

**1 Popular Mobilization moving towards Tel Afar.** Popular Mobilization media claimed on January 27 that Mosul Operations Commander Lt. Gen. Abdul-Amir Rasheed Yarallah announced that the Popular Mobilization was assigned to recapture Tel Afar and nearby areas. Popular Mobilization units announced the start of an offensive on February 1 to advance from its position on the highway near Sinjar, where they had established a joint checkpoint with the Peshmerga, and move towards Tel Afar and then western Mosul, closing in the western axis.

**12 Security forces thwart SVBIED assassination attempt west of Ramadi.** The Ministry of Interior announced on January 27 that security forces thwarted a SVBIED assassination attempt on Anbar Police Commander Maj. Gen. Hadi Razig between Ramadi and al-Wifa' sub-district, west of Ramadi.

**11 VBIED detonates in central Ramadi.** A VBIED detonated in front of a government building in downtown Ramadi, injuring four people, on January 25. This is the first successful ISIS spectacular attack in Ramadi since its recapture in February 2016. ISIS has since launched attacks east and west of Ramadi, but rarely in the city itself.

**10 SVBIED detonates at checkpoint east of Fallujah.** A SVBIED detonated at a checkpoint at the eastern entrance of Fallujah targeting a sonar vehicle on January 28. The blast killed two security forces and injured two others.

**9 ISIS targets Popular Mobilization in Karbala desert.** A source in Karbala stated on January 26 that ISIS fighters in a car shot at militia positions, in Nahiliyah sub-district northwest of Karbala, injuring two Popular Mobilization fighters. The militias in turn killed one ISIS fighter and injured two others, but the driver fled.

**8 Two VBIEDs detonate in central Baghdad.** A VBIED detonated in Hayy al-Shorjah in central Baghdad, killing ten people and injuring thirty others on January 25. Later in the day, a second VBIED detonated in Hayy al-Rusafi, also in central Baghdad and not far from Shorjah. The blast killed two people and injured four others. At time of publication, ISIS has not yet claimed these attacks.

**7 CoR appoints Ministers of Interior and Defense.** The Council of Representatives (CoR) voted to accept PM Abadi's nominees for Ministers of Interior and Defense on January 30. Qassem al-Araji, the head of the Badr Organization's political party, was appointed Minister of Interior and Arfan al-Hiyali, a career military man from Anbar who most recently served in the CTS, was appointed the Minister of Defense.

**2 Eastern Mosul IDPs begin returning home.** Local humanitarian officials and the UN reported on January 25 that hundreds of families from eastern Mosul have begun to leave Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) camps near Khazar and Hasansham, east of the city, and are returning home. Local officials reported that the returns are staggered, with return trips from the camps occurring only twice a week.

**3 ISIS activity increases east of Tikrit.** A security source in Salah al-Din reported on January 25 that ISIS militants on motorcycles with "light and medium weapons" attacked members of the Popular Mobilization stationed in Tel Kusaybah, east of Tikrit. A source reported on January 30 that a Suicide Vehicle-Borne IED (SVBIED) attacked a checkpoint in Albu Tarmish, 40 km east of Tikrit, on January 30, killing one tribal fighter, one member of the Iranian proxy militia Saraya al-Khorasani, and wounding three others. The source further stated that Federal Police Lt. Col. Sabah al-Juburi survived an assassination attempt when attackers burned his car while he was on a security mission northeast of Tikrit.

**4 ISIS clashes with security forces east of Dour District in Salah al-Din.** A source in Salah al-Din province announced that ISIS militants launched an attack the night of January 27 in several villages around Dour District, south of Tikrit, burning houses and forcing an unverifiable number of families to flee. Tribal fighters, Salah al-Din police, and Dijla Operations Command (DOC) arrived the next day and clashed with ISIS. According to a local eyewitness, the militants withdrew on motorcycles with night vision goggles to Hamrin Mountains to the northeast and Mtaibijah to the southeast.

**5 Police arrest militants confessing to al Qaeda ties near Samarra.** Leader of the Dhi Qar emergency police battalion under the Samarra Operations Command, Col. Raed Mohsen al-Jabri, stated that police forces arrested two militants in Samarra who confessed to have ties to al Qaeda (AQ) on January 31.

**6 ISIS clashes with PMU fighters near Iranian border.** The Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP) branch in Khanaqin District in northeast Diyala stated that 30 ISIS fighters infiltrated Naft Khana, a large oil field in the district on the Iranian border, on January 25. ISIS killed several individuals and kidnapped a number of oil employees. Clashes broke out between ISIS and the Popular Mobilization in the region. Army units deployed to the area as well, rescuing ten kidnapped workers.



- Major Cities
- ★ Major Clash
- ✈ Airstrikes
- 🚚 Coalition
- 👤 Iraqi Shi'a Militias
- 🟢 ISF
- 🟡 Peshmerga
- ⬤ ISIS
- 🚗 VBIED
- 🚛 SVBIED
- 🚫 Failed S/VBIED
- 🔴 al Qaeda

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ISIS continued to reestablish its presence in its historic support zones around Tikrit, Diyala, and the Euphrates River Valley from January 25 to February 1. ISIS launched several attacks against security forces between Tikrit and the Hamrin Mountains as part of a developing trend of ISIS rebuilding its capabilities in the area to launch attacks and to penetrate high levels of security. ISIS launched a major attack against an oil facility on the Diyala-Iran border. Its continued encroachment on Iran's doorstep could prompt Iran to more aggressively intervene in Iraq, as it did when ISIS neared its borders in 2014. Meanwhile, ISIS demonstrated that it has advanced its capabilities in the Euphrates River Valley, carrying out the first successful spectacular attack in Ramadi since the city's recapture in February 2016. ISIS attempted an attack in the city in November 2016, but it was thwarted. The January 25 attack, though it produced limited casualties, underscores that ISIS has reestablished significant capabilities and a network in Ramadi, likely by infiltrating the city through returning refugee flows.

Other Sunni insurgent groups may form in Iraq as ISIS focuses on shifting from a governing to guerilla style terrorist organization. A police officer reported on January 31 that his forces arrested two militants in Samarra who confessed to having ties to al Qaeda (AQ). AQ will likely work through refugee camps and alongside local insurgent groups, such as the neo-Baathist group Jaysh Rijal al-Tariqa al-Naqshabandiya (JRTN), in order to establish a local affiliate in Iraq as it has in Syria. The anti-ISIS Coalition will need to broaden the anti-ISIS fight to include all Salafi-jihadi groups in Iraq lest it inadvertently produces the conditions in which AQ can resurge in Iraq.