



Weekly Iraq .Xplored report

14 July 2018

Prepared by Risk Analysis Team, Iraq

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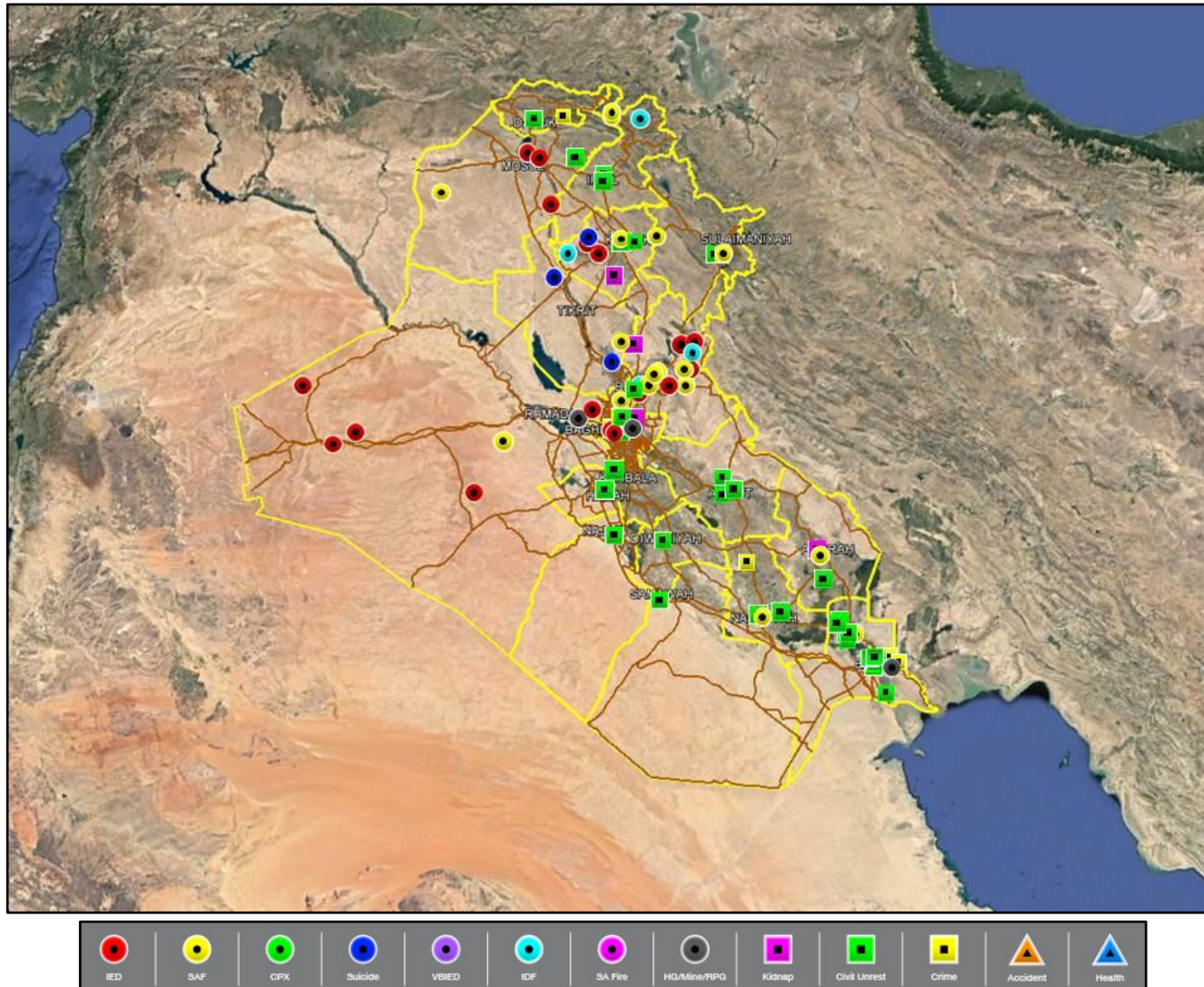
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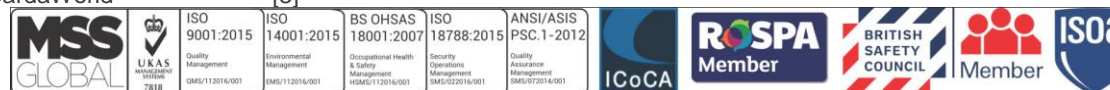
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ACTIVITY MAP



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OUTLOOK**Short term outlook**

- The trend for protests continues across the country, southern region in particular, driven by shortages of water and electricity and employment demands. Such events can be expected to continue, with the likelihood of them becoming more violent dependent on the security forces' initial reactions; these warnings were realised in Basra province on July 08 and 12, when one protester was killed and a number of others were injured by ISF. The breach of Najaf International Airport on July 13, in addition to attacks on government buildings and political offices in Najaf, Maysan, Dhi Qar and Basra, further illustrate the risk of violence associated with the current protest action. Extreme care is advised when in transit in areas affected by protests, due to the elevated risk of traffic disruptions and negative community reactions. Demonstrations over the issue of electricity and water supply can be expected to continue in the next few weeks as demand for both commodities increases during the hot summer months.
- The fall-out of the May 12 parliamentary elections continues to dominate political reporting. There is now an increased risk of confrontation between supporters of various parties as a result the manual ballot recount, officially launched on July 03. Political instability and rivalries in the process of coalition negotiations will also drive the risk of civil unrest.
- Controversial results of the parliamentary elections and the ongoing fall-out from the Kurdish independence referendum mean that the general threat from political instability in northern Iraq could manifest itself to varying degrees of unrest and violence at the local level. On July 01, a suicide VBIED targeted a warehouse housing ballot boxes in Kirkuk; one security element was killed and 20 others were injured.

Medium to long term outlook

- A protracted period of coalition building is expected follow the elections. The official government formation process will be initiated once the Federal Court confirms the parliamentary election results, after the manual recount is completed. A period of transition will follow in which bureaucracy will increase as incumbents and policy changes.
- The election results and government composition will have a significant impact on the security environment in northern Iraq. In the absence of a concerted effort to engage the disenfranchised Sunni population of the country, these areas will remain at risk of sectarian violence from radical Sunni elements, especially in Nineveh, Salah al-Din and western Kirkuk.
- Islamic State activity will continue to dominate security reporting with focus on the potential resurgence of an insurgent campaign in northern and western Iraq. Despite ongoing ISF efforts to clear remaining IS pockets, the group retains a degree of freedom of movement in the desert regions of Anbar, near the Syrian border, and along the Hamrin Mountains.
- Low-level incidents related to criminality, personal disputes and tribal tensions are likely to continue in Basra and the southern region. Long-term tensions are also expected to be driven by the return of militia factions expecting material and social rewards for their contribution in the campaign against IS.

SIGNIFICANT EVENTS

Electricity shortages and unemployment drive protests across Iraq

Protest activity was the central theme of reporting from Iraq with high temperatures and poor electricity supply driving civil unrest across the country. Protests over unemployment and poor electricity provision were seen in Basra, Wasit, Babil, Dhi Qar, Maysan, Muthanna, and, to a limited extent, Baghdad, Diyala, Kirkuk and the Kurdish Region. Such events can be expected to continue, with the likelihood of them becoming more violent dependant on the security forces' response. Extreme care is advised in the immediate outlook in view of the high risk of escalation associated with the current protests. These fears were realised in Basra, Maysan, Dhi Qar and Najaf provinces, where government buildings and commercial compounds were attacked.

ISF interventions during demonstrations result in casualties

The actions by the security forces have resulted in protester casualties on a number of occasions during the week. These occurrences have often enflamed protesters and made them even more determined. In Basra province, one person was killed and three others were injured after ISF fired shots to disperse the crowd south of Madaina town on July 08. On July 12, the protest in the West Qurna 2 area turned violent and at least four protesters were injured along with two Oil Police elements. Two people were reportedly injured when ISF attempted to clear a protest in the Tuba area, Zubayr district. Shots were fired during a protest in Amara on July 13, with up to 11 resulting injuries.

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, Diwaniyah, Dhi Qar, Muthanna, Maysan & Basra

OVERVIEW**Civil unrest****Electricity shortages drive the risk of protests across Iraq**

Protest activity was the central theme of reporting from Iraq with high temperature and poor electricity supply driving civil unrest across the country. Protests over unemployment and poor electricity provision were seen in Basra, Wasit, Babil, Dhi Qar, Maysan, Muthanna, and, to a limited extent, Baghdad, Diyala, Kirkuk and the Kurdish Region. Such events can be expected to continue, with the likelihood of them becoming more violent dependant on the security forces initial reactions. Extreme care is advised in the immediate outlook in view of the high risk of escalation associated with the current protests. These fears were realised in Basra, Maysan, Dhi Qar and Najaf provinces, where government buildings and commercial compounds were attacked, with casualties resulting from ISF interventions. Fatal shooting occurred during a demonstration in Madaina, Basra province, on July 08. Six other people were injured in the course of protests on July 12.

Angry protesters break into Najaf Airport; casualties reported in Maysan

Protests were seen across southern Iraq during the evening of July 13. Demonstrations were reported in Maysan, Najaf, Babil, Dhi Qar, Muthanna, and Basra. In Najaf, protesters demanding improvements of local service provision broke the perimeter of Najaf International Airport. They were shortly forced to withdraw by the ISF intervention, but flights to and from Najaf were temporarily suspended. Also in Najaf, a group of protesters reportedly attacked the Provincial Council building; assaults on political offices of the Dawa Party and the Wisdom Movement were also reported by the media. Elsewhere in the region, protesters attacked the Maysan Provincial Council in Amarah. ISF fired warning shots; media reported that one person was killed and over 10 were injured as a result. The Dawa Party office in Amarah was reportedly set on fire. In Dhi Qar, protesters reportedly tried to attack the governor's house in Nasiriya, but were forced to withdraw.

Minister of Oil promises more jobs for Basra residents

Iraq's Oil Minister, Jabbar al-Luaibi, was among a number of senior government officials that have condemned the fatal shooting of a protester in Basra on July 08. Luaibi has offered to meet the victim's tribe and other affected tribes to discuss how best to proceed with employment demands. He called on the demonstrators and their families to exercise restraint and let the legal and constitutional frameworks work the case. In the effort to appease protesters the cabinet granted the Ministry of Oil the authority to provide extra fuel to Basra power plants to reverse the electricity shortage. On July 12, Minister al-Luaibi announced that 10,000 employment opportunities are to be created to solve the problem of unemployment within the province. The 'jobs' are to be distributed between Iraqi Ministries, International Oil Companies and sub-contractors, according to population density and the geographic location of the tribes. A number of new employment operating offices are to be implemented to accommodate the unemployed and help with their training to suit the work within the oil companies. Luaibi stressed in the statement the importance of non-aggression on oil installations during the demonstrations.

PM Abadi visits Basra in response to protests

On July 13, Prime Minister al-Abadi arrived in Basra in response to the outbreak of protest activity. He spent most of the day meeting the senior ISF leadership to discuss the policing of the protest action and a likely resolution for the protest demands. During the evening protesters gathered at the Basra Council and the Basra Oil Company headquarters, before moving to the Basra International Hotel to confront PM al-Abadi, who had left the hotel only a short time before the crowd arrived in the area.

Political**Sadr urges to cut foreign influence over government formation**

Muqtada al-Sadr, Shia cleric and leader of the Sa'eroun coalition, urged political blocs and parties to abstain from any talks with the US and 'neighbouring countries' regarding the formation of the next government. "The political parties have to cut talks regarding the formation of coalitions with the US and neighbouring countries. This is a matter of concern only for us Iraqis," Sadr tweeted on July 08. He also advised political factions to stay away from "hateful sectarian and ethnic" alliances. "I am ready to cooperate to form a coalition away from partisan, sectarian, and ethnic divisions," Sadr added.

Media suggest al-Sadr will support PM Abadi for second term

On July 07, Iraqi media reported that Muqtada al-Sadr had already agreed to support current Prime Minister Haider al-Abadi's candidacy for another term in office. A source inside the Sa'eroun coalition explained that al-Sadr had earlier demanded that Abadi resign from the Islamic Dawa Party in exchange for supporting his candidacy. However, on reflection and given the support that Abadi enjoys as a result of his success in leading the country under difficult security and economic circumstances, al-Sadr had reportedly dropped the stipulation. Meanwhile, other reports suggested that tighter cooperation between al-Sadr and PM al-Abadi has put a further strain on Sa'eroun's relations with the Fatih alliance.

KDP, PUK hold talks with Fatih, State of Law officials

Kurdish media speculated on July 08 that the two main Kurdish parties may decide to join the Iranian-backed Fatih alliance to form a new Iraqi government, citing information from unnamed sources in those parties. Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP) leaders met with Fatih and the State of Law coalition in Irbil on July 07 to discuss the formation of a new Iraqi government. During the meeting, all parties voiced their commitment to resolving outstanding issues between Irbil and Baghdad. Later on July 07, Fatih and State of Law held similar talks with the PUK.

Manual vote recount continues amidst controversies

Iraq's Independent High Electoral Commission (IHEC) continued the manual recount of parliamentary election votes in the provinces of Irbil, Anbar and Salah al-Din this week. As the manual recount of ballot boxes continues, anger over the exercise has mounted following the conclusion of the process in Kirkuk and Sulaymaniyah. Some Kurdish parties that contested election results announced a boycott of the manual recount in Sulaymaniyah due to the lack of transparency. Several political blocs, including the Turkmen Front, condemned the decision to examine only a small number of boxes, stating that the amendments to the Election Law indicated the need to recount all votes.

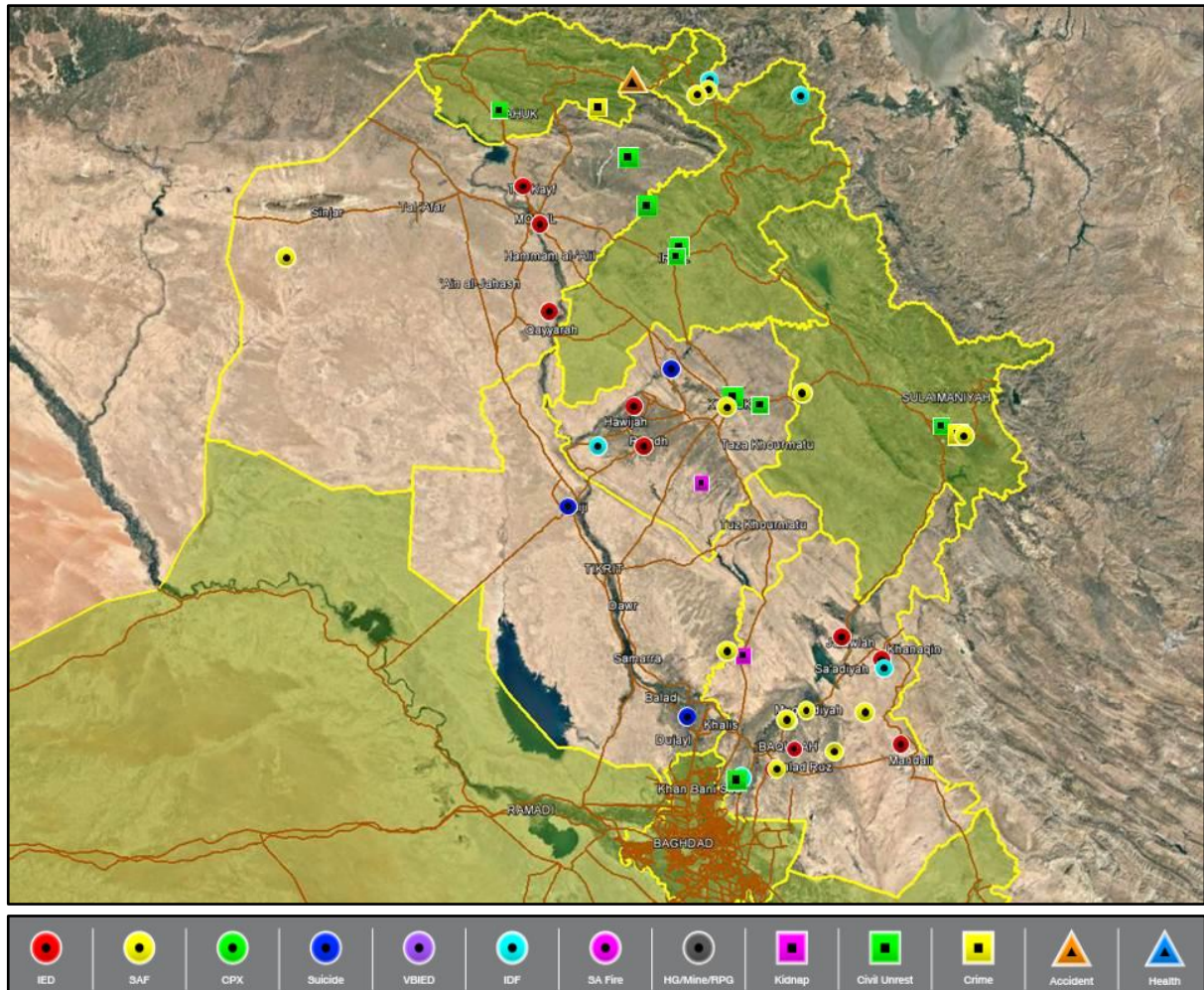
Kurdish regional parliament suspends presidential office

The regional parliament of the Kurdish Region passed a law to suspend the region's presidential office until a new parliament decides what to do with the presidency post, Kurdish media reported on July 11. Reports said that after the September polls a new parliament would decide on the appointment of a regional president or the cancellation of the region's presidency. MPs from the Kurdistan Democratic Party, the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan and the Change Movement (Gorran) reportedly voted in favour of the new law, while MPs from the Kurdistan Islamic Union (KIU) and the Kurdistan Islamic Group (KIG) rejected it, Rudaw TV reported.

Security

Canada to lead NATO training mission in Iraq; PMF criticise NATO presence

Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau announced at the NATO summit in Brussels on July 11 that the Canadian military would lead a new NATO training and capacity building mission in Iraq for its first year. Trudeau said the mission would begin in the Fall 2018 with as many as 250 Canadian Armed Forces personnel being deployed to support NATO activities. A statement from the Prime Minister's office called the mission a "natural next step for Canada" that moves beyond the successful fight against Islamic State militants to "helping build institutional capacity in Iraq and lay the groundwork for longer-term peace and stability." Iraqi Prime Minister Haider al-Abadi visited Brussels on July 12 to join a meeting of the US-led coalition against Islamic State. Prior to his departure, Abadi said in a televised statement that Iraq needs cooperation with world leaders in the fields of intelligence and security to assume its leading role in fighting IS and pursuing its remnants in Syria and other areas in the region.

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

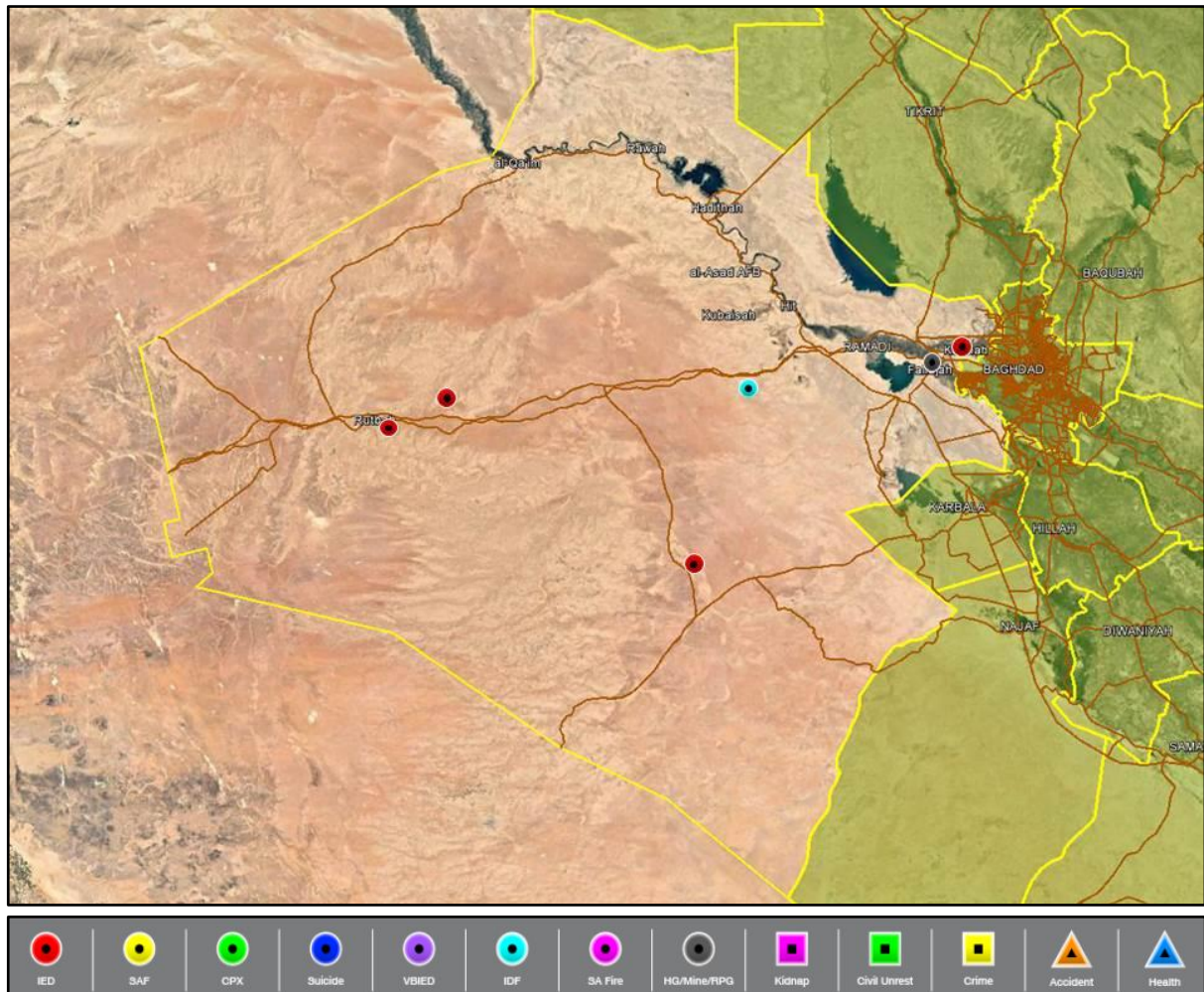
In the Kurdish Region, Turkish attacks against PKK insurgents have continued for another week. Airstrikes were reported around Avasin Basyan, Sinat Hafanin, Rawanduz, Hakurk, Gara, Zap, and Qandil. The People's Defence Forces (HPG), a PKK-affiliated group, claimed that they had killed one Turkish soldier near Lelikan, Bradost region, on July 07. There were several protests reported in the Kurdish Region, in line with the current trend for electricity and employment-related demonstrations elsewhere in the country, but the protests have remained peaceful and limited in scale. The remainder of reporting comprised low-level, isolated incidents and criminal activity.

Reporting from Nineveh focused on the western parts of the province. Several skirmishes between Sunni tribesmen and Islamic State militants were seen near Ba'aj. ISF have been put on alert after dozens of vehicles reportedly infiltrated the province through the borders with Syria. ISF claimed that up to 60 vehicles belonging to Islamic State entered Iraqi territory from the Syrian side. Meanwhile, July 10 marked the first anniversary of recapturing Mosul from Islamic State militants. On this occasion, Prime Minister Haider al-Abadi greeted the "martyrs" and wounded, who fought the battle to liberate the city. Otherwise, reporting from Nineveh comprised the usual brand of arrests of alleged IS militants and finds of cached weaponry around Mosul, Tal Afar, Badush, and Qayyara.

Kirkuk province is still suffering a regular insurgency that draws on support from Hawijah district and the Hamrin Mountains. The majority of incidents were seen in Hawijah and Daquq, including IDF, IEDs on security patrols, and attacks on local community leaders. IEDs reportedly detonated at two electricity pylons near the Mahdiya village, damaging the power line between Hawijah and Samarra, in line with the pattern of attacks on electricity infrastructure. In Dibis district, Iraqi media reported that insurgents killed or injured seven Iraqi troops in an attack on a security outpost in the Tanak area, north-west of Kirkuk. Activity in Kirkuk city was subdued during the week.

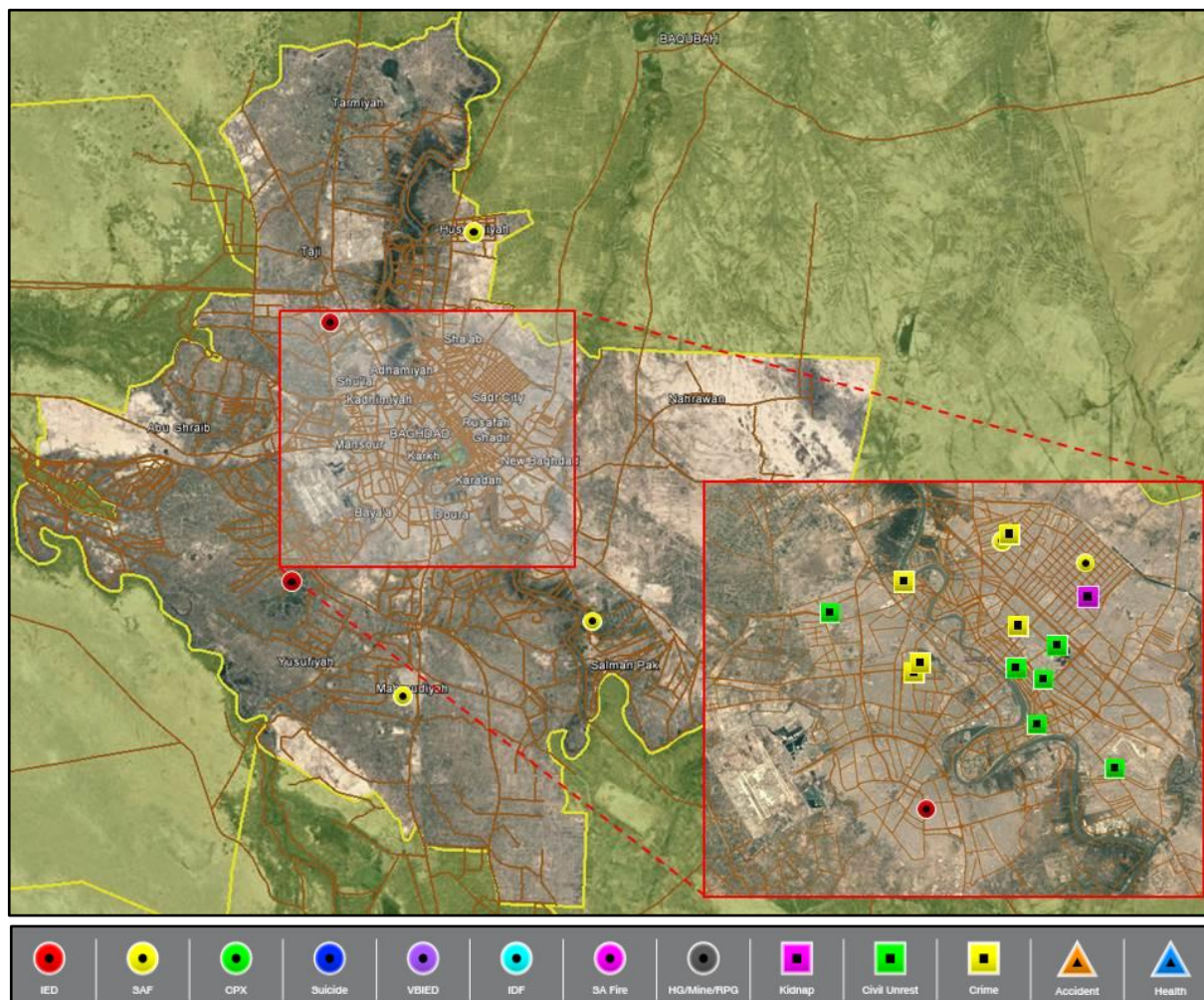
Activity levels in Salah al-Din were relatively low this week, but open confrontations between insurgents and the security forces occurred again in Tuz Khurmatu, Samarra and Balad districts. In Baiji, the Popular Mobilisation 31st Bde claimed that four insurgents were killed in the vicinity of the Baiji Refinery on July 09. One of the assailants managed to detonate his explosive vest, killing one PMF member and injuring four others. Another attack with suicide bombers was reported by PMF 43rd Bde near Tal al-Dhahab, south of Samarra. On July 12, PMF elements again confronted a group of militants in the vicinity of nearby Yathrib.

Activity in Diyala this week was broadly a repeat of the previous week with low-level fighting between ISF and insurgents in the north of the province, IED detonations along the Diyala River Valley and on routes in the region. There were recurring SAF and IED incidents around Abu Saida, Muqdadiya, Jalawla and Khanaqin. There were several notable attacks recorded in western parts of Diyala. A mortar shell impacted in Khan Bani Saad, south of Baqubah, on July 08, killing a woman. One policeman was killed and another was wounded when a roadside IED exploded on a patrol in a rural area near Buhriz. Following a recent spate of organised attacks on civilians and security forces in the area, ISF started a large-scale security operation in Buhriz sub-district.

Anbar Province

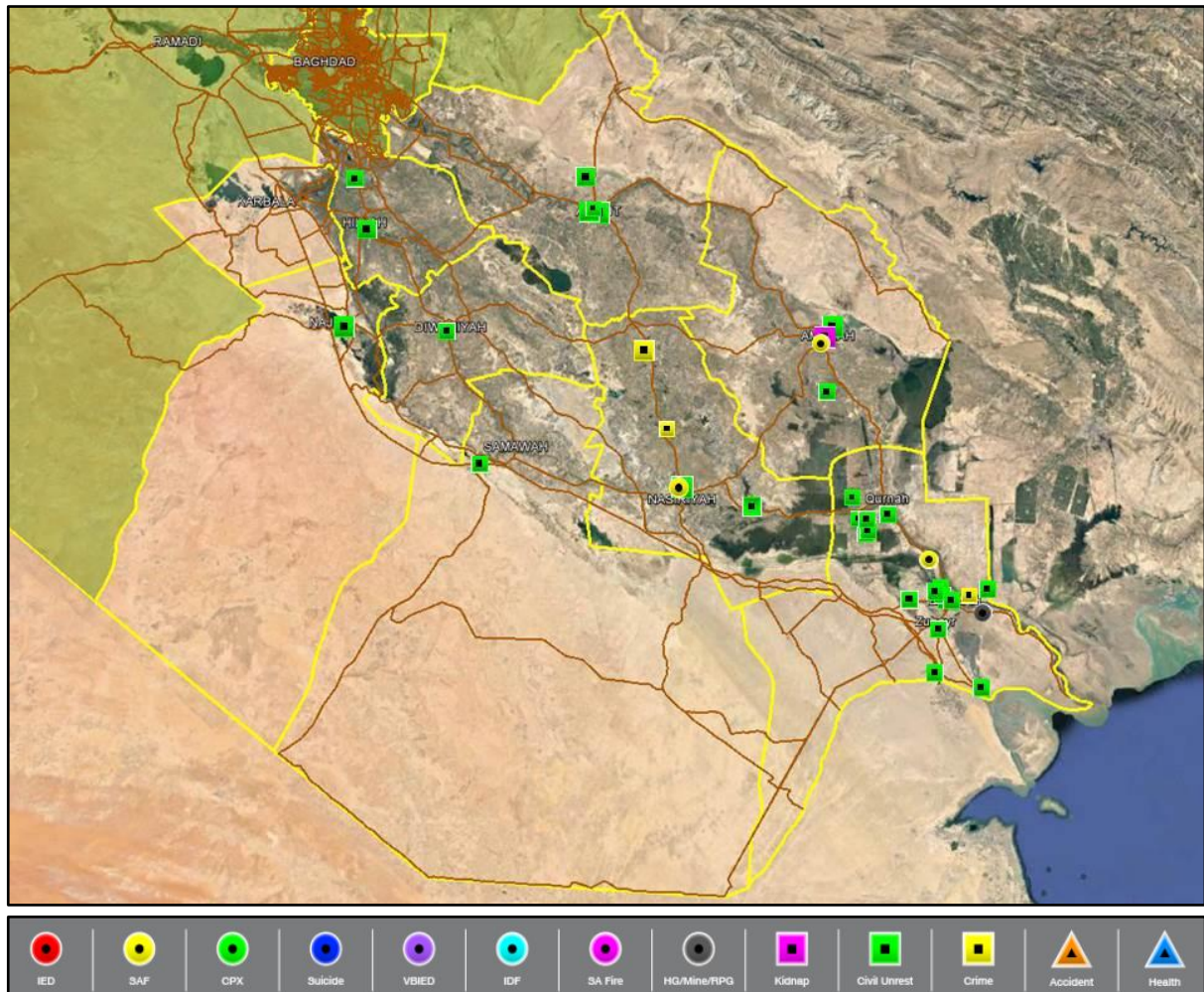
Reporting remained low across Anbar and concentrated in the east of the province. There were two notable attacks on security forces to the west of Ramadi, highlighting the continuous presence of insurgents in the desert districts. On July 08, a joint patrol of the Iraqi Army and Sunni tribal fighters was attacked with rockets on a desert road west of Ramadi; two military vehicles were destroyed and three soldiers and two tribal fighters were killed. Also in the region, a roadside IED detonated against an army patrol in Nukhayb, resulting in an unspecified number of casualties. Three civilians were wounded in a landmine detonation in the Akashat area of Rutbah district. A senior figure of the pro-government Sunni tribal militia claimed that IS intended to launch multiple attacks on Qaim, Rutbah and Akashat in the immediate future. Meanwhile, PMF continue with the construction of additional security berms and trenches in the Qaim area near the border - this to prevent IS infiltration attempts from Syria.

ISF arrest operations have continued with a number of terror suspects arrested and numerous explosive devices found in Ramadi and Fallujah districts. IED clearance and sporadic detonations continue to be seen in Falluja district. A roadside IED detonated, killing two ISF members and wounding another, near Karma.

Capital Region (Including Baghdad City)

The security environment in Baghdad remains stable and permissive for commercial operations provided the adoption of adequate security measures. Once again, there were no high-casualty attacks in the city during the week. An IED detonated in the Baaya neighbourhood on July 12, injuring three civilians. Reporting from Baghdad was dominated by criminal incidents and ISF operations. Background activity, including targeted shootings, armed robberies and kidnappings, continues unabated in the background. There were no high-profile demonstrations seen in Baghdad city, despite warnings that southern protests may spill into the capital. As compared to violent protest activity seen during the week, demonstrations in the capital have remained low level and relatively peaceful so far.

Outside the city limits, IED attacks against civilian targets are likely to remain a constant feature of reporting. An IED detonated near the house of a tribal elder in Taji on July 07; the sheikh and one other civilian were injured. A civilian was killed in a UVIED explosion in Radwanayah, south-west of Baghdad. ISF in Nahrawan sub-district have been put on alert after the recent spate of incidents in nearby Buhriz, across the border of Diyala province. Meanwhile, the Iraqi Army 6th DIV elements continue a search operation in Tarmiyah district north of Baghdad.

Southern Provinces

Protest activity remained the central theme of reporting from southern Iraq. For the second week, protest action was the mainstay of activity in Basra province, driven by the shooting of a protester by ISF on July 08, unrealistic employment demands and the complete lack – in some cases – of basic services. At least 11 sites have been affected by the protest action – the main locations being, West Qurna 1 and 2, Qarmat Ali, Rumaila, Shalamcha, Majnoon, Umm Qasr, the Basra Provincial Council (BPC) and the Basra Oil Company. Other districts and neighbourhoods have recorded sporadic harassing protest activity. On three occasions, the actions by the security forces in the province have resulted in protester injuries and a fatality.

Protest activity is also being seen in other provinces of the region. Tensions remain elevated in Wasit after ISF forcibly dispersed a sit-in protest outside the Electricity Distribution Directorate office in Kut; several protestors were subsequently arrested. Demonstrations were reported in Maysan, Najaf, Babil, Dhi Qar, Muthanna provinces. An increase in the protests' intensity was seen on July 13. In Najaf, protesters demanding improvements of local service provision broke the perimeter of Najaf International Airport. Assaults on political offices of the Dawa Party and the Wisdom Movement were also reported by the media at numerous locations across the region. In Maysan province, hundreds of protesters attacked the Maysan Provincial Council and Provincial Office in Amarah on July 13, demanding improvement of services. Up to 11 people were injured as a result of ISF intervention.

The usual brand of criminal activity and ISF operations continued in the background.

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 (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
EFP - Explosively Formed Projectile	TTP - Tactics, Techniques and Practices
EOD - Explosive Ordnance Disposal (Bomb Squad)	UVIED - Under Vehicle IED
ERW - Explosive Remnants of War	UXO - Unexploded Ordnance
FoM - Freedom of Movement	VBIED - Vehicle Borne IED
Gol - Government of Iraq	VCP - Vehicle Checkpoint
HCN - Host Country National	WIA - Wounded in Action
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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