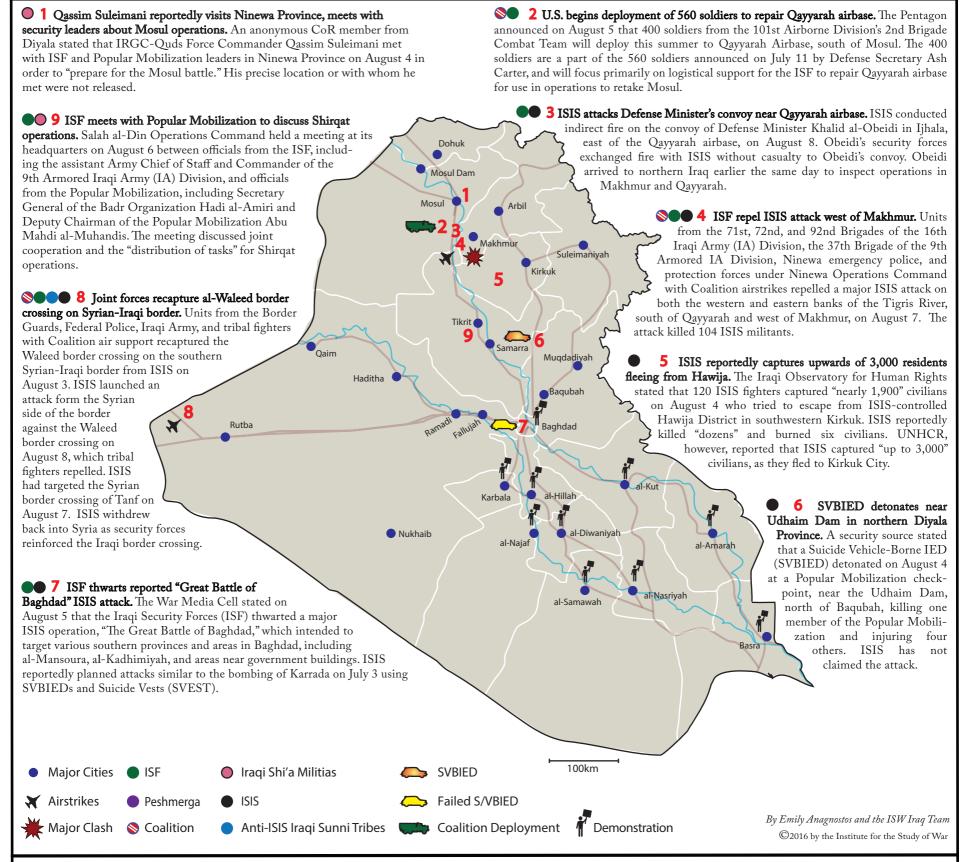


Iraq Situation Report: August 3-8, 2016



The Popular Mobilization, including major Iranian-backed Shi'a militias, sought to formalize their participation in operations in northern Iraq. IRGC-Quds Force Commander Qassim Suleimani reportedly visited unnamed locations in Ninewa Province to discuss operations in Mosul with Iraqi Security Forces (ISF) and militia leaders on August 4. Suleimani's presence in theater before the start of major operations in the past has preceded intense militia involvement in the operation. Suleimani's visits to Fallujah at the start of the operation in late-May and Baiji in mid-October 2015 heralded a significant increase of militia participation in the operations. The pattern will likely remain true, and his visit to Ninewa Province on August 4 indicates that Popular Mobilization, including proxy militias, could play a serious role in upcoming operations in Shirqat and even Mosul. Senior militia leaders, including Badr Organization leader Hadi al-Amiri and Popular Mobilization Deputy Chairman Abu Mahdi al-Muhandis, also met with senior ISF officials under Salah al-Din Operations Command on August 6 to discuss participation in Shirqat. The Popular Mobilization, however, will face resistance against their deployment to northern Iraq from Coalition, Kurdish, and Ninewa officials out of fear of sectarian reprisals on Ninewa's majority Sunni population. The Coalition will also reject militias imposing on long-cultivated Coalition turf. The Coalition will shape the Mosul operation by leveraging air support to eliminate militia participation and by increasing its presence on the ground. The Pentagon announced on August 5 the beginning of the deployment of the 560 soldiers announced on July 11 in order to provide logistical support to Qayyarah airbase, which was recaptured on July 9. The base will serve as a logistics hub for operations into Mosul. Coalition basing in both Qayyarah and Makhmur may limit the militias' expansion towards Mosul, though they are likely to participate in Shirqat.