IEDs were reported around the province, of which nine were disarmed and six resulted in fatal strikes. In total, 7 people were killed and 48 injured in 15 detonations around the province. Additionally, two IS suicide bombers wearing explosive vest were encircled and killed in al-Maqaleh west of Abu Ghraib district. No further casualties were reported.

Southern Provinces

In the south this week incidents were in-line with established trends, characterized again by low-level violence associated with criminality and tribal disputes.

Basra saw further instances of tribal violence, with one person killed and three injured in clashes in al-Shafi, north of the city. Within Basra city, a head teacher reportedly dissuaded armed kidnappers from taking a student whose family was embroiled in a tribally motivated feud with the would-be abductors. Several low-yield IED and grenade attacks have been reported against local businesses.

A minor disruption was reported on the morning of April 12 at one of the entrances to Zubayr oil field. During the protest a small number of workers burned tyres over employment issues and tried to restrict access to the area. The matter was reportedly resolved quickly by management and workers, and the protest ended at 0710hrs with roughly 20 OPF remaining in place.

Public services and corruption have again catalyzed demonstrations throughout the south. At various points throughout the week demonstrators gathered in Basra and Nasiriyah to oppose the mooted privatization of the electricity supply. Dhi Qar provincial council officials are reported to have increased security around the municipal building amid concerns protestors intended to occupy the buildings.

ACRONYM LIST

All - Area of Intelligence Interest	MoO - Ministry of Oil
AKA - Also Known As	MoT - Ministry of Transportation
AO - Area of Operations	MSR - Main Supply Route
APC - Armored Personnel Carrier	NFDK - No Further Details Known
APIED - Anti-Personnel IED	NGO - Non-Governmental Organization (aid/charity)
AQ - Al-Qaeda	NSTR - Nothing Significant To Report
AT - Anti-Tank	OCG - Organized Crime Group
ATGW - Anti Tank Guided Weapon	OPF - Oil Protection Force
AVIED - Anti-Vehicle IED	PAX - Person, Persons or Passenger
BBIED - Body Borne IED	PBIED - Person-Borne Improvised Explosive Device (UN Term)
Bde - Brigade	Pol - Point of Impact (for IDF)
Bn - Battalion	PoO - Point of Origin (for IDF)
BXP - Border Crossing Point	PSAF - Precision Small Arms Fire
CET - Convoy Escort Team	PSC - Private Security Company
CLC - Concerned Local Citizens	PSD - Private Security Detail
CoP - Chief of Police	RCIED - Remote-Controlled IED
CP - Check Point	RPG - Rocket Propelled Grenade
C-PERS - Captured Personnel	RTA - Road Traffic Accident
CPX - Complex Attack (an attack using multiple weapon systems)	SAF - Small Arms Fire
CQA - Close Quarter Assassination/Attack	SAFIRE - Surface to Air FIRE
DBS - Drive by Shooting	SF - Special Forces
Div - Division	SVBIED - Suicide Vehicle Borne IED
DoD - Department of Defense	SVEST - Suicide Explosive Worn Vest
DoS - Department of State	TCN - Third Country National
DoS - US Department of State	TCP - Traffic Control Point
ECP - Entry Control Point	Technical - An improvised weapon-mounted pick-up truck
ECP - Entry Control Point (IZ, BIAP)	TTP - Tactics, Techniques and Practices
EFP - Explosively Formed Projectile	UVIED - Under Vehicle IED
EOD - Explosive Ordnance Disposal (Bomb Squad)	UXO - Unexploded Ordnance
ERW - Explosive Remnants of War	VBIED - Vehicle Borne IED
FoM - Freedom of Movement	VCP - Vehicle Checkpoint
GoI - Government of Iraq	WIA - Wounded in Action
HCN - Host Country National	
HG - Hand Grenade	
HME - Home Made Explosive	
HMG - Heavy Machine Gun	
HVT - High Value Target	
IC - International Community	
IDF - Indirect Fire (i.e.: rockets, mortars)	
IDP - Internally Displaced Persons	
IEC - Independent Electoral Commission	
IED - Improvised Explosive Device	
IM - International Military	
IOC - International Oil Company	
IRAM - Improvised Rocket Assisted Mortar	
IRL - Improvised Rocket Launcher	
IS - Islamic State	
IVCP - Illegal Vehicle Check Point	
IVO - In Vicinity Of	
IZ - International Zone	
KIA - Killed in Action	
LN - Local National/Iraqi Civilian	
MAIED - Magnetically attached IED (aka UVIED)	
MIA - Missing in Action	
MoD - Ministry of Defense	
MoF - Ministry of Finance	
MoFA - Ministry of Foreign Affairs	
MoHE - Ministry of Higher Education	
Mol - Ministry of Interior	
MoJ - Ministry of Justice	

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