



## Weekly Iraq .Xplored report

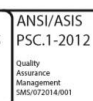
20 January 2018

Prepared by Risk Analysis Team, Iraq

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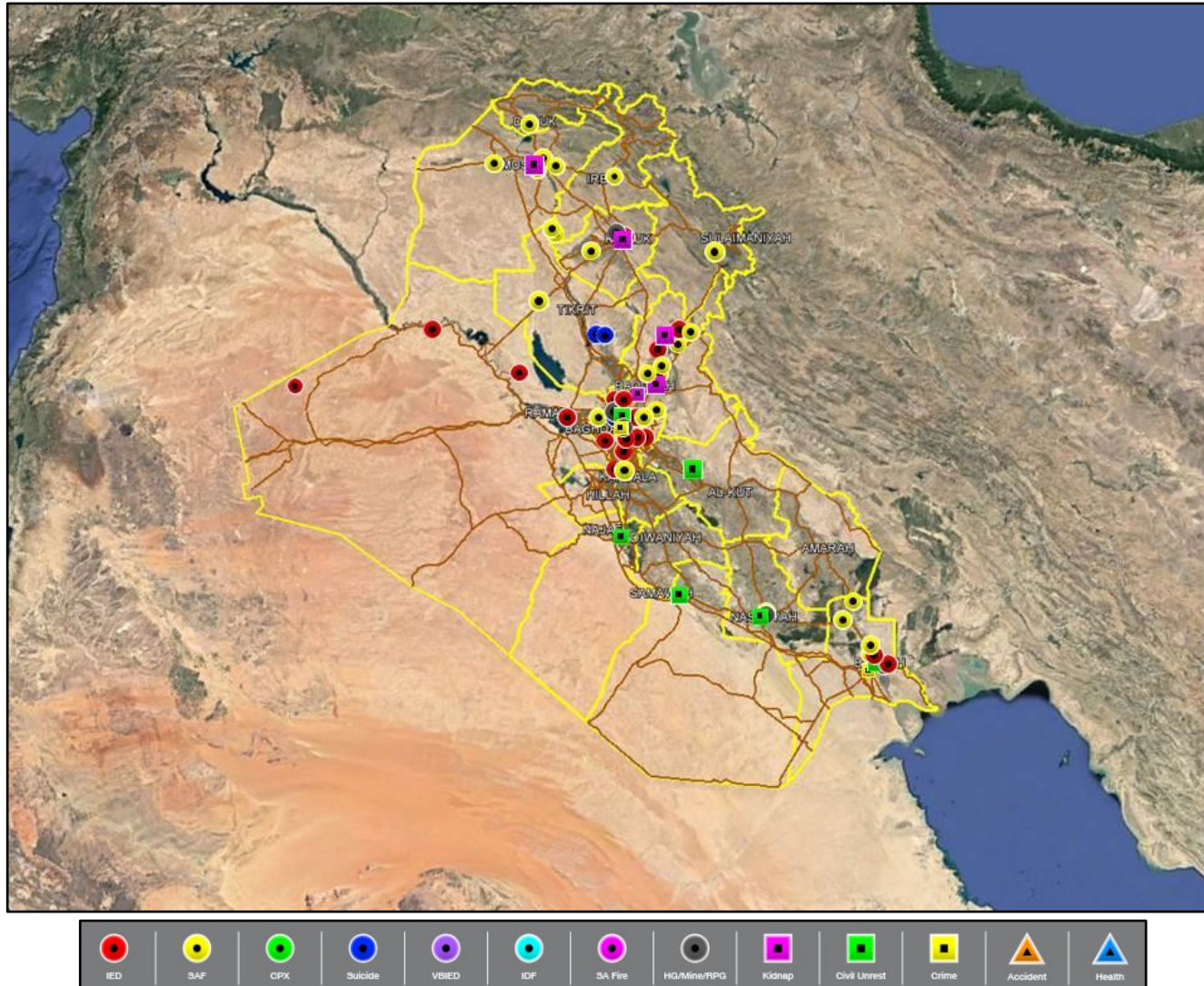
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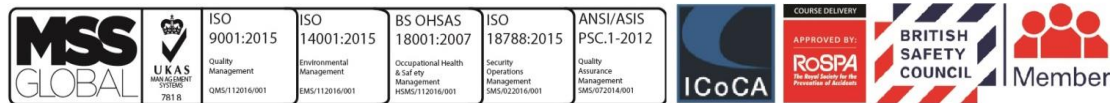
## ACTIVITY MAP



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## OUTLOOK

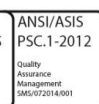
### Short term outlook

- ISF have now liberated IS' last remaining territorial holding in Iraq and the group is also under increasing 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 Nineveh, Salah al-Din, and Diyala province. This week's detonations may also be a pre-cursor for more frequent high-profile attacks in 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). Despite ongoing ISF efforts to clear remaining IS pockets, the group still retains a degree of freedom of movement in the rural regions of Anbar and along the Syrian border area. Though recent IS suicide attack plans appear to be focusing on outlying areas in the province, the cities of Ramadi and Fallujah are likely to be key targets for further high-profile attacks.
- 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. Acts of low-level violence, intimidation and provocation have been reported in Nineveh, Kirkuk, Salah al-Din, and Diyala; 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.
- A complex attack against Shia pilgrims in western Dhi Qar in September 2017 exhibits that IS retains the 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 in 2017 included two SVBIED attacks in Basra province on May 19 and SVIED attacks in Karbala and Babel in June.

### Medium to long term outlook

- In the absence of a concerted effort to engage disenfranchised 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 elements 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, Nineveh, Salah al-Din and Diyala.
- 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



### Political negotiations continue ahead of the upcoming Iraqi elections

The Iraqi local and general elections, which are slated to be held in May, remain the central topic of the current political debate. Iraqi Prime Minister Haider al-Abadi officially announced his new "Victory Alliance" list for the election. Two political blocs from within Iraq's Shia Popular Mobilisation Units (PMU) initially declared the intention to run alongside PM candidates, but they announced their withdrawal only one day afterwards. Meanwhile, the move was criticised by Muqtada al-Sadr who accused al-Abadi of having formed a "sectarian" coalition. The Iraqi Parliament is yet to confirm May 12 as the date for elections.

### Twin suicide bombing in Baghdad kills dozens on January 15

A double suicide attack occurred in the vicinity of Tayaran Square in central Baghdad during the morning of January 15. According to official sources, at least 27 people were killed and 93 others were injured as a result. Islamic State group (IS) has claimed responsibility for the bombings two days after the attack, threatening with increased intensity of the terror campaign ahead of the elections.

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

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

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



**LATEST DEVELOPMENTS****Political****Iraqi PM Abadi to seek re-election; PMU blocs withdraw from PM's electoral coalition**

Iraqi Prime Minister Haider al-Abadi officially announced his candidacy for the upcoming parliamentary elections on January 13. PM Abadi announced his new "Victory Alliance" list for the elections. Abadi is a Dawa member but he didn't secure the party leader Nouri al-Maliki's endorsement for his PM candidacy. Iraq's Vice-President Nouri al-Maliki who also heads the State of Law coalition announced he will be running in the elections on the same day. Maliki said Dawa supporters will be free to choose between his alliance "State of Law", and Abadi's "Victory Alliance". Two political blocs from within Iraq's Popular Mobilisation movement initially announced the intention to run alongside PM candidates, but they withdrew only one day after Abadi's coalition was announced, citing corruption allegations among reasons.

**Muqtada al-Sadr criticises new 'sectarian' electoral coalitions**

Influential Iraqi cleric Muqtada Sadr has criticised "sectarian" electoral coalitions formed to run in the country's upcoming parliamentary election, saying that he rejects joining any such coalitions. "These reprehensible sectarian deals will pave the way for the return of the corrupt. We were invited to join [these coalitions] but we have categorically rejected it," Sadr said in a statement published on his office's Facebook page on January 14. "I will only support [electoral] lists that go beyond sectarian quota and include independent technocrats," he added. Sadr accused Prime Minister Haider al-Abadi of having formed a "sectarian" coalition as well. Efforts to restore the relationship between Prime Minister Haider al-Abadi and Muqtada, disrupted after al-Abadi signed the electoral pact with other PMU, reportedly continued during the week.

**Iraqi parliament adjourns voting on elections date**

The Iraqi parliament has again adjourned the parliamentary session to vote on the general elections' date on January 20. Iraqi Prime Minister Haider al-Abadi in coordination with the Independent High Electoral Commission (IHEC) decided the upcoming elections are to be held in May 12. The date must be ratified by the parliament before the endorsement of the Presidential Council to be fully approved. According to the Iraqi constitution, the parliamentary elections must be held at least 45 days before the end of the current legislative term. Meanwhile, major Sunni parliamentary coalition, the Iraqi Forces Alliance, has demanded the postponement of the elections for six months to allow the displaced people to return to their homes after recapturing their towns from IS.

**IHEC confident of delivering credible election process; UN pledges technical support**

Iraq's Independent High Electoral Commission (IHEC) faces significant challenges but will be able to surmount them and deliver a timely, fair and transparent national election on 12 May 2018, the United Nations has said, pledging continued technical support to ensure an effective and credible process that wins the confidence of Iraqi voters, politicians and the international community. The UN pledge came during a two-day workshop the IHEC held in Sulaimaniyah on 11-12 January to roll out countrywide preparations for the elections. Topics discussed included the use of new technologies, inclusive participation by Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs), special voting, public outreach and electoral dispute resolution mechanisms.

**PM Abadi: Erbil, Baghdad talks have reached a 'high-level' of agreement**

A senior Iraqi delegation visited Erbil on January 15 to discuss with Kurdish officials a range of issues, including land borders, airports, the oil industry, customs revenue and river dams, a statement from the Iraqi cabinet said, adding "the atmosphere of trust" marked talks. The two sides have reportedly reached a preliminary agreement that could end the international flight ban imposed to and from the Kurdistan Region, and pave the way for an oil-

for-budget arrangement. Kurdish Rudaw news website said that the airports and other border crossings will be run jointly between the Kurdish and federal government, adding the draft agreement will be submitted to Prime Minister Haider al-Abadi for approval. On his part, Iraqi Prime Minister agreed that technical talks between Erbil and Baghdad have reached a “high level” of agreement while insisting that his government is prepared to solve “all outstanding issues” with the Kurdish Region. Abadi said that the so-called efforts to impose the federal authority over key institutions in the Kurdish Region such as the airports do not mean he intends to violate Erbil’s political and administrative powers. “We insist that the powers of the federal government are clear, and the powers of the Region and the provinces are clear,” Abadi said in his weekly press conference on January 16, in reference to Baghdad and Erbil’s different interpretations of the Iraqi constitution.

## Security

### IS claims twin bombings in Baghdad and vows strong comeback in Iraq ahead of elections

Islamic State group has claimed responsibility for the twin suicide bombings that struck the Iraqi capital Baghdad on 15 January. IS's news outlet Amaq cited an IS "security source" as saying that, "two soldiers of the Islamic State carried out a suicide attack with explosive belts targeting a gathering of Shia [Muslims] in Tayaran Square in Baghdad." A subsequent Amaq statement claimed the attack had killed and wounded 200 "Shia". IS sought to further capitalise on the attacks to play up the threat it poses ahead of parliamentary elections, an event the group alluded to in its weekly publication. IS's Arabic-language newspaper al-Naba, issued on January 19, highlighted the group's alleged capability in Iraq, in the paper's editorial titled, "Baghdad... between the attacks of the pious and the illusion of victory". IS said the twin bombings in Tayaran Square proved that the government's December declaration of victory over the group was "an illusion".

## Humanitarian

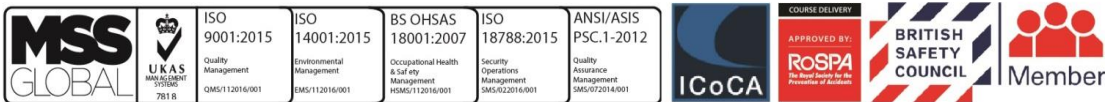
### UNICEF: One in four Iraqi children impacted by conflict,

More than four million children have been impacted by extreme violence in Iraq, many forced to fight on the frontlines, the United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF) stressed in a statement on January 19. “Last year alone, 270 children were killed,” said UNICEF Regional Director Geert Cappelaere following a recent visit. Currently, Iraq hosts one of UNICEF’s largest operations in the world, responding with humanitarian and development assistance to the needs of the most vulnerable children. Poverty and conflict have interrupted the education for three million children across Iraq. Over a quarter of all children in Iraq live in poverty, with children in southern and rural areas most affected over the past decades. “As Iraq prepares for elections and the International Summit for Iraq, there is no better moment to prioritize the interests of children, stop the violence, and break the cycle of poverty and deprivation,” stressed Mr. Cappelaere. The International Summit for Iraq, hosted by Kuwait from 12-14 February, offers an opportunity for Iraq and the international community to strengthen commitments to the country’s children – specifically by increasing budgets allocated to supporting them. “Member States and the private sector should turn financial pledges into concrete commitments for children. This is fundamental for rebuilding a peaceful and prosperous Iraq away from the vicious cycles of violence and intergenerational poverty,” emphasized Mr. Cappelaere

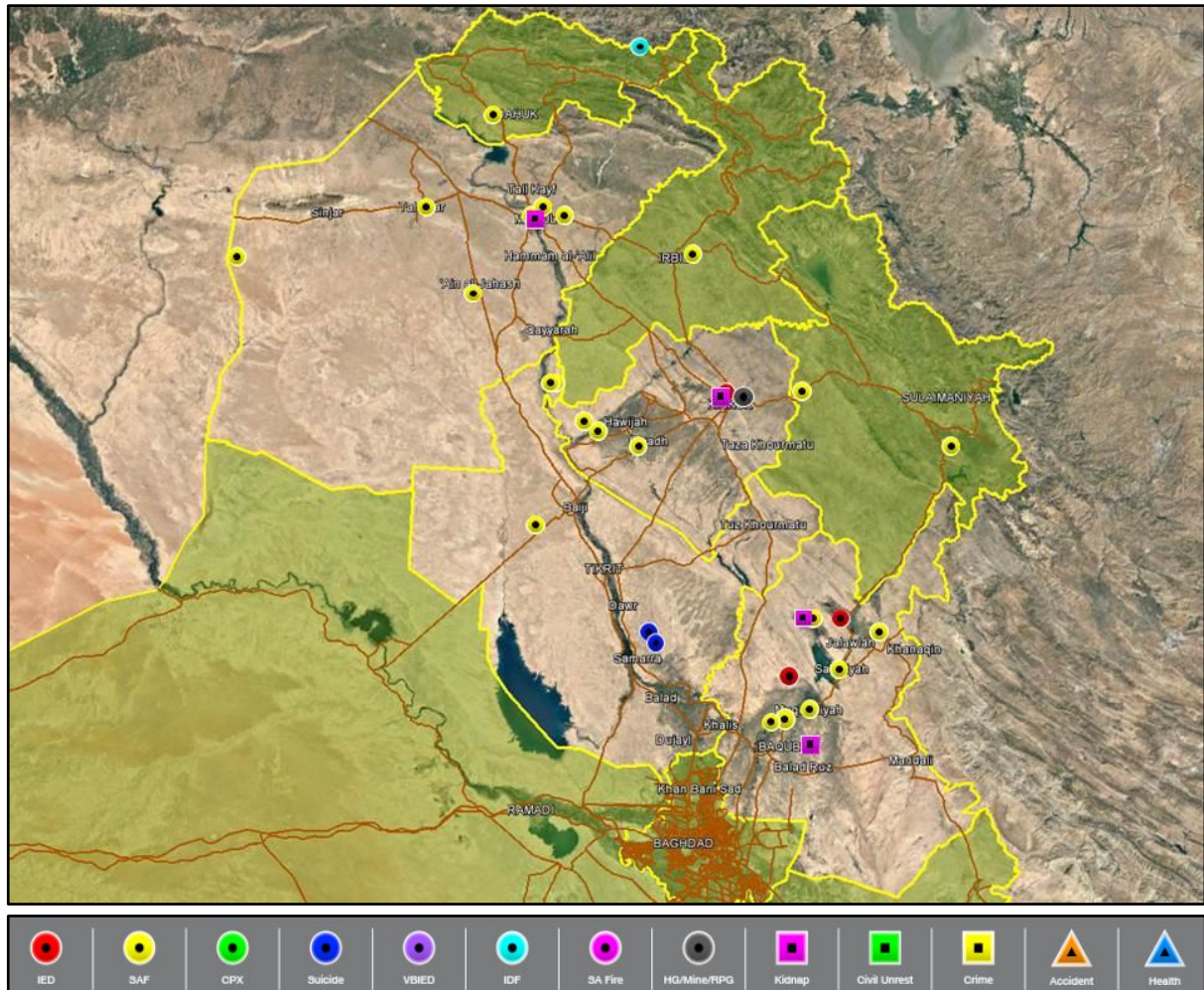
Economy

BP signs deal to help increase oil output at Kirkuk fields

British Petroleum agreed to help increase crude production at northern Iraq’s Kirkuk fields as part of government push to restore output and exports capacity after recapturing the oil-rich region from Kurdish forces in October, Bloomberg reported. Iraqi and BP officials signed an agreement in Kirkuk city on January 18 to study ways of boosting capacity at the fields to 700,000 to 750,000 barrels a day. The deposits currently can pump about 450,000 barrels a day. “North Oil must restore its glory and its output averages to 1.5 million barrels a day,” Oil Minister Jabbar al-Luaibi said at the signing ceremony in Kirkuk city. “We have an ambitious plan to activate the company.”





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

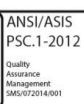
Although the political dispute between KRG and the Government of Iraq and the upcoming elections continue to dominate headlines from the Kurdish Region, the majority of incidents reported in the KRG were linked to criminality and local disputes. A notable incident occurred in Sulaymaniyah province, when Kurdish counter-terrorism forces reportedly killed one person, wounded three, and arrested five others in Chamchamal district, after security forces were attacked during the transfer of detainees from the local prison to a federal facility near Sulaymaniyah. Although security forces initially reported the incident was linked to terrorist activity, later reporting indicated the skirmish was related to a dispute between the prison authority and local tribes over employment issues and delayed payments. Meanwhile, the likelihood of Turkish military operations against the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) remains high in the border areas of the region. Peripheries of the Kurdish Region and bordering areas disputed with between Erbil and Baghdad remain restive. The current security environment in the region is complex and nuanced with Kurdish and ISF fault lines overlapping with areas of insurgent activity.

As clearance of legacy explosive devices and IS pockets continues in Nineveh province, the Federal Police units launched an operation in search for IS militants south of Mosul on January 13; three militants were killed, bodies of 28 insurgents were discovered, while quantities of weapons and explosives were seized by the end of the week. There were also clashes reportedly involving IS militants near Tal Safouk (on the Syrian border) and Tal

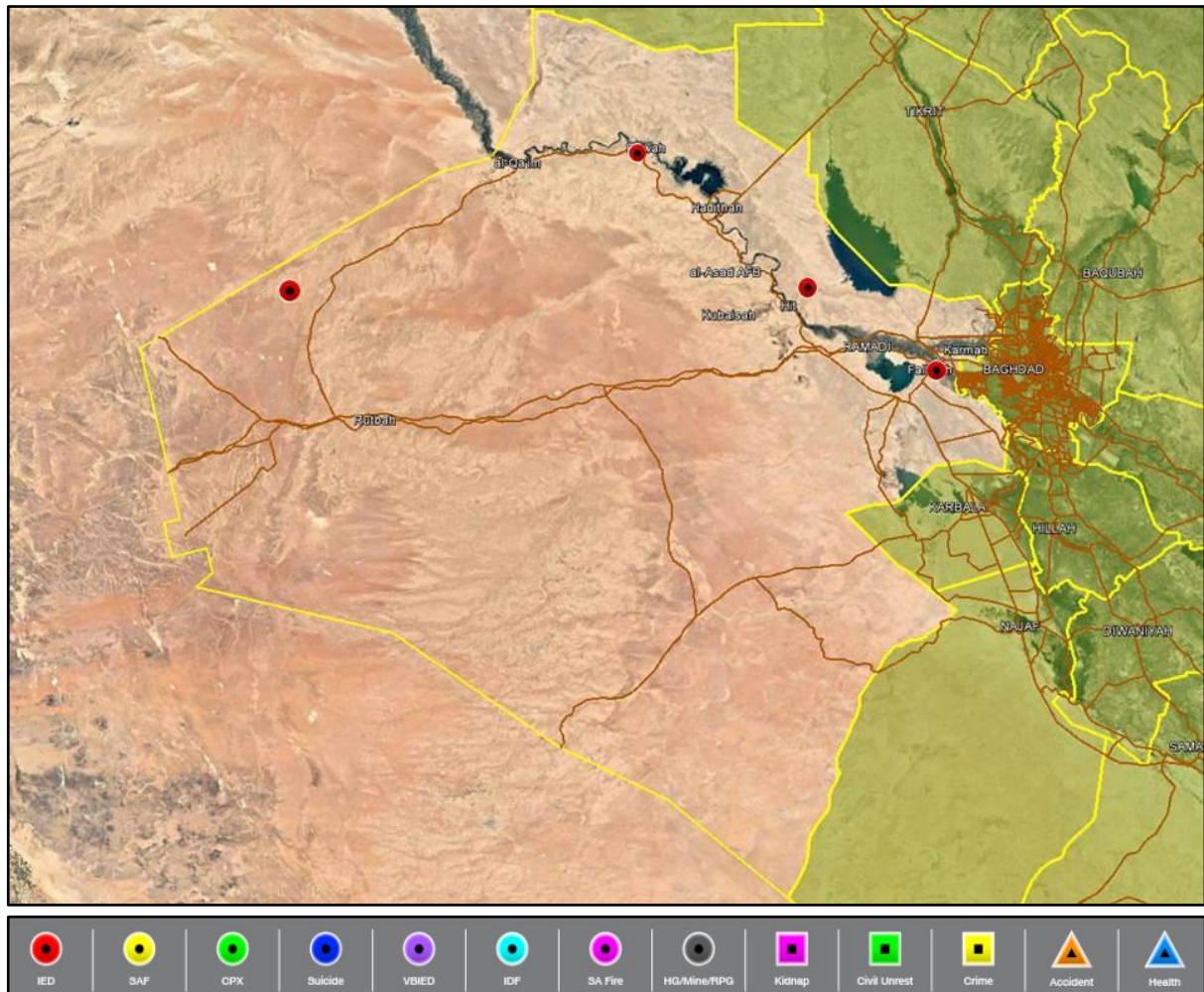
Afar. Three policemen were reportedly killed by militants who set up a fake checkpoint in Ayn al-Jahish, 45 km southwest of Mosul on January 15. Meanwhile, reporting from the Mosul region continue to reflect the ongoing clearance process, as well as the lingering threat from militant groups and criminality. Multiple explosive devices were found in the Old City of Mosul and in Bashiqa to the north-east. Mass graves of IS victims, primarily ISF members, were found in Badush and Athbah village (40 km south of Mosul). Multiple attacks on civilians were also seen, including SAF and kidnappings; although they were often reported as linked to IS activity, criminal elements were also likely involved.

Reporting from Kirkuk, Diyala, and Salah al-Din provinces continues to focus on the insurgent presence and current ethnic tensions in the region, in addition to background criminal activity. In Kirkuk province, several clashes between ISF and militant groups as well as attacks on community leaders were seen in Hawija district. On 13 January, gunmen attacked the home of a PMU member near Riyadh; four PMU elements in addition to three civilians were reportedly killed. Also in Riyadh sub-district, the private residence of a tribal elder was targeted on January 17; tribesmen confronted the assailants who managed to flee. Kirkuk saw further attacks on Iraqi Security Forces, apart from background criminal activity consisting of armed robberies, kidnappings, and thefts. Reporting from the ethnically mixed Tuz Khurmatu district was subdued during the week, following the deployment of federal Emergency Response Units, under orders from PM al-Abadi, in order to strengthen security in the district and mitigate the risk of violence between various communities in the area. Multiple IEDs and insurgent bases were cleared in the Jazira area of Samarra district and near Mutaibijah. On 16 January, Sadrist Peace Brigades reported killing a suicide attacker during an operation in the Nahr al-Rasasi area, east of Samarra.

Diyala province remains volatile, in particular the areas along the Diyala River Valley and the Hamrin Mountains, with attacks on ISF and civilians recurring throughout the week. On January 18, three policemen were killed and four others were injured in an IED strike against a passing ISF convoy in the Tibij region of Jalawla; subsequently, joint security forces launched a large-scale operation to clear the area of IS sleeper cells. On the same day, one person was killed and four others were kidnapped by alleged IS militants who attacked a mosque in Qara Tepe sub-district. SAF attacks on ISF and civilians were also seen near Khanaqin, Naft Khana, Abbarah, and Muqdadiah.



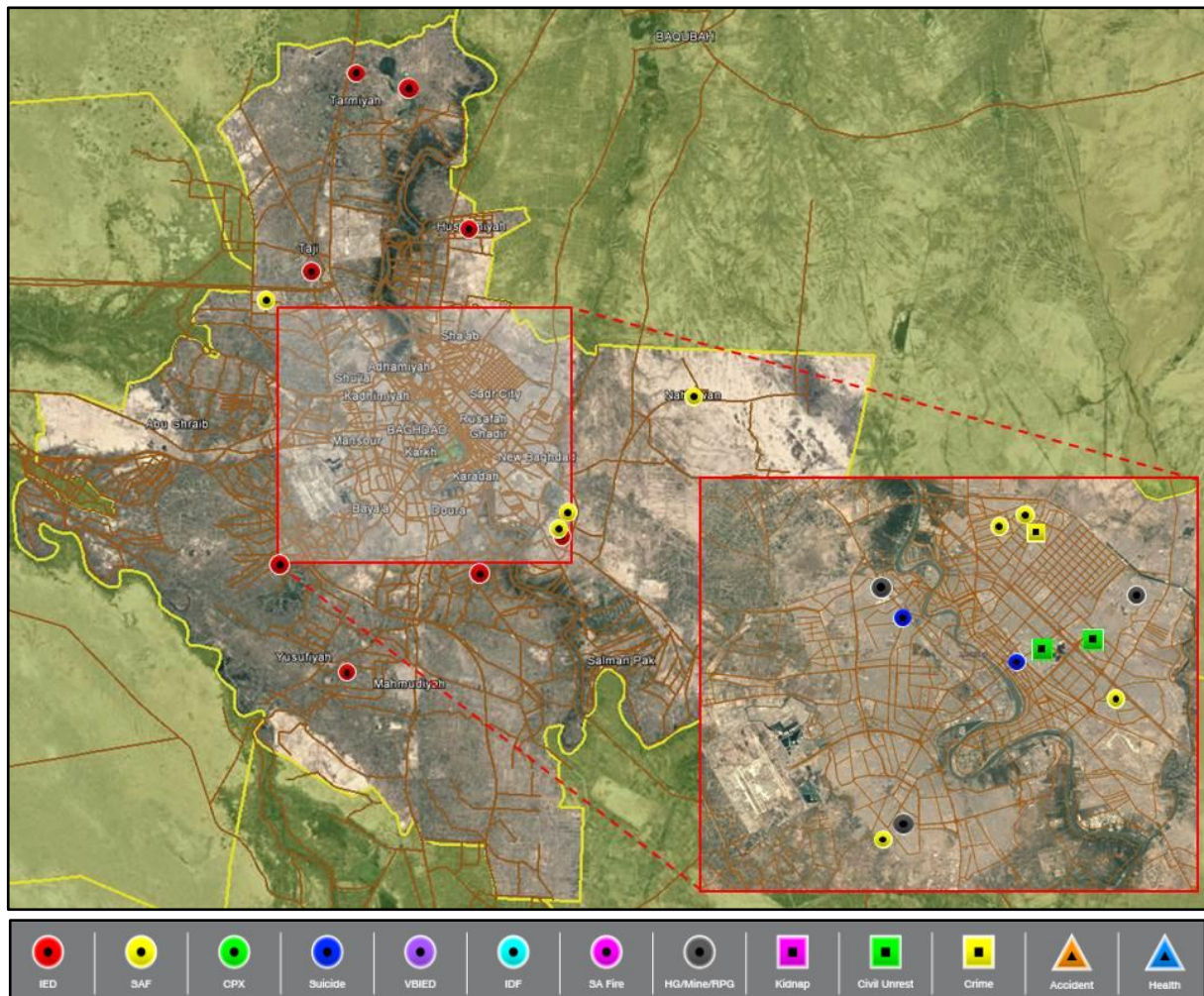


**Anbar Province**

Reporting from Anbar province was again subdued, as the majority of activity remains focused on border with Syria and the desert areas to the west of the province. ISF seized three underground bunkers in the Karbala area of Qaim district. Following the improvement of the security situation in retaken areas, a sizable number of internally displaced civilians have returned to their homes in al-Qa'im. Multiple explosive devices were cleared along the Khasfa - Ana road in Haditha district. Four children were injured by an IED detonation east of Hit on January 19, highlighting the underlying risk from explosive devices in areas freed from IS control.

The Chairman of the Anbar Provincial Security Council said this week security forces and volunteer PMU fighters have cleared large swathes of Anbar desert areas in the course of multi-pronged military operations. Several underground bunkers and one VBIED were destroyed by Sunni tribesmen supported by troops from the 7th IA Infantry Division in the Horan Valley, south of Rutbah. Reporting from the Euphrates River Valley concentrated on clearing unexploded ordnance; large stockpiles of munitions and explosives were again found in Karma. However, attacks targeting ISF members and prominent civilians continue to be seen intermittently in the region. On January 19, three people were killed and three were injured by an IED detonation at a house belonging to a policeman in Albu Dhiyab, north of Ramadi.



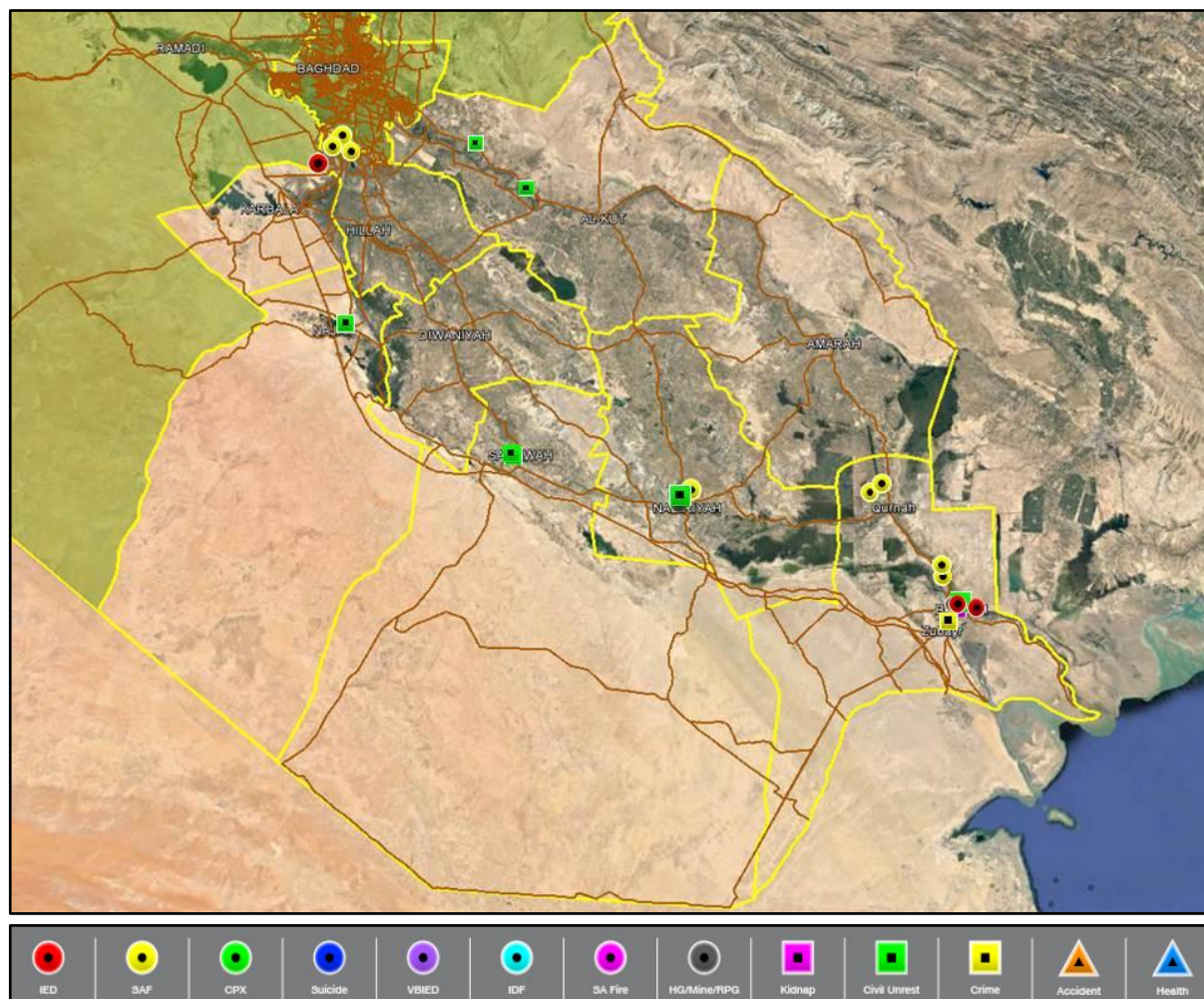
**Capital Region (Including Baghdad City)**

Baghdad Province saw the first high-profile attacks since November 2017. On the evening of January 13, a suicide bomber detonated himself in the vicinity of Aden Square, Kadhimiyah district. Multiple press reports claimed at least three people were killed and nine were injured, including ISF members. On the morning of January 15, a double suicide attack occurred in the vicinity of Tayaran Square in Rusafa, central Baghdad, reportedly targeting a gathering of local workers. The first detonation occurred at around 0710hrs followed by a second explosion a few minutes later. According to official ISF reports, 27 people were killed and 93 others were injured in both explosions. Islamic State group has claimed responsibility for the bombings two days after the attack, threatening with increased intensity of the terror campaign ahead of elections. ISF found a cached explosive vest near the highway in the Saadiyah area on January 17.

The remainder of reporting in the city consisted primarily of criminal incidents and ISF operations. A notable grenade attack was occurred on January 15 in Kadhimiyah, without casualties. The device reportedly detonated at the office of a Shia cleric, Kamal al-Haidari. Other notable incidents in the city included several IED and grenade detonations, as well as criminal acts. A UVIED detonation killed a civilian in the Tubchi area of western Baghdad. An IED detonated outside a private house in Karrada on January 16. Kidnappings were reported in the Bunuk, Jamila, and Baladiyat area of eastern Baghdad. The level of civil unrest remains relatively low. Hundreds of Sadrist Movement supporters demonstrated in Tahrir Square on Friday, as seen regularly over the past year. Smaller demonstrations over local issues and employment disputes were also seen causing local disruptions.



SAF attacks and IED detonations continue to occur regularly on Baghdad's peripheries, with local markets and commercial areas attracting most of attacks. North of the city, IED detonations targeted civilians in Husseinia, Mushada, Tarmiyah and Taji. South of Baghdad, local markets were targeted near Yusufiyah and Madain. One person was killed and two others were wounded by an IED in an orchard in Hawr Rajab area. Three members of a Sunni tribal militia were injured by an IED strike against their vehicle in Radwanayah. West of Baghdad, three people were injured by an IED detonation in Abu Ghraib. East of the city, a UVIED detonated against a car belonging to a mosque muezzin in Nahrawan.

**Southern Provinces**

Reporting from the southern region focused primarily on Babil and Basra provinces. There were several notable incidents in north Babil, the area historically affected by Sunni extremist networks. ISF imposed a short-lived curfew in Musayib district reportedly in response to warnings over planned terrorist attacks in the area. On January 14, two members of the Popular Mobilization Units were wounded in an IED strike against their vehicle in Jurf al-Sakhar. A number of armed attacks occurred in Iskandriya. Basra province saw primarily low-level hostile action involving criminal elements. Tribal fighting again occurred to the north of the city and a number of low-yield IED incidents were also recorded. Most of these incidents is linked to tribal and business rivalry, however an increasing number have political undertones. Two large scale security operations were conducted in Zubayr and Qurna. The operation in Qurna resulted in a firefight between security forces and a number of tribal members – illegally held firearms were to be seized – one soldier was killed and two others injured. Reporting on hostile activity from other provinces was subdued.

Protest action continues throughout the region, with most conducted in the areas deemed to be affected by political or service provision change. Numerous demonstrations occurred in relation to the government's proposal to privatise the provision of electricity. All the recent protests have been peaceful in nature, but the subject of electricity provision is an emotive one and previous protest action in relation to the subject have resulted in violence – most in direct response to how the security forces react. On January 19, hundreds of Sadrist Movement supporters and local activists demonstrated across the region.

**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
Gol - 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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## GARDAWORLD

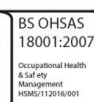
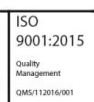
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We work across multiple business sectors to provide protection and security for clients in the extractives, aerospace and defense, critical infrastructure, government and diplomatic and development sectors to secure employees, assets, and reputation 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](mailto:gwinfo@garda.com)





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