



The Iraqi Security Forces (ISF) launched operations to retake Ramadi from ISIS on December 22 and established control of the city on February 9. The ISF will need to target remaining ISIS safe havens in the Euphrates River Valley, including Hit and Fallujah, in order to consolidate these gains. These subsequent operations will strengthen the ISF's long-term operational abilities in Anbar while undermining ISIS's control along a key line of communication between Iraq and Syria. The ISF will nevertheless face various challenges to clearing and controlling ISIS safe havens in western Anbar. ISIS has already responded by launching counter-attacks against the ISF's thinly spread forces. These have included coordinated ground attacks and spectacular attacks in Anbar and Baghdad. Tying up the ISF in dispersed engagements could allow ISIS to maintain key territory, vital access points, and lines of communication while undermining the ISF's ability to focus on counter-offensive rather than defensive operations. Second, political pressures in Baghdad and shortages of manpower will also likely precipitate the direct participation of predominantly Shi'a Popular Mobilization fighters in ongoing operations, causing real risks of sectarian violence in majority Sunni areas. Finally, ISIS retains Fallujah as a heavily fortified stronghold on the Euphrates near Baghdad and from it can launch deadly attacks into ISF-secured areas. Popular Mobilization forces, including Iranian-backed proxy groups, have spearheaded operations to encircle Fallujah, but they are aiming to isolate and besiege the city rather than recapture it. The ISF is therefore not likely to regain Fallujah in 2016.

The ISF is also preparing for the recapture of Mosul and has generated forces for that fight. Opening fronts in Anbar and Ninewah simultaneously will likely force ISIS to adopt a defensive posture, as it did in the first quarter of 2015. Ongoing ISIS counterattacks and the scope of subsequent operations in Anbar will likely challenge the ISF and delay the decisive phase of a Mosul operation.

1 Ramadi. 22 DEC – 02 JAN. **Joint forces launch offensive to retake Ramadi.** The Iraqi Security Forces (ISF) with Coalition and Iraqi air support launched operations into the southern neighborhoods of Ramadi on December 22, 2015. The ISF secured key areas in downtown Ramadi by December 29 and areas north and east of Ramadi on January 2 despite ISIS counter-attacks. Sunni tribal fighters continued operations north of Ramadi and held recaptured territory west of Ramadi.

2 Southern Haditha. 03 JAN. **ISIS launches offensive in Barwana resulting in heavy ISF losses.** ISIS launched a multi-axis offensive against Barwana in southern Haditha district, briefly holding parts of the village until forces from the Iraqi Army (IA), police, tribal fighters, and Counter-Terrorism Service (CTS) with air support from the Coalition, IA Aviation, and Iraqi Air Force (IAF) repelled the attacks and cleared the area on January 11, 2016.

3 Nukhaib. 04 JAN. **ISIS attacks ISF checkpoint near Saudi border.** ISIS detonated two Suicide Vehicle-borne Improvised Explosive Devices (SVBIEDs) at an ISF-manned checkpoint at Nukhaib near the Saudi border on January 4. The attack killed eight soldiers.

4 Eastern Ramadi. 11 - 15 JAN. **Joint forces advance east and north of Ramadi.** The ISF and tribal fighters pushed into the neighborhoods east of Ramadi, clearing areas towards Eastern Husaybah of ISIS militants. The ISF and Sunni tribal forces also faced numerous ISIS counterattacks during operations in the desert north of Ramadi, clearing the northern axis on January 21.

5 Husaybah. 23 - 28 JAN. **Popular Mobilization participation reported in Husaybah.** An ISIS VBIED killed six Kata'ib Hezbollah members near Husaybah on January 23. Asa'ib Ahl al-Haq (AAH) claimed that it clashed with ISIS near Husaybah on January 28. The presence of militias in Husaybah confirms the participation of Iranian-backed proxies in areas east of Ramadi, despite government rhetoric against their involvement.

6 Central Ramadi. 23 JAN. **The ISF begins drawdown in central Ramadi.** The ISF completed operations in downtown Ramadi, handing over security to Anbar Police on January 23.

7 Baghdadi. 27 JAN. **ISIS attacks compound near Ain al-Asad Airbase.** ISIS detonated six Suicide Vests (SVEST) and VBIEDs at a residential compound near Ain al-Asad Airbase in Baghdadi sub-district, killing 11 local police officers. ISIS briefly controlled parts of the compound before retreating.

8 Ramadi. 04-09 FEB. **The ISF secures Ramadi and its environs.** The ISF with Coalition air support repelled a broad attempted ISIS infiltration northwest of Ramadi. The ISF also recaptured Juwaibah and Eastern Husaybah, east of Ramadi, on February 8, as well as the road linking Ramadi to Baghdad. Operation Inherent Resolve spokesperson Colonel Steve Warren reported that the ISF have full control of the city of Ramadi on February 9. The ISF's strong foothold in western Anbar allows them to extend offensive operations up the Euphrates River Valley.

9 Western Anbar. 18 FEB. **ISIS launches suicide attack in western Anbar.** ISIS suicide attackers targeted Iraqi forces in 35 Kilo, west of Ramadi, killing a Federal Police commander.

10 North of Haditha. 18 FEB. **ISIS launches suicide attack in northeastern Haditha.** The ISF repelled six ISIS SVEST attackers in al-Sakran northeast of Haditha.

11 Fallujah. 19 - 25 FEB. **ISIS and tribal fighters clash in Fallujah.** Clashes broke out between Fallujah tribes and ISIS in Fallujah from February 19 to 21. ISIS later reportedly kidnapped civilians that led to an end to the clashing. ISIS then reportedly executed tribal members in Fallujah on charges of spying on February 25. Disputes in Fallujah, a town historically sympathetic with ISIS, suggest that ISIS is facing growing internal pressures that may limit its offensive capabilities.

12 South of Fallujah. 21- 22 FEB. **ISIS clashes with Popular Mobilization and the ISF south of Fallujah.** ISIS attacked the ISF north of Amiriyat al-Fallujah using seven VBIEDs, four of which successfully detonated, on February 21. Iranian-backed Shi'a militia Kata'ib Hezbollah clashed with ISIS south of Fallujah on February 22 during continued efforts to encircle and isolate ISIS-controlled Fallujah. Clashes and ISIS attacks south of Fallujah indicate that ISIS under pressure to assume a defensive posture to retain its hold on territory in Eastern Anbar.

13 Western Anbar. 22 FEB. **ISIS attempts suicide attack in western Anbar.** The ISF thwarted an attempted ISIS suicide attack in 35 Kilo, west of Ramadi, killing five suicide attackers. ISIS seeks to demonstrate an offensive capability as it loses control over terrain in western Anbar.

14 Baghdadi. 22 - 23 FEB. **The ISF begins preparations for Hit offensive amid clashes between ISIS and civilians in the city.** The ISF deployed CTS, IA, and police to Ain al-Asad Airbase in Baghdadi sub-district on February 22 and 23 in preparation for operations to retake Hit and Kubaisah. Civilians in Hit District reportedly clashed with ISIS fighters on February 23. Deployments to Baghdadi indicate the ISF's shift to an offensive posture against ISIS while clashes in Hit indicate growing internal pressure on ISIS to control its territory and populations.

15 Abu Ghraib. 28 FEB. **ISIS launches attack near Abu Ghraib.** ISIS stormed a checkpoint, grain silo, and several buildings with five SVEST attackers in Khan Dari west of Abu Ghraib, temporarily establishing control of areas in the district before CTS and Popular Mobilization fighters including Asa'ib Ahl al-Haq reestablished control over Khan Dari and the district.

16 Haditha. 29 FEB-01 MAR. **ISIS launches SVEST wave against Haditha military bases.** Emergency Police forces thwarted an attack by six ISIS SVEST attackers at their headquarters in Haqlaniyah in southern Haditha district on February 29. The clashes killed six Sunni tribal fighters before ISIS withdrew. ISIS launched four SVESTs against an Iraqi Army base near the Haditha Dam killing the Chief of Staff of Jazeera and Badia Operations Command (JBOC) and seven other security officers. The attacks follow ISIS's SVEST attacks in Baghdad and Diyala on February 28 targeting Shi'a civilians and militia leaders.

ONGOING LOW-LEVEL ACTIVITY
Areas assessed to have witnessed ongoing clashes without major territorial gains or losses.

1 Thar Thar. Ongoing low-level clashes continue between ISIS and Baghdad Operations Command (BOC) with support from Popular Mobilization. ISIS has attempted to launch spectacular attacks in the area but none have succeeded.

2 North of Fallujah. Fallujah and the of sub-district Garma in eastern Anbar remain under ISIS control. Ongoing clashes between ISIS and Baghdad Operations Command (BOC) with Popular Mobilization participation continue north of Fallujah and around Garma. The joint force recaptured terrain west of Fallujah on February 3 and continue to push westward. Clashes continue north of Fallujah along the Anbar-Salah al-Din provincial border.

3 Southern Fallujah. Baghdad Operations Command with Popular Mobilization participation continue operations in southern Fallujah in efforts to retake the city via its southern suburbs. Joint forces have had some success in southern Fallujah but have been blocked from entering Fallujah itself. With the ISF occupied in western Anbar and Ninewa, Popular Mobilization will spearhead any continued operation to retake Fallujah. However, their objective is more likely to isolate Fallujah rather than to occupy the city itself.

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