



Weekly Iraq .Xplored report

December 16, 2017

Prepared by Risk Analysis Team, Iraq

garda.com/ips



Confidential and proprietary © GardaWorld

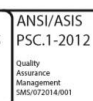


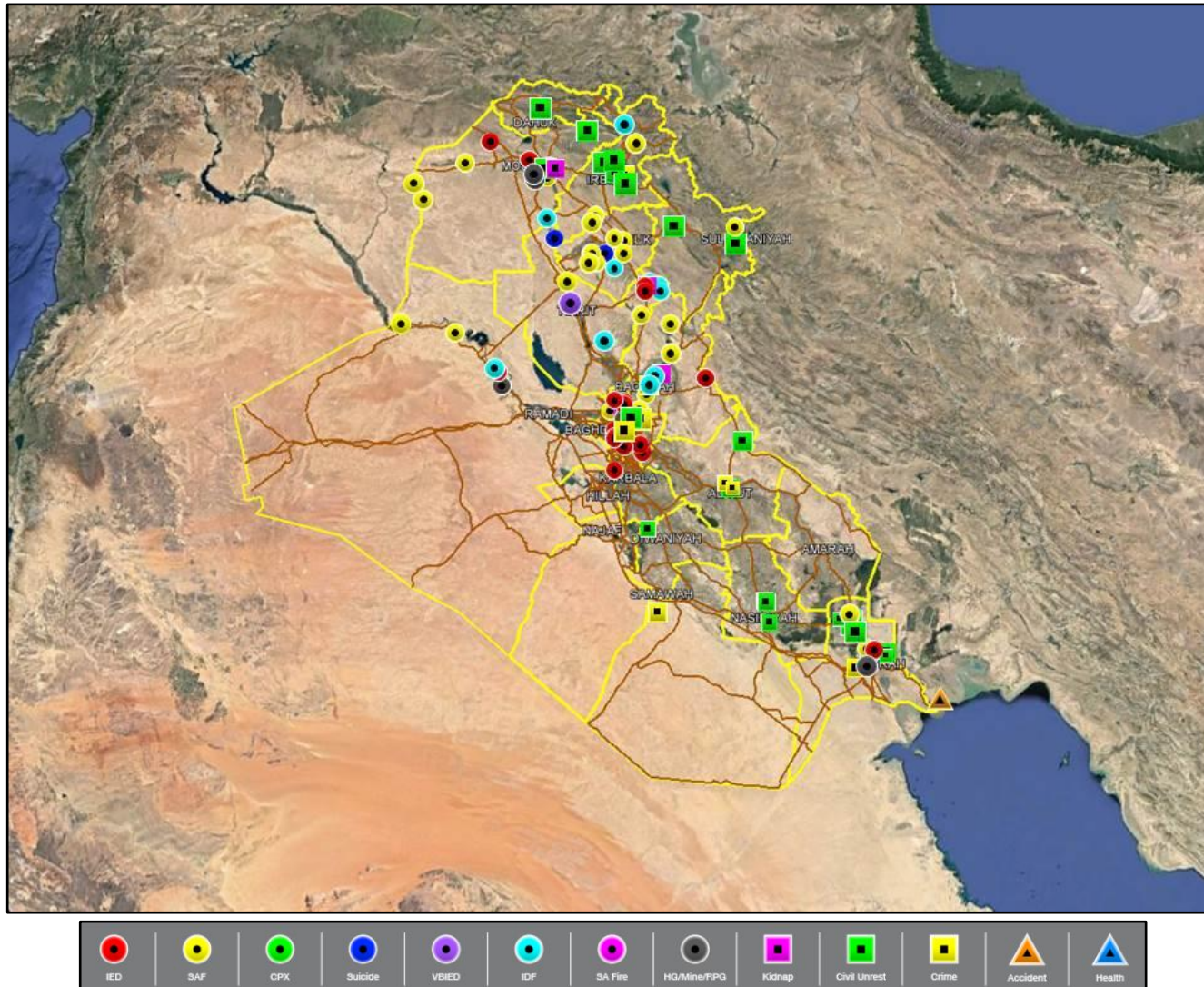
TABLE OF CONTENTS

TABLE OF CONTENTS	2
ACTIVITY MAP	3
OUTLOOK	4
Short term outlook	4
Medium to long term outlook	4
SIGNIFICANT EVENTS	5
Iraq says it has met all requirements of UN oil-for-food programme	5
Kurds deploy forces near Tuz Khourmatu amid military tensions	5
Three major Shia militias start initiative to disarm	5
THREAT MATRIX	5
LATEST DEVELOPMENTS	6
Political	6
Security	7
Economy	9
WEEKLY OPERATIONAL ASSESSMENT	10
Countrywide Military/Security Situation	10
ACRONYM LIST	18
GARDAWORLD INFORMATION SERVICES	19
GARDAWORLD	19

This report is an abridged version of GardaWorld Weekly Iraq .Xplored December 16, 2017. To subscribe to the full versions of the daily/weekly Iraq .Xplored reports, or for enquires relating to other GardaWorld services, please contact daniel.matthews@garda.com

Disclaimer: The information and opinions expressed in this Report are the views of GardaWorld and constitute a judgment as at the date of the Report and are subject to change without notice. The information and opinions expressed in this Report have been formed in good faith on the basis of the best information and intelligence available at the time of writing, but no representation or warranty, express or implied, is made as to its accuracy, completeness or correctness. GardaWorld accepts no liability arising out of or in connection with the comments made or the information set out in this Report and the reader is advised that any decision taken to act or not to act in reliance on this Report is taken solely at the reader's own risk. In particular, the comments in this Report should not be construed as advice, legal or otherwise.

ACTIVITY MAP



Confidential and proprietary © GardaWorld

[3]

garda.com/ips

OUTLOOK**Short term outlook**

- Tensions remain following the Kurdish independence referendum and the ISF move into disputed territories occupied by Peshmerga. Armed clashes have occurred between Peshmerga and ISF, but only over limited territorial objectives of economic significance. The area of Tuz Khourmatu remains of significant concern however, with reports of Kurdish resistance groups being formed in order to protect the indigenous Kurdish population against alleged acts of violence against them by Shia militias. Meanwhile, acts of low-level violence, intimidation and provocation have been reported in Nineveh, Kirkuk, Diyala, Babel and Wasit. Baghdad and Erbil also remain in a 'standoff' over Baghdad's demands for access to the border crossings with Turkey in northern Dohuk province. While international mediation is underway, both sides currently remain entrenched in the political positions.
- ISF have now liberated Rawah, IS' last remaining territorial holding in Iraq along the Euphrates River Valley in Anbar province, and the group is also under pressure in Syria. These losses of territory will likely see IS revert back to their asymmetric warfare model of terrorist attacks, and we have already seen an uptick in retaliatory attacks by IS in Mosul, Tuz Khourmatu and Hawijah. This may also be a pre-cursor for high-profile attacks into Baghdad and the surrounding belts. However, these will likely be constrained by security footprint, particularly in Baghdad City, with attacks most likely to strike secondary or opportunistic targets in outlying districts (including checkpoints). IS still retain a degree of freedom of movement in the rural regions of Anbar and along the Syrian border area, however the final phase of the ISF operation to clear the Al-Jazeera desert triangle which straddles Nineveh, Anbar and Salah-al-Din provinces is underway and it is assessed that IS offensive capability in the region is now severely curtailed. Though recent IS suicide attack plans appear to be focusing on outlying areas, the cities of Ramadi and Fallujah are likely to be key targets for further high-profile attacks, as was seen on September 27.
- A complex attack against Shia pilgrims in western Dhi Qar on September 14 exhibits IS retains intent and capability for substantial attacks in the southern provinces. The region remains assessed as non-permissive for IS to significantly escalate operations due to demographics, with the few Sunni militant sympathizers in the region remaining isolated. Other major attacks in the south so far this year include two SVBIED attacks in Basra province on May 19 and SVIED attacks in Karbala and Babel on June 9.

Medium to long term outlook

- In the absence of a concerted effort to engage disenfranchised and radical tribes in Sunni dominated areas of the country, 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 pointed to displaced Sunni families being advised or directed to leave Kirkuk. IS is almost certain to revert to a decentralized insurgency, conducting asymmetric attacks in permissive areas of the country, which will be complemented by more substantial complex attacks in areas of Anbar, Salah ad-Din, and Nineveh.
- 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 the dispatch of large segments of the security forces to the frontlines up north. Long-term tensions are also likely to be driven by the return of Shia militia factions likely expecting material and social rewards for the contribution in the national campaign against IS.

SIGNIFICANT EVENTS

Iraq says it has met all requirements of UN oil-for-food programme

The Iraqi Foreign Ministry has said that Iraq has met all requirements by resolutions pursuant to the United Nations (UN) Iraq oil-for-food programme. The ministry applauded the step in a statement on its official website, saying: "The ministry's diplomatic efforts were successfully crowned with the UN Security Council's (UNSC) announcement that Iraq is no longer under Chapter Seven of the UN Charter of the oil-for-food programme and that it has recovered its normal status and international position".

Kurds deploy forces near Tuz Khourmatu amid military tensions

Tensions are rising between Kurdish and federal forces in disputed areas near the volatile town of Tuz Khourmatu, Salah-al-Din governorate, according to many Kurdish press outlets. The Kurds are concerned about the advance of federal government-aligned mainly Shia Popular Mobilisation Forces (PMF) in the area. There are also reports of Kurdish forces deploying in the region. A group that is thought to consist of Kurdish fighters and also former members of IS is also based in the surrounding mountainous areas, further complicating the situation.

Three major Shia militias start initiative to disarm

The leader of the Iraqi Shia Asaeb Ahl al-Haq (League of the Righteous) militia has launched a new initiative for disarming civilians nationwide. Additionally, the Secretary General of Badr Organization, Iraq's biggest Shia Muslim paramilitary group, has told his fighters to take orders from the national military and sever their relations with the group's political wing, which holds 22 seats in the Iraqi parliament. Muqtada al-Sadr has urged also his fighters to hand state-issued weapons back to the government, following Iraq's declaration of victory against the Islamic State group. Al-Sadr called on his forces to hand over some territory to other branches of Iraq's security forces within 45 days, but said his men would continue to guard a holy Shiite shrine in Samarra, north of Baghdad.

THREAT MATRIX

Region	Political	Terrorism	Militancy	Crime	K&R
KRG*	Moderate	Low	Moderate	Low	Low
North**	Moderate	High-Extreme	High	High	High
Baghdad	Moderate	Moderate	Moderate	Moderate	Moderate
Anbar	Moderate	High	High	High	High
South***	Moderate	Low	Moderate	Moderate	Moderate

Threat Scale	Minimal	Low	Moderate	High	Extreme
--------------	---------	-----	----------	------	---------

* **KRG** – Dohuk, Erbil & Sulaymaniyah

** **North** – Nineveh, Salah ad-Din & Diyala

*** **South** – Babil, Wasit, Karbala, Najaf, Qadisiyah, Dhi Qar, Muthanna, Maysan & Basra

LATEST DEVELOPMENTS

Political

Iraq says it has met all requirements of UN oil-for-food programme

The Iraqi Foreign Ministry has said that Iraq has met all requirements by resolutions pursuant to the United Nations (UN) Iraq oil-for-food programme. The ministry applauded the step in a statement on its official website, saying: "The ministry's diplomatic efforts were successfully crowned with the UN Security Council's (UNSC) announcement that Iraq is no longer under Chapter Seven of the UN Charter of the oil-for-food programme and that it has recovered its normal status and international position". The decision to remove Iraq from the Chapter VII on the oil-for-food program came after the "diplomatic successes" of Baghdad, Iraqi Foreign Ministry announced in a statement. The Iraqi Foreign Ministry quoted the Security Council that the resolution "is an important step in the restoration of Iraq's natural status and international standing, which confirms the end of Iraq's obligations under Chapter VII on the oil-for-food program after it was implemented in full".

Sunni bloc urges pull out of militias before polls

The Sunni parliamentary bloc has called for the withdrawal of pro-government militias from Iraqi cities ahead of the country's parliamentary election next year. In a statement on December 12, the Iraqi Forces Coalition (IFC) said the pull out of "unofficial forces" from the cities would ensure the holding of a "fair" election in Iraq. It underlined the "need to create a favourable atmosphere for holding election on time via the full return of the displaced people to their cities". The Sunni bloc, which holds 53 seats in the 328-member parliament, called on the government to "remove obstacles and address reasons that prevent the return of the displaced to their homes". Iraq's parliamentary election is scheduled to be held in May 2018. The Sunni bloc warned that holding the polls in May "would deprive most residents of the liberated areas from the right to participate" in the vote. Nearly four million Iraqis are estimated to have been forced to flee their homes since IS seized vast swathes of territory in northern and western Iraq in 2014. According to Iraqi government estimates, roughly half of those displaced from their homes have since returned.

Kurdistan MPs to visit Iraqi parliament for negotiations

A delegation from the regional parliament of the Kurdistan Region will visit the Iraqi parliament to urge negotiations to resolve disputes between the Erbil and Baghdad governments, according to press reports. "The delegation from the Kurdistan Region parliament [in Erbil] will visit the Council of Representatives of Iraq [in Baghdad] as an initiative towards solving of the disputes between Erbil and Baghdad [governments]" press quoted Kurdish MP Sherko Jawdat as saying in a news conference in Erbil. Jawdat, who heads the regional Kurdish parliament's Finance, Industry and Natural Resources Committee, said: "We believe that it is necessary for the KRG [Kurdistan Regional Government] to also send a delegation to the Council of Representatives of Iraq". He added that the KRG needs to urge negotiations with Baghdad to "break the ice that exists between Erbil and Baghdad and improve the financial situation [in the Kurdish region]". He did not mention the exact date set for the Kurdish parliament's delegation to visit Baghdad.

KRG to make more salary cuts in 2018 after losing Kirkuk oil

The KRG has planned to reduce the salaries of high-earners by as much as 33 percent after a dramatic drop in revenue with the loss of Kirkuk's oil fields, a government source told press. The government's income has decreased from \$565.5 million a month to \$337.4 million, a 40 percent drop. The new pay cuts will affect those who were skipped during a previous round of salary reductions as part of unpopular austerity measures in 2016. The KRG will reduce "by a percentage" salaries of the security forces, including Assyrian and police, the source said. Rank and file Peshmerga will not be affected, but commanders with high salaries will see their income cut by "33 percent." Ministers at a KRG cabinet meeting headed by Prime Minister Nechirvan Barzani on December 11 discussed forecasts for oil and non-oil revenues for the first half of 2018. The cabinet, following the discussion of two reports from the Region's Ministry of Natural Resources and the Ministry of Finances, decided

that public sector salaries will be "the priority," but did not release any revenue figures. The KRG will announce the new salary reductions in the future, the source explained.

Iraqi PM lauds Peshmerga for role in anti-IS campaign

Iraqi Prime Minister Haider al-Abadi has thanked Kurdish Peshmerga forces for their role in ending the presence IS in the country. This comes after the premier failed to mention the Peshmerga forces in his speech last week in which he declared victory over the militant group. Abadi said "the Peshmerga is part of our forces and we have saluted them as we have saluted all fighters". Speaking at a news conference on the sidelines of a climate conference in Paris, he said: "The Peshmerga has fought alongside the Iraqi army and the rest of our troops in liberating Mosul". This comes after the Peshmerga ministry criticised Abadi for not acknowledging their role in the war against IS. Kurdish parties and figures refused to take part in "victory celebrations" held in Baghdad in protest at Abadi's failure to mention the Peshmerga forces in his speech.

Meanwhile, Jabbar Yawar, the secretary-general of the Peshmerga Ministry has stated that the Peshmerga armed forces are made up of 160,000 members. The figure includes the members of the partisan Seventy Peshmerga Forces of the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK) and the Eighty Peshmerga Forces of the Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP) as well, he said. This is the first time an Iraqi Kurdish official has revealed the number of employees of the Peshmerga Ministry. Yawar also said that US troops on the ground have begun to "reform" the Peshmerga forces with the help of British and German military experts. In May, the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) approved a proposal by military experts from the US, the UK and Germany to "reform and reorganise" the Kurdish Peshmerga forces into a "unified professional army", KRG officials have said.

Security

Kurds deploy forces near Tuz Khourmatu amid military tensions

Tensions are rising between Kurdish and federal forces in disputed areas near the volatile town of Tuz Khourmatu, Salah-al-Din governorate, according to many Kurdish press outlets. The Kurds are concerned about the advance of federal government-aligned mainly Shia Popular Mobilisation Forces (PMF) in the area. There are also reports of Kurdish forces deploying in the region. A group that is thought to consist of Kurdish fighters and also former members of IS is also based in the surrounding mountainous areas, further complicating the situation.

Latest reports indicate that the Iraqi army and PMF have moved a force towards the village of Hanjira, east of Tuz Khourmatu. In response, two Peshmerga divisions, some Assyrian security and police forces, and some volunteers have been put on a state of emergency to "counter" the Iraqi forces if they advance further towards the Kurdistan Region. Another report stated that a Kurdish force has been sent to the town of Nawjul to protect the gas fields of Khor Mor. Nawjul now serves as the unofficial boundary between Peshmerga and PMF forces. Another press report stated that the First Brigade of the Sulaymaniyah Protection Force had been sent with heavy weaponry to protect the fields. It also quoted local Nawjul official Nawjal Dier Abdulla as saying that 80 per cent of residents have left the town. He went on to say: "The [PMF] force has no excuse to be here... According to their statements, they want a security belt around Tuz Khourmatu to protect it from the [Kurdish] volunteer force". Abdulla told press that the PMF have carried out "unusual" movements and more Peshmerga have been deployed in the area ready for any "undesirable" confrontation. He said they agreed at talks that: "We [Kurdish Peshmerga] will not leave the area by any means and are ready to encounter any force. We will never allow what happened in Tuz Khourmatu to be repeated here".

Iraqi Sistani urges integrating Shia fighters into army

Ayatollah Ali al-Sistani has called for integrating the Shia militias that fought alongside security forces against IS into state military bodies stating "The security system should be supported by the fighters who took part in the war against Daesh... and the possession of weapons should be exclusive to the state". Sistani's call came in his Friday sermon, which was delivered on behalf of him by Sheikh Abdel Mahdi al-Karbalaie. The influential Shia cleric hailed the "victory against terrorism", stressing the need to outline "well-studied plans to stand up to

terrorist thought and media". He called on the government to support families of the "martyrs", who lost their lives in the battle with IS. Sistani also urged the government to engage in a serious confrontation with corruption. "Corruption should be combated through legal measures rather than shows of power and [hollow] statements," he said.

Asaeb Ahl al-Haqq and Badr Corps start initiative for disarming

The leader of the Iraqi Shia Asaeb Ahl al-Haqq (League of the Righteous) militia has launched a new initiative for disarming civilians nationwide. Qais al-Khazali said that his initiative, dubbed "Start with yourself", aims to "end all forms of the militarisation of the society". "The use of all kinds of weapons, whether heavy or medium, should be limited to security forces in order to support stability and stand against all attempts to destabilise the security situation in the country" Al-Khazali said. Meanwhile, Interior Minister Qasim al-Araji thanked Al-Khazali for the initiative, describing it as "a patriotic step that aims to support the state and impose the rule of law". In related reporting, the secretary general of Badr Organization, Iraq's biggest Shia Muslim paramilitary group, has told his fighters to take orders from the national military and sever their relations with the group's political wing, which holds 22 seats in the Iraqi parliament. Hadi al-Amiri made the request in a speech delivered yesterday (December 14), further calling on his fighters to withdraw from the cities under their control. "I also call on all my brothers, the commanders of various formations, to clear cities of all signs of militarization", he said.

Al Sadr urges militias to disarm after IS defeat

Muqtada al-Sadr has urged his fighters to hand state-issued weapons back to the government, following Iraq's declaration of victory against the Islamic State group. In a speech broadcast on Iraqi television, Muqtada al-Sadr also called on his forces to hand over some territory to other branches of Iraq's security forces within 45 days, but said his men would continue to guard a holy Shiite shrine in Samarra, north of Baghdad. Al-Sadr added that all peace brigade HQ's will be utilised exclusively for humanitarian and civil services. Further, Sadr issued a series of demands including that the government launch an investigation into the fall of Mosul and the Speicher massacre, and must also prevent the participation of any PMUs in the upcoming elections.

U.S.-backed Syrian forces, Iraqi army coordinate at border

US-backed militias in Syria said they have set up a joint military centre with the Iraqi army to protect their common border region after ousting Islamic State. Commanders of the Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF), an alliance of Kurdish and Arab militias, reportedly met with Iraqi military leaders on December 10 and "discussed protecting the Syrian-Iraqi border in the region adjacent to Deir al-Zor province, and how to finally eradicate Daesh mercenaries there", the SDF said in a statement. "The two sides decided to form a joint coordination centre to guarantee the security of the border", it said.

Iraq arrests 400 Islamic State militants

The Iraqi Ministry of Interior has said that 400 IS militants were arrested during recent operations to recapture different cities and regions from the jihadist group. An Interior Ministry source told press that the arrested militants hold Arab, Asian and European nationalities. He added that "51 of the militants were Saudi nationals". A Baghdad court will handle all cases after the prosecution finishes the investigations, Iraq will notify the countries of origin of all arrested militants according to international law requisites, the source said, adding that their trial will take place only in Iraq. "These are non-negotiable judicial cases because they are involved in crimes against Iraqis"

Peshmerga have withdrawn from 95% of the disputed areas

Peshmerga forces affiliated with northern Iraq's Kurdish Regional Government (KRG) have withdrawn from some 95 percent of all territories disputed between the KRG and Baghdad, according to Nasreddin Said, the KRG's minister for disputed territories. Speaking to press, Said noted that the Peshmerga withdrawal had been carried out as a direct result of joint operations conducted in mid-October by Iraqi army, police and Hashd al-Shaabi forces. "For over three years, the Peshmerga had total control of the area from [northern Iraq's] Sinjar district to the city of Mosul to Diyala's Hanekin district", he said. "According to Iraq's constitution, joint [federal/Peshmerga]

security forces should provide security in Kirkuk and in other disputed areas but now, only the Iraqi army and the Hashd al-Shaabi are performing this function" Said added. Saying many local families had fled to KRG-controlled areas after military operations in mid-October, Said asserted that members of KRG President Masoud Barzani's Kurdistan Democratic Party now feared for their safety and were allegedly unable to return to their homes.

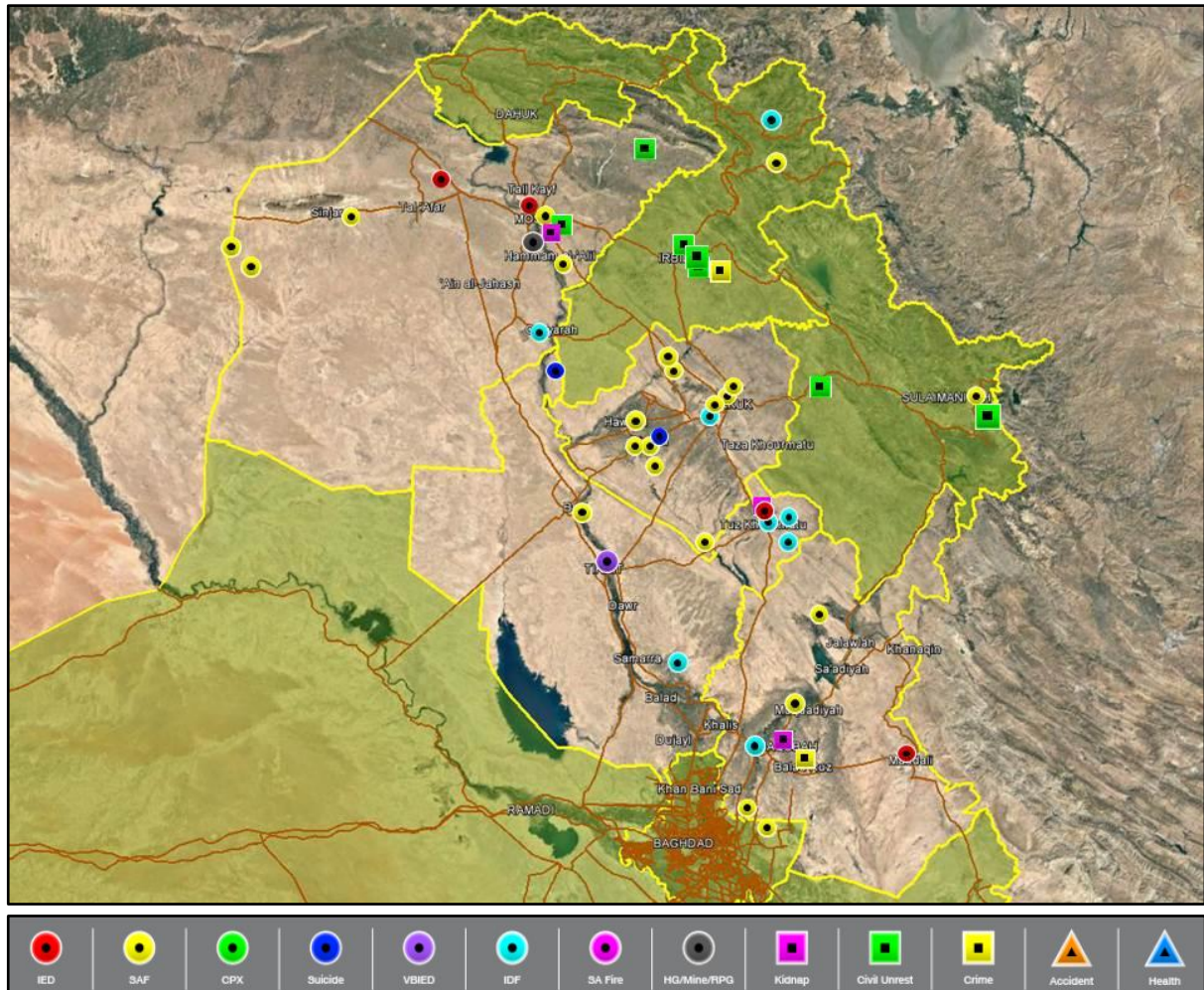
Economy

Emirates and Flydubai resume operating some flights over Iraq

Emirates and Flydubai have resumed using Iraqi airspace for flights to other countries, the Middle East airlines said on December 11, two days after Iraq declared victory in its years-long fight against Islamic state. Several airlines stopped flying over Iraq in 2014 on safety concerns because of the conflict and after a Malaysian Airlines passenger jet was shot down over Ukraine the same year. Airlines have instead been flying longer routes over Iran and other countries, increasing congestion in the region, with many airlines also avoiding Syrian airspace. The use of Iraqi airspace is likely to help Emirates and Flydubai to save on fuel costs by shortening flying hours and also reduce regional airspace congestion.

Speculation that Federal Government will reopen Kirkuk airport

The Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) may file a lawsuit in court due to economic damage facing the region's airports following a ban on international flights, a Kurdish minister said. KRG Minister of Transportation and Communication, Mawlud Bawa Murad, told press that the government has made efforts to reopen the airports to international flights but Baghdad has not responded yet. "Due to the closure of the Erbil and Sulaymaniyah airports, [the airports] have suffered great damage", the Minister said. "Besides that, many [airline] companies have been damaged too", noting that the KRG may file a lawsuit in the future. The KRG minister said last month that there was no way to reopen Erbil and Sulaymaniyah airports to international flights unless the decision was made by Baghdad.

WEEKLY OPERATIONAL ASSESSMENT**Countrywide Military/Security Situation****Northern Provinces**

In the Kurdistan region, Turkish Army artillery strikes targeted alleged PKK positions in the Kani Rash, Gali Rash, and Awdal areas of Soran District in northern Erbil Province on December 14. No casualties were reported by local sources, but Turkish sources claimed five PKK fighters were neutralized during earlier airstrikes in the region. A more significant event was reported the following morning, when a roadside IED detonated against a vehicle suspected of transporting Turkish intelligence personnel near Derishke Village Junction in the Kani Masi area of northern Dohuk. Five casualties were reported, but no fatalities were confirmed.

We have continued to see an increase in protests and demonstrations in the KR-I, particularly in the two major cities of Erbil and Sulaymaniyah, although so far this has not manifested into violent civil unrest. Subjects for protests include Prime Minister Abadi's failure to mention the Peshmerga in his "Victory Over IS" speech, the non-payment of teachers wages, and the lack of public services.

During the reporting period Turkey's Prime Minister has said that ISF have now taken control of the strategic Ibrahim Khalil border crossing point between Turkey and northern Iraq from Peshmerga forces. Speaking at the ruling Justice and Development (AK) Party's parliamentary group meeting, Prime Minister Binali Yildirim said Turkish officials will remain in control of the Habur border gate on the Turkish side of the border, but from now

on, the Ibrahim Khalil gate on the Iraqi side will be under control of Iraqi authorities. Northern Iraq's autonomous Kurdish Regional Government (KRG) handed over control to Iraqi forces following a Turkish-Iraqi joint military deployment to the border crossing on December 12. The Ibrahim Khalil border gate, also known as the Habur crossing in the Turkish sector, is the main crossing between Turkey and Iraq.

To the west, in Nineveh province, legacy IEDs continue to kill and injure civilians in Mosul and the outlying areas, while ISF continue their clearance operations, discovering a number of booby-trapped house this week, particularly in the Old Mosul district of the city. Although IS activity is still evident in Nineveh, the report this week that 53 militants surrendered to ISF is a possible indicator that morale amongst some insurgents has folded, following the defeat of IS and the dismantling of its command and infrastructure in the western Anbar desert. That being said however, throughout this week, we have seen evidence of small to medium scale IS conventional and IED attacks against ISF in Nineveh province, with "scores" of IS militants attacking a military barracks and checkpoints belonging to the PMUs in Tal Safuk, west of Mosul. Three members of the Federal Police Units (FPU) were also wounded in an IED strike against their patrol in the village of Hugnah, Zummar district, west of Mosul. ISF retaliatory strikes have also been evident; a coalition artillery fire mission was launched against unidentified targets in the Dakazil area of Qayyarah. No casualties were initially reported. Finally, it was also reported that unidentified individuals shot at an anti-IS Sunni tribal militia checkpoint in the Kharar Village area of Hammam al-Alil. At least one militiaman was reportedly killed and three others wounded. A roadside IED later detonated against a Hashd al-Shaabi vehicle while they were evacuating the casualties. No additional casualties were reported.

In Sinjar, ethno-sectarian tensions have increased in the district where clashes have been reported between Arab and Yazidi tribal fighters. The clashes erupted after gunmen opened fire on a group of Yazidi civilians in the district, prompting retaliatory action by Yazidi tribesmen; casualties have been reported on both sides but the situation calmed following intervention by ISF. It was also reported that Iraqi security forces have discovered yet another mass grave containing the bodies of at least 400 people killed by IS in Sinjar. An informed Iraqi source, who spoke on condition of anonymity, said that the victims were mainly from the Yezidi minority and had been "brutally murdered" by IS.

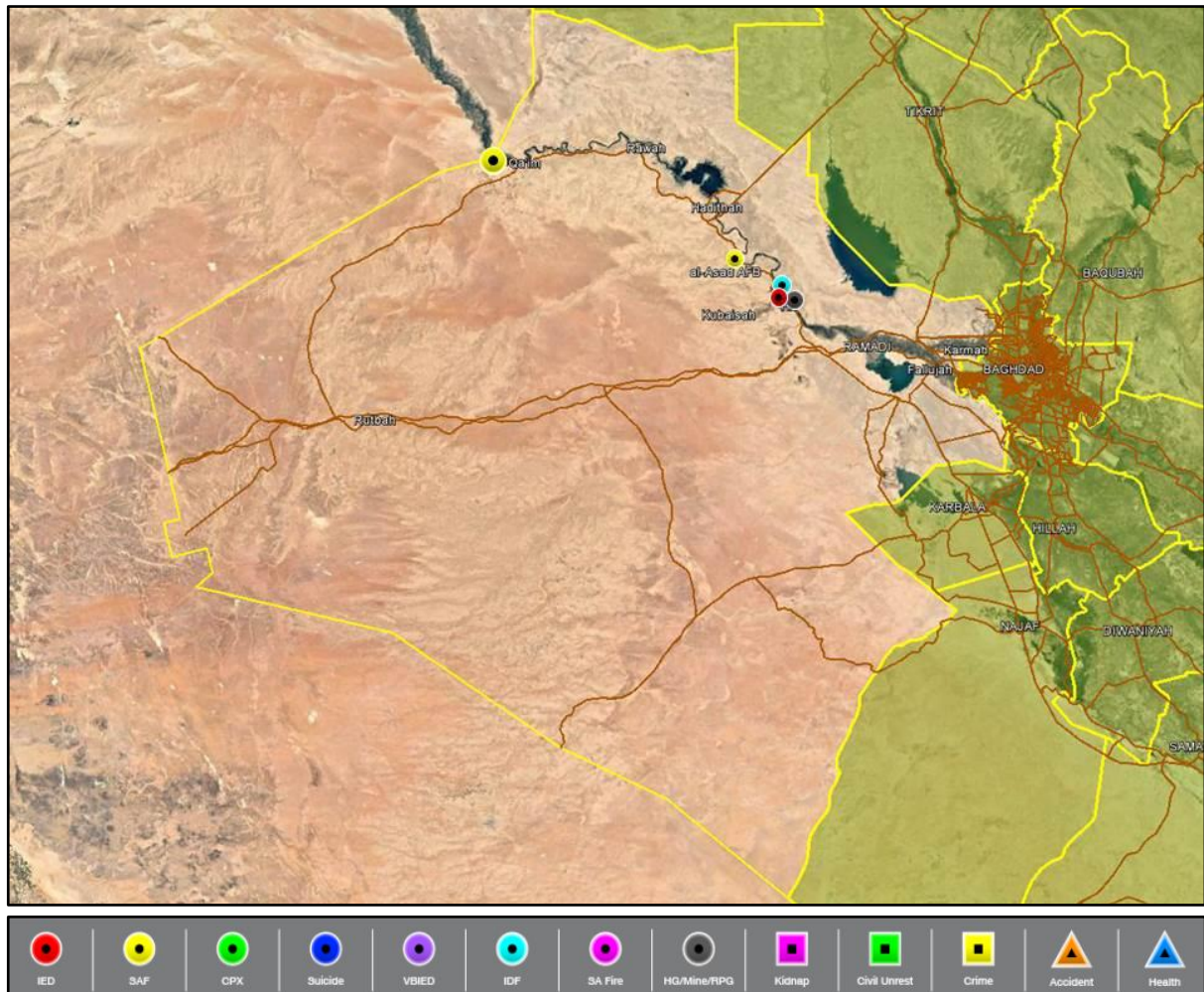
In Salah-al-Din province, the focus of activity remains the town of Tuz Khourmatu and its surrounding areas. On December 10, seven mortars impacted in the predominantly Turkmen neighbourhood of Urtah in central Tuz Khourmatu, killing a child and wounding 13 others, and two ISF members were seriously wounded in second mortar attack on the town a day later. PMF retaliated against suspected targets in the neighbouring Mountains of Hanjira. Two PMF were also reportedly killed in clashes with Kurdish gunmen near Balkana village of Tuz Khourmatu district in the east of Salah-al-Din province. On December 12, further mortar attacks were recorded, reportedly fired by Kurdish militia from the Hamrin Mountains area which again impacted on several Turkmen neighbourhoods in the centre of Tuz Khourmatu, killing two and injuring seven others. Unconfirmed reports state that ISF helicopters targeted Kurdish militia members in the villages of Dawouda and Zinana in retaliation.

This increase in kinetic activity has resulted in the deployment of extra PMF forces into Tuz Khourmatu in order to combat the Kurdish (and possibly Sunni Arab) militant groups in the areas surrounding the town. The PMU are reported planning an offensive in to the villages of Palkan, Zanana and Dawuda, announcing that it would eliminate the 'White Flag' armed group, which they claim have been targeting the militias' forces stationed in the town. While the group remains relatively unknown, local reports suggest it was formed by local fighters of various ethnicities and backgrounds in response to the Hashd al-Shaabi's takeover of the disputed area and subsequent alleged abuses of power and human rights violations. The group, previously reported as the 'Liberation Army,' is believed to be operating in the mountainous areas to the east of Tuz Khourmatu.

In Kirkuk province, the situation remains unstable. Unidentified gunmen opened fire on a headquarters belonging to the Iraqi counter terrorism forces in the Almas neighbourhood in northern Kirkuk using RPG-7s and grenades along with SAF. In a separate incident, unidentified gunmen reportedly opened fire on a passing

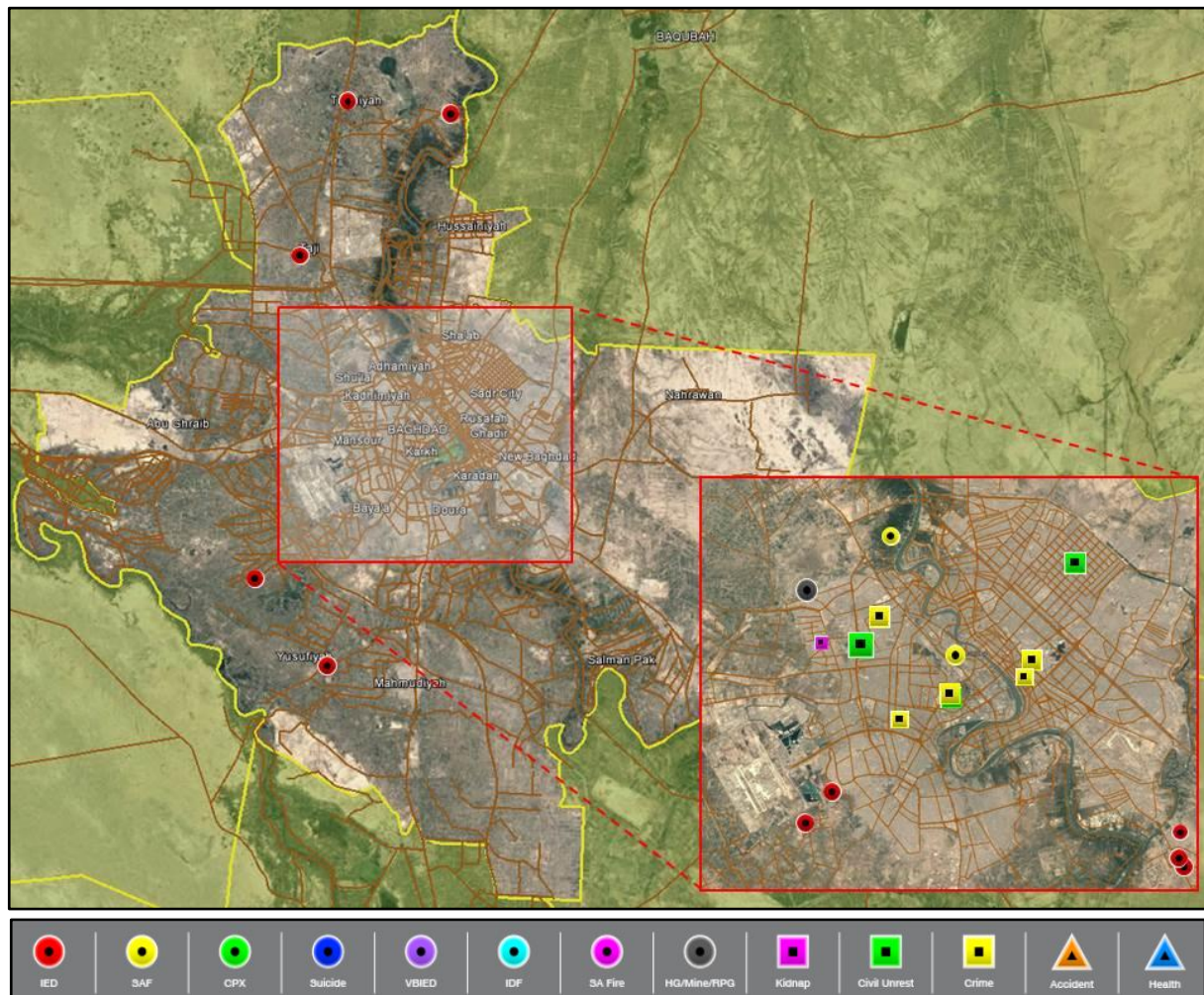
Counter Terrorism Service (CTS) patrol in Raheem Awa neighbourhood in northern Kirkuk city. Meanwhile, IS activity in Kirkuk province remains evident. Five IS suicide bombers reportedly detonated their explosive belts inside an underground bunker after being surrounded by security forces during ongoing search operations in Al-Riyadh sub-district, west of Kirkuk.

Finally, in Diyala province, the Iraqi army launched a large-scale military operation to pursue remnants of IS in north eastern Baquba city, Diyala province. "Joint security forces supported by the Air Force have launched a wide-scale military operation through two main axes in Baquba to chase Daesh cells and purge areas" Tigris Operations Commander Lt-Gen. Mozher al-Azzawi stated. He said the offensive fell within the framework of the operations to hunt down IS cells and purge the areas with the aim of achieving security and stability. Finally, civilians in a village in Diyala province are still being threatened by an Islamic State sniper for a second week according to Udai al-Khadran, the mayor of al-Khales (15 km north of Baqubah). Al-Khadran stated that "Islamic State snipers, scattered above the hills of Mubarak al-Farhan village, on the borders between Diyala and Salah-al-Din, are paralyzing civilians' movement and prevent them from reaching their farmlands".

Anbar Province

IS activity has decreased significantly since the operation to clear the Al-Jazeera desert triangle was completed last week. However, IS legacy cells continue to launch operations against ISF in Anbar province. Five civilians were injured when two separate IEDs detonated in the outskirts of Hit district, west of Ramadi, underlining the continuing threat from low-level attacks in the rural areas in Anbar. Seven militants were killed in an operation near Baghdadi, and in Hit, several militants were discovered hiding inside a tunnel complex and subsequently arrested.

Although denied later by the Iraqi Army, a PMF commander, Qatari al-Ubaidi told press that the Jazeera and Badiya Operations Command along with PMF members had begun to establish an extensive berm system between Iraq and Syria. This was reportedly in order to prevent illegal smuggling and facilitation efforts by criminal and terrorist organizations. The berm system will extend from Al Qaim all the way to Rubai'a in Nineveh, which covers approximately 200 Kilometres. It was stated that the Jazeera and Badiya Operations Command will control the first 120 Kilometres, whilst Nineveh Operations Command forces will control the remaining 80 Kilometres of the system.

Capital Region (Including Baghdad City)

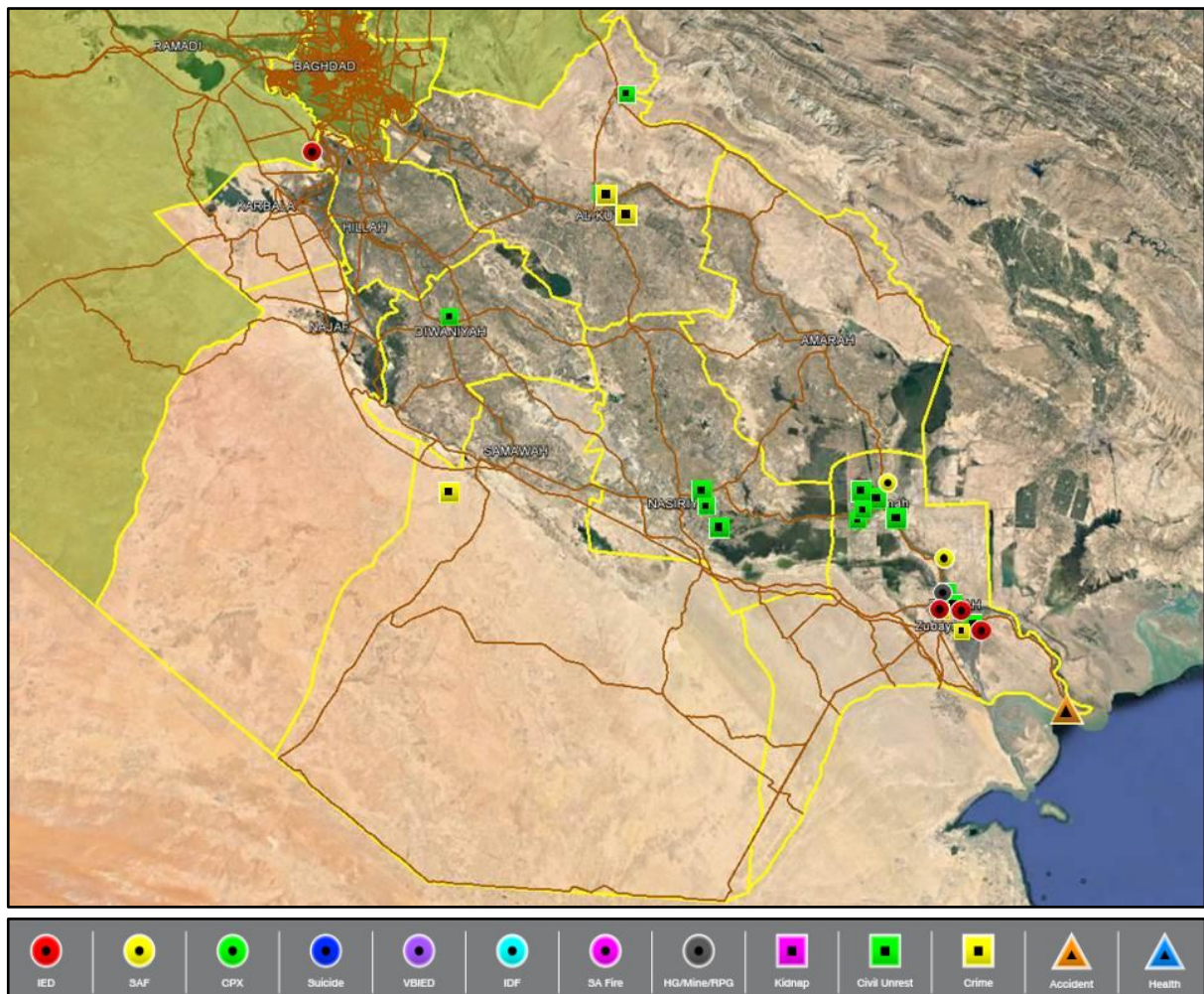
A total of four IEDs were reported to have detonated in the northern belts area this week, with Tarmiyah District the focus of two, which included an attack in the Baghdadi area of the district during which a number of PMF members were seriously injured. A number of significant finds have also been made in the northern Baghdad belts area including the find of an RPG-7 launcher, 6 rockets and unspecified quantities of explosives in an ISF operation in the Al-Hussaiwah area in Tarmiyah.

Security incidents in Baghdad city have conformed to normal patterns of low level, low-yield IED detonations and general criminal activity. A civilian was reportedly killed by a UVIED affixed to his vehicle in the Jihad neighbourhood in West Rashid, southwestern Baghdad. A civilian was also killed in a close-quarter shooting by gunmen carrying suppressed weapons in the Shatti Al-Taji area in Kadhimiyah District, northern Baghdad city. Meanwhile, Baghdad Operations Commander Major General Jalil al-Rubaie has stated that the Hayy al-Jami'a road in Mansour District, Baghdad city will be reopened after many months of being shut due to the security situation in the area. He also stated that roads across Baghdad and also the southern region are now gradually being reopened due to the improvement of security and the declining conventional threat that IS pose. He cautioned however, that the IS asymmetric threat is extant, and the reopening of roads could increase the vulnerability of some areas within the capital.

To the west of the city, five people were wounded in an IED explosion near a local market in Abu Ghraib, and ISF seized a cache of explosives and munitions containing 76 x IEDs, 3 x mortars and 9 x jerry cans full of explosive materials in an operation in al-Ma'ameer Al-Thanyah area, also in Abu Ghraib, to the west of Baghdad

City. Six SPG-9 rockets and 8 mortars were recovered during a search operation in Zaidan area, also in Abu Ghraib.

Finally, in the southern belts, we have witnessed a slight uptick in IED activity with a total of four IED detonations in the region during the period. Two people were injured in an IED detonation near shops in Jisr Diyala, southeast of Baghdad and six people were injured in an IED strike near a café, also in Jisr Diyala, two days later. An IED detonated near shops in Yusufiya, injuring three people and the Madain area south east of the city also witnessed one IED detonation, injuring one person.

Southern Provinces

In Babel province this week, a joint force of intelligence and national security forces arrested two IS members in an ambush at the entrance to the southern Hillah district of Shomali. It was further reported that three members of the PMF were wounded by an IED detonation against their vehicle while traveling in the area of Jurf al-Sakher north-west of Hilla. A report from the Iraqi Counter-Terrorism Unit stated that IS were currently conducting infiltration operations into the Jurf al-Sakhar sub-district, north of Hillah from areas in Anbar province.

In Muthanna, Iraqi security forces have arrested eight Kuwaitis and five Iraqi nationals over illegal falcon hunting. ISF also seized 11 falcons and several hunting rifles with the hunters in Samawah desert in Muthanna Province. The source added that the hunters did not obtain prior approval of the authorities, as the hunting of migratory birds in Samawah is illegal, according to the website.

In Dhi Qar province, protest activity has been evident during the reporting period. Dozens of people gathered in Al-Haboubi Square in Nasiriyah, to protest against electricity privatization and to demand the resignation of the governor of Dhi Qar, Yahia Al-Nasri. It was further reported that university graduates staged a protest outside the Education Directorate Office in Nasiriyah, demanding jobs. Separately, protests were also reported in the Al-Chibayish district, this time demanding the completion of a second carriageway on the main road links within Nasiriyah itself. Citizens from three districts within Dhi Qar province also held demonstrations, warning that "dry" marshes have resulted in the migration of the people from those areas because of the scarcity of water. The protestors, from areas including Khamisyah, say that the drought has caused the destruction of livestock and the death of large numbers of fish. They said that 25 families in villages on the border with Iran had already been

displaced due to the water crisis. Meanwhile, the Dhi Qar provincial council have said that they are attempting to alleviate the situation with the direct drilling of new wells. Finally, 38 Sunni Muslim militants have been hanged in Nasiriyah after they were sentenced to death on terrorism charges, the justice ministry said in a statement. The mass executions were carried out at a prison in the city.

Basra province has seen usual patterns of tribal, criminal and protest activity along with low-yield IED detonations attributed to criminal activity. In Al Qurna, north of Basra, usual tribal fighting patterns have been evident and in al Hartha, northern Basra City, a number of shops were burned down after a tribal clash broke out in the Mortada neighbourhood. The fight was reportedly between the Gramasha and the Sabih tribes.

In terms of IED incidents, unconfirmed reports indicate that an IED targeted a police officer's house in the 5 mile area causing damage to the outer wall and windows of the property and a coffee shop in Sabkha Al-Arab (near Jumhuriyah) was targeted with a small IED (100 grams of explosive) which caused minor damage. Finally, in Basra City, what was described as a small IED was thrown at a house in al Qibla district on the night of December 13.

Protests have occurred in a number of areas throughout Basra province during the week. Anti-electricity power supply privatization protests occurred in the Qurna and Medina areas in north Basra rejecting the privatization of electricity and demanding jobs for graduates. Small-scale demonstrations also continued in Basra over water shortages and by teachers demanding an increase in salaries. The Ministry of Water resources announced that water levels are increasing in the south following adjustments in the release of water from dams further north which may alleviate protest activity in the short term. It was also reported that a number of staff members who work for the Basra Oil Company conducted a demonstration in front of company headquarters, demanding that the company recognize their university degrees achieved in science, engineering and other fields of study. A demonstrator said that the Ministry of Oil has authorized the Basra Oil Company to recognize their degrees, yet administrative issues have prevented this from occurring.

Finally, the Basra Operations Command (BaOC) also officially announced the opening of the Oil Operations Centre within BaOC, a security mechanism dedicated to the protection of oil fields in the province. During a press conference it was also announced that air reconnaissance will be carried out to safeguard oil concessions.

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	

GARDAWORLD INFORMATION SERVICES

From our management offices and field offices in strategic locations our constant monitoring of the high-risk environments in which we work is conveyed through our range of .Xplored™ risk analysis reports. The reports contain detailed updates, delivering current and relevant ground-truth information to assist both our personnel and our clients in their decision-making.

Our wider risk management solutions provide members of the defense, diplomatic, development, oil & gas and infrastructure sectors operating in potentially high-risk and complex environments with a comprehensive range of risk analysis, intelligence, crisis response, and training services. These services are designed to provide clients with the proactive capability to remain aware in potentially hostile environments and identify risks while strengthening their reactive capacity in emergency situations.

Our current regular reporting geographies include: Nigeria, Mali, Libya, Iraq, Afghanistan and Yemen on a daily, weekly, fortnightly, and monthly basis.

Through our constant monitoring and predictive threat analysis our Information Services team help you plan for, manage, and respond to risks.

For more information on our .Xplored reports or for information about our special-to-task reports tailored to individual client requirements, please contact us: informationops@garda.com or contact our regional representative iraq.ram@garda.com (Mobile: +964 7823 783 972)

For more information on how our services can support your business in Iraq contact: Daniel Matthews, Senior Director Iraq daniel.matthews@garda.com

GARDAWORLD**A global leader in comprehensive security and risk management**

GardaWorld International Protective Services is the international security division of GardaWorld Security Corporation, the world's largest privately owned security company with over 62,000 global staff.

We support clients in emerging, complex and high-risk markets around the world with static security, security consulting, risk analysis and reporting, crisis management and business continuity, mobile security, close protection, training and kidnap for ransom and extortion response solutions.

We work across multiple business sectors to provide protection and security for clients in the extractives, aerospace and defense, critical infrastructure, government and diplomatic and development sectors to secure employees, assets, and reputation so clients can focus solely on running daily operations and growing their business.

Discover more about the markets we serve and to learn how our international security solutions can help you contact us today: gwinfo@garda.com

Middle East

International Protective Services Headquarters
Office 2502, Tower 2, Currency House
DIFC, PO Box 482069
Dubai, United Arab Emirates

United States

1101 Wilson Boulevard
Suite 1725
Arlington, VA, 22209
United States

UK

5th Floor
1, London Bridge
London
SE1 9BG

Europe

37-39 rue des Deux Eglises
1000 Brussels
Belgium

garda.com/ips