

1 Peshmerga offensive recaptures territory east of Mosul. Peshmerga forces backed by Coalition airstrikes and advisers attacked ISIS on two sides on May 29; they breached the Khazar axis, east of Mosul, recapturing the Shabak village of al-Mufti, and surrounded Zahrat Khatun, reportedly under Iraqi Kurdistan Regional President Masoud Barzani's direct supervision. The operation ended on May 30 leaving the Peshmerga in control of nine villages, including Wardak, Kulbur, Kazkhan, and Tulbud. One Peshmerga Brigadier General was killed during the operation.

10 ISIS launches major attack on recently recaptured areas in Hit District. ISIS attacked security forces and tribal fighters on May 29 in several neighborhoods of Hit District, west of Ramadi, including in al-Bakr neighborhood and in central Hit, killing at least six Iraqi Police (IP) members and wounding an IA Battalion commander. The attack forced CTS, 16th IA Division forces, and the 4th Anbar emergency battalion to deploy to Hit as reinforcements and resecured the area. ISIS launched a similar attack on Kubaisa, west of Hit District, on June 1 using four SVEST attackers, but the ISF thwarted the attack.

9 Reported Iraqi Shi'a militia violations in Garma. The Popular Mobilization handed security for Garma sub-district, northeast of Fallujah, to the ISF on May 27. However, the handover came amid reports from Garma officials and tribal notables that Popular Mobilization fighters, including from a militia closely linked to former Iraqi Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki, destroyed the main mosque in Garma, looted homes and buildings in the area, and kidnapped and executed Sunni Arabs. The Badr-affiliated Interior Minister, PM Abadi's office, and the Popular Mobilization strongly denied the reports.

8 Security forces continue surrounding Fallujah, begin operations in Fallujah city. The ISF and Popular Mobilization continued operations to recapture Fallujah, launched on May 23. Joint forces have recaptured almost all of the villages immediately surrounding Fallujah as of June 1, and continue efforts in Saqlawiyah, west of Fallujah. Iraqi Shi'a militias played a major role in recapturing areas north, northwest, and south of Fallujah, and Iranian Revolutionary Guard Corps-Quds Force commander Qassim Suleimani visited the area on May 23 to support the operation. The Popular Mobilization stated they would not enter the city, however, which would be cleared by the ISF and supporting tribal fighters. A spokesperson for the Coalition stated that an airstrike killed the most senior ISIS leader in the Fallujah area on May 27. The Counter-Terrorism Service (CTS), an elite combat force under the leadership of the Defense Ministry, began clearing al-Shuhada neighborhood in southern Fallujah on May 30.

7 Grand Ayatollah Sistani calls for restraint in Fallujah. Representative of Grand Ayatollah Ali al-Sistani Sheikh Abdul Mahdi al-Karbalai released a statement on May 25 reporting that "Sistani reaffirms his recommendations that the ethics of jihad be respected." Sistani called for fighting in Fallujah to not be "extreme." Sistani met the UN Special Representative for Iraq, Jan Kubis, on May 30, where he reiterated his concerns about proper conduct in Fallujah, expressed regret about the stalled reform program, and reportedly stated that the Iraqi Shi'a religious establishment was prepared to "intervene" if necessary.

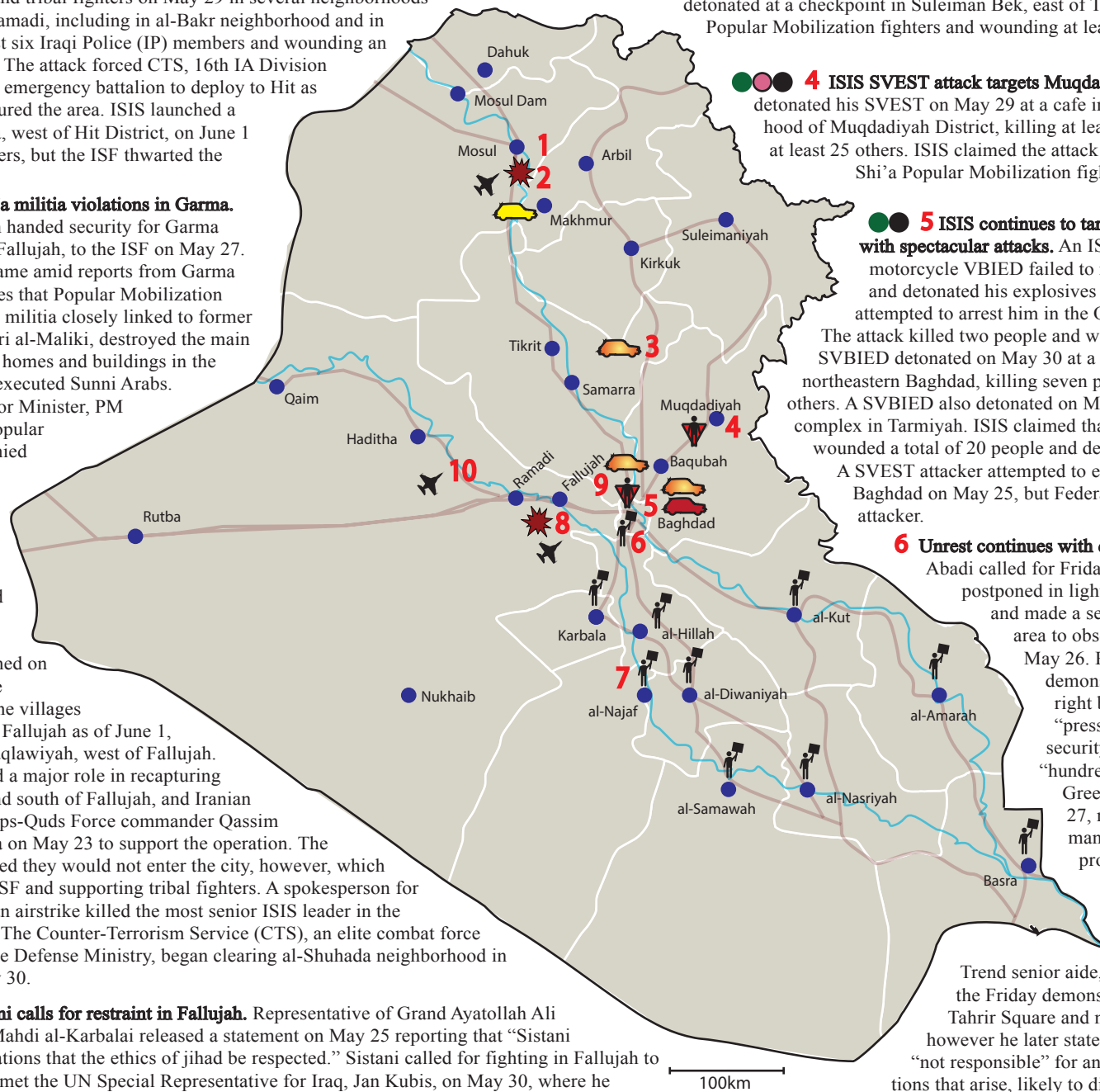
2 ISIS targets Peshmerga stronghold near Mosul. Gwer-Makhmur Peshmerga official Sirwan Barzani stated that five ISIS attackers wearing Suicide Vests (SVEST) targeted Peshmerga forces on the Gwer axis, southeast of Mosul on May 29. Four of the attackers were killed but one detonated his explosives, "slightly wounding" seven Peshmerga fighters.

3 ISIS explosive attack targets Iraqi Shi'a militia stronghold in Salah al-Din. An Iraqi Police source stated on May 31 that an ISIS Suicide Vehicle-Borne IED (SVBIED) detonated at a checkpoint in Suleiman Bek, east of Tikrit, killing at least three Popular Mobilization fighters and wounding at least nine others.

4 ISIS SVEST attack targets Muqadadiyah. An ISIS attacker detonated his SVEST on May 29 at a cafe in al-Mualimeen neighborhood of Muqadadiyah District, killing at least five people and wounding at least 25 others. ISIS claimed the attack targeted Iraqi Army and Shi'a Popular Mobilization fighters near the police station.

5 ISIS continues to target civilians in Baghdad with spectacular attacks. An ISIS attacker on a bicycle or motorcycle VBIED failed to reach his target on May 30 and detonated his explosives while IA members attempted to arrest him in the Oreba Market in Sadr City. The attack killed two people and wounded 10 others. A SVBIED detonated on May 30 at a checkpoint in al-Shaab in northeastern Baghdad, killing seven people and wounding 20 others. A SVBIED also detonated on May 30 at the government complex in Tarmiyah. ISIS claimed that the attack killed and wounded a total of 20 people and destroyed part of the building. A SVEST attacker attempted to enter Kadhimiyah in northern Baghdad on May 25, but Federal Police interdicted the attacker.

6 Unrest continues with demonstrations in Iraq. PM Abadi called for Friday demonstrations to be postponed in light of operations in Fallujah and made a second visit to the Fallujah area to observe ongoing operations on May 26. PM Abadi stated that demonstrations are a constitutional right but asked for them not to "pressure" security forces. Tight security did repulse an attempt by "hundreds" of protesters to enter the Green Zone with tear gas on May 27, reportedly wounding as many as 50 people before the protesters withdrew. Smaller demonstrations also occurred across the southern provinces. Meanwhile, a Sadrist Trend senior aide, Ibrahim al-Jabri, stated that the Friday demonstrations would be limited to Tahrir Square and not enter the Green Zone, however he later stated that the Sadrist Trend is "not responsible" for any spontaneous demonstrations that arise, likely to distance the Sadrist Trend from the negative press resulting from the April 30 and May 20 protests which stormed the Green Zone.



- Major Cities
- Coalition
- Demonstration
- Major Clash
- Peshmerga
- ISF
- Anti-ISIS Iraqi Sunni Tribes
- Iraqi Shi'a Militias
- SVBIED
- VBIED
- Failed S/VBIED
- SVEST
- Airstrikes

Content: Patrick Martin and Emily Anagnostos
Graphics: Patrick Martin
©2016 by the Institute for the Study of War

Iraq's political situation remains tenuous as security forces escalate a major military operation in Fallujah. Iraqi Shi'a militias, tribal fighters, and the Iraqi Security Forces (ISF) continued recapturing territory around Fallujah and began probing attacks into the city of Fallujah. However, there are numerous reports that the Popular Mobilization engaged in sectarian violence in Garma sub-district, reportedly destroying a mosque with explosives, looting homes and buildings, and kidnapping and executing civilians. While the reports could not be confirmed, this conduct is not anomalous for many of the Iraqi Shi'a militias operating in the area. Continued sectarian violence will have serious consequences on the stability of the Fallujah area, providing a support base for Sunni extremist groups and increasing the stabilization force requirements to hold the area. The visit of Iranian Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) - Quds Force commander Qassim Suleimani to the area and the prominent role of Iran's proxy militias underscore the level of influence Iran has over the conduct of the operation; the Popular Mobilization appears content to let the Counter-Terrorism Service (CTS) with Coalition airstrikes recapture Fallujah city itself while Iraqi Shi'a militias establish themselves in the area and take the credit. Grand Ayatollah Ali al-Sistani likely influenced this decision, who insisted on May 25 that security forces respect civilian lives and not to be "extreme." Sistani's statement indicates increasing concern among the Iraqi Shi'a religious establishment over Iran's prominent role in the Fallujah operation.

ISIS also continued to launch spectacular attacks in Baghdad and the northern Belts in areas that have been repeatedly targeted in recent weeks. Despite increased levels of security forces in and around Baghdad, repeat attacks in areas such as Sadr City and al-Shaab suggest that ISIS retains access in Baghdad and underscores the failure of the security forces to address fundamental vulnerabilities in their security system. Similarly, an ISIS attack in Muqadadiyah comes amidst the largest deployment of forces to Diyala Province since 2008. The ISF, occupied with operations in Fallujah, does not have the reserves to increase its presence in these areas. The Fallujah operation in the short-term will drive an increase in ISIS attacks in retaliation for territorial loss; attacks in Baghdad will increase the burden on the security forces to preserve a standard of security with limited resources.