National Overview

Incidents This Week 151 Weekly Trend Down

- Levels of violence fell across Iraq this week, recording the lowest weekly incident count since July last year. However, this reduction does not represent an improvement in security. ISF in Eastern Mosul made modest progress, pushing into three new districts. However, there are increasing indications that the Mosul campaign will take longer than previous assessments suggested.

- Activity levels in Baghdad increased, owing to a marked rise in insurgent activity. A double SVIED attack in Sinak, Central Baghdad, dominated reporting, but was one of six high-profile incidents this week.

- In Anbar, high-profile insurgent attacks continued, and locals in Rawa clashed with IS controlling the town. In the North Central region, reporting was focused mainly on the Diyala-Salah ad Border, where insurgent violence is building.

- A complex attack in Najaf dominated reporting from Southern Iraq. In the southeast, incident patterns and levels were normal for the region.

Figure 1: Regional Incident Levels
WEEKLY INCIDENTS BY PROVINCE: 26 Dec 2016 – 1 Jan 2017

As a result of the open conflict between ISF and IS in the northern and central regions of the country, the weekly Incident totals annotated in RED are not representative of actual levels of activity taking place. The real totals for these provinces and regions will be significantly higher than those officially recorded.
**Regional Summary**

Iraq Weekly Report

**BAGHDAD (City & Province)**

There were 74 incidents in Baghdad Province this week, an increase on the previous week. Much of this increase was attributable to a rise in insurgent activity. IEDs and VBIEDs continued to target peripheral districts. A double SVIED attack at a market in Sinak District on 31 December dominated reporting.

**NORTH (Ninawa, Dahuk & Erbil Provinces)**

There were 18 incidents in the North region. This is the same as the previous week. Subdued incident levels are the result of the way in which kinetic activity is being reported, rather than an indication of reduced violence. Security forces made modest progress in eastern Mosul, security two new districts, despite heavy resistance.

**NORTH CENTRAL (Tamim/Kirkuk, Salah al-Din, Diyala & Sulaymaniya Provinces)**

A total of 26 incidents were recorded in the North Central region. This is a marked decrease on the previous reporting period. Insurgent activity in Diyala was centred in the Himrin area, which has in the past week been subject to both ISF and PMU security operations. Activity in Tamim was largely related to Hawija, including those attempting to escape IS-held territory. Activity continued in northern Salah ad-Din, with attacks against Shirqat and the surrounding region. Efforts to clear Shirqat’s eastern bank remain stalled.

**WEST (Anbar Province)**

There were 18 incidents noted in Anbar. This is a decrease on the 29 during the previous week, and is well below average 2016 levels. The reduced incident rate does not represent a change in the security environment, however, but rather the continued interruption of official reporting. A complex attack in Baghdadi was the most significant incident this week, which involved SVBIEDs followed by a ground assault. In Rawa, there was a firefight between IS militants and members of the Albu Faraj tribe, in the latest in a series of anti-IS incidents in the town.

**SOUTH CENTRAL (Karbala, Babil, Wasit, Qadisiya & Najaf Provinces)**

There were three hostile incidents recorded this week, an increase on the previous week’s one incident. Two of these incidents - a murder and a SAF incident in Kufa and Karbala - were relatively low-level. The third, which occurred on 1 January in Najaf Province, consisted of a SAF and SVIED attack – later claimed by IS – against an ISF checkpoint in the town of Qadisiya, south of Najaf City.

**SOUTH EAST (Muthanna, Dhi Qar, Maysan & Basra Provinces)**

There were 12 hostile incidents recorded in the southeast. This is a slight increase on last week’s 11 incidents, and in-line with established trends. The incidents consisted of six SAF incidents, three IED attacks, two murders and one body find. Additionally, the region is witnessing increased criminal activity.
Baghdad

Incidents This Week 74  Weekly Trend Up

Figure 2: Reference Map & Incident Levels – Baghdad
Outlook

- **High-profile attacks increase in Baghdad.** There were six high-profile incidents during this reporting period, in addition to an increase in IEDs targeting civilians in largely Shia areas. In-keeping with recent patterns, much of these IEDs struck soft civilians targets in peripheral districts. Particularly badly affected this week was Shuala, on the northern fringe of Baghdad City. On 31 December, five IEDs detonated in four different locations in the district. Also targeted by IEDs were Jisr Diyala and New Baghdad — two areas that have been relentlessly targeted by IEDs in recent months. The three VBIEDs reported this week also struck peripheral districts – in new Baghdad on 31 December, Nasser District (east of Sadr City) on 29 December, and Malif in southwest Baghdad, also on 29 December. There are two plausible explanations for this trend of peripheral incident clusters. The first is a clear redevelopment of insurgent networks in the so-called ‘Baghdad Belts’ area. Throughout the course of the year, security forces have been tirelessly engaging insurgent networks that surround Baghdad, with little obvious success. On the contrary, insurgent networks have been evidently rebuilding, and are now capable of exporting violence through sustained attacks against civilians residing in these peripheral districts. A second factor for this peripheral trend is likely to have been the change in security procedures inside Baghdad city following the Karada bombing in July. This led to the deployment of Rapiscan explosive detection vehicles at strategic point, which in turn led to a decline in attacks targeting central areas of Baghdad.

However, at the end of this reporting period, IS mounted its highest-profile attack in central Baghdad since the Karada bombing. On 31 December, a double SVIED targeted a car parts market in the Sinak area, killing upwards of 24 and injuring 39 civilians. The first blast targeted civilians at the market, and was followed by a second detonation that targeted first responders. This preceded the more widespread attack that occurred two days later on 2 January, again targeting central areas. These attacks almost certainly signal an increase in insurgent ability to strike more centrally, and raises the spectre of a return to multi-strike VBIED attacks that characterised the 2012/2013 period.

- **Kidnap of journalist attracts political comment.** On 27 December, female journalist, Afrah Hamoudi, was kidnapped from a residence in Saidiya, after unidentified armed men forced entry to the property. Although the attackers stole a small amount of cash and gold, they abducted only Hamoudi, leaving others at the residence. This, and the fact that Hamoudi was outspoken against sub-state armed groups, has led many observers to argue the kidnap was targeted. The incident has attracted considerable media coverage, as well as political comment from Baghdad Governor, Ali al Timimi, who condemned the action and called for her release. Prime Minister Abadi also made similar comments. Inevitably, whatever the motive behind this incident, this is likely to raise tensions regarding the activities of sub-state armed groups. However, it is important to underline that this incident in isolation does not indicate a change to the operating environment in Baghdad. On the contrary, the attention this incident has drawn, particularly in the international media, is almost certainly the result of Hamoudi’s high-profile media connections with western newspapers. Certainly, kidnaps for a range of motives are routinely reported in the capital, yet have negligible bearing on commercial operations. Moreover, the negative attention this incident has attracted is only likely to increase political criticism to sub-state groups, irrespective of the motive.
Security Overview
Iraq Weekly Report

Forecast

- **Short term:** The latest attacks targeting central Baghdad are likely to prompt increased security measures in the near-term. The recent decision to remove some security measures is also likely to come under scrutiny, and a policy U-turn should not be discounted, with the permanent redeployment of additional checkpoints. Typically within a few days, security measures regress into more familiar patterns, at which point the city becomes equally vulnerable to high-profile attacks. As such, within the next few weeks, further high-profile attacks involving VBIEDs and SVIEDs are inevitably in peripheral districts of Baghdad, prosecuted by insurgent groups most likely operating from the ‘Baghdad Belts’ area. In addition, there is a substantial likelihood of isolated or small numbers of coordinated attacks in more central areas of the city. Insurgent groups will continue to mount IED attacks against Shia civilians, mostly in peripheral districts such as Shaab, Shuala, Jisr Diyala, Zafaraniya and Dora.

A recent visit to the southeast by Nouri al Maliki led to Sadrists organizing protests, one of which turned violent in Basra. This has triggered strong rhetoric from both sides, and a period of heightened inter-Shia tensions. These tensions have been exacerbated in Baghdad by political developments regarding the Baghdad Provincial Council, where an effort remains underway to question the Sadrist Governor. This political tension will be sensitive to rhetoric, and there is an elevated likelihood of low-level attacks on political offices and affiliated persons.

- **Medium term:** The continued displacement of insurgents from Salah ad-Din and Ninawa Provinces is expected to adversely affect security in the Baghdad belts. Although this risk will continue to be mitigated by ISF and PMU operations targeting insurgents in these areas, there will likely be an incremental increase in activity, especially in the northern Baghdad belts. Despite ongoing security efforts to contain increasing insurgent activity, it is almost inevitable that these areas will be used as staging zones for attacks inside Baghdad’s metropolitan area.

- **Long term:** The general outlook for the province remains largely stable, based on the consistent patterns of activity over the past year. An anticipated increase in IS attacks will not preclude normal commercial operations. The heavy ISF and PMU presence in the city and surrounding areas makes an uncontrollable surge in violence unlikely. However, intra-Shia divisions represent a risk to the long-term political and security outlook in Baghdad and the country’s southern governorates.
North

Incidents This Week 18  Weekly Trend No Change

Figure 3: Reference Map & Incident Levels – North
### Outlook

- **Overall progress remains modest following a slowdown in operations in mid-December.** After reports that bad weather had stalled the advance, followed by what security figures described as a ‘tactical pause’ to allow for the arrival of reinforcements, the Mosul offensive recommenced towards the end of the previous reporting period. Although there was some progress this week, IS continue to put up robust resistance. According to US estimates, casualty figures among Iraq’s elite Golden Brigades are significant. Furthermore, IS continues to pressure recaptured districts. Overall, therefore, whilst the campaign is back underway, progress is likely to remain slow and non-linear, with frontline territory changing hands repeatedly.

- **Southeast and Eastern Mosul.** There were two main areas in eastern Mosul where activity was most intense – the adjoining neighbourhoods of Karama and Quds, and the Hadba area to the northeast of the city. Security forces had begun initial forays into the Quds District the previous week, and had met with significant resistance. With air support from coalition assets, however, security forces pushed into Quds and neighbouring Karama, which at the time of writing are best described as ‘contested’. Note that declarations that areas have been liberated have been routinely premature, and a temporary reversal of this advance should not be discounted.

- Equally significant was the activity around the Hadba area, northeast of the city. On 28 December, IS launched a major counterattack against ISF locations on the northern outskirts of Hadba, involving at least three SVBIEDs, several armoured vehicles, and a ground force that some reports suggest numbered more than fifty. Ultimately, security forces repelled the offensive, and later in the week were able to make further gains by moving into the suburban Arkoub area to the north.

- **South.** There was no notable progress made on the southern axis. Security forces retain forward-most positions around Azba and to the north of Hammam al Alil Cement factory along the Tigris River.

- **North/northeast.** There were no significant developments on the northern axis. ISF continued its pressure of Tel Kayf, despite earlier reports that an attack on the town was imminent. To the west of Tel Kayf, IS remains in control of a large area between Highway 2 and the Tigris River. Highway 2 itself – which connects Mosul’s northern neighbourhoods to areas close to the Peshmerga-held Mosul Dam – also remains under IS control.

- **IS mount major attack near Tal Afar.** On 28 December, IS mounted a sustained complex attack against members of the Kataib Hezbollah (KAH) PMU around Tal Afar. The assault involved a fighting force, supplemented by IDF and SVBIEDs targeting PMU lines. KAH repelled the attack, which was almost certainly an attempt to push PMU fighters back from the western fringes of the town. Elsewhere, PMUs moved into and secured the Qamishliya village, southwest of Tal Afar, although no major resistance was detected. Despite being only a small village, this is a strategically important step for PMUs seeking to create a western buffer between the main route between Tal Abta and Tal Afar, without which the route would be vulnerable to ambushes from militants operating freely in the western flank.
Forecast

- **Short term**: The Mosul Operation, which started on 17 October, will continue to see steady progress by ISF, although the speed of the advance is almost certainly going to fall behind most official predictions. Most progress in the near-term is expected on the eastern side of the Tigris. In southern Mosul, security forces are expected to push further into the Sumar, Falastin (Palestine) and Domiz Districts in the near-term, although the current rate of progress suggests it will be several weeks at least before these districts will be considered ‘liberated’. Progress anywhere in Eastern Mosul will not be linear, and the pattern of frontline districts changing hands multiple times before finally falling to security forces will remain a feature in coming weeks. The situation along northern and southern axes around Hamam al Alil and Tal Kayf respectively are unlikely to change in the near-term. Around Tal Afar, PMU forces will to continue capturing smaller outlying villages, but are unlikely to begin the assault of Tal Afar itself in the near-term.

- **Medium term**: In the medium term, it is likely that progress will slow further as the security forces meet more resistance, with IS pushed back into a more condensed area in and around Mosul. Further to the west, ISF will commence an operation to liberate Tal Afar. IS is likely to commit considerable resources to its defence, as many of its high-ranking Turkmen militants come from that area. Further to the west, a combination of Peshmerga, YBS, PKK and YPG forces will seek to liberate the predominantly Yezidi areas to the south of Sinjar. An increased role for the PKK and its affiliates (YPG and YBS) in the liberation of the Sinjar region will likely result in Turkey threatening to intervene. Tensions between KDP Peshmerga and PKK affiliates are also likely to occur in this area after IS is defeated.

- **Long term**: IS will almost certainly lose significant portions of Ninawa Province, and will lose control over Mosul city. A high-intensity but de-centralised insurgency is expected to follow IS territorial losses, both in smaller population centres and inside Mosul itself.
North Central

Incidents This Week  26  Weekly Trend Down

Figure 4: Reference Map & Incident Levels – North Central
Outlook

♦ **Sectarian tensions building in Samara.** A police source in Samarra this week anonymously complained that the city is gradually witnessing a demographic shift due to PMU activity. He stated that Shia militias were involved in the opening of real estate companies and pressuring or intimidating Sunni residents to sell, often at below market prices, in order to resettle Shia families. This, it was claimed, has led to Sunni neighbourhoods steadily becoming Shia. There were also moves to nominate Shia militia members to the local council, whilst shops and commercial projects, and even taxi drivers have been largely taken over or replaced by Shia militia affiliates. Also this week the Salah ad Din Governor Ahmed al-Jabouri welcomed the release of 27 Sunni suspects that were reportedly being held by PMU elements. This incident indicates that Sunni individuals are being detained by PMUs fulfilling an active policing function. This has the potential to isolate the Sunni population of the city, and will likely lead to sympathy or support for Sunni militant groups.

♦ **Diyala-Salah ad Din border remains chronically insecure.** The situation in Mutayjibiya in the provincial border area between Diyala and Salah ad Din remains difficult, with incidents this week prompting comments from Hadi al-Ameri, the commander of PMU forces. Following a militant attack against a PMU outpost, which resulted in two PMU fighters killed and three injured on 31 December, Ameri made statements calling for reinforcements to the region. The area around nearby Udaim also remains an area of notable Sunni militant activity. On 28 December a roadside IED injured a police officer. To the west of this provincial border area is a sparsely populated desert region that has provided Sunni militants with a relative haven stretching to the Tigris River Valley and Tikrit. In this area east of Tikrit on 26 December, a local IS leader was killed during a firefight with ISF, although several militants were able to escape.

♦ **Much of the activity recorded in Diyala this week was focused in the Himrin area.** On 31 December a senior IS commander and one of his bodyguards were killed during an ISF ambush in the Lake Himrin area. The commander was purportedly involved in the facilitation and transportation of suicide bombers in the area, as well as the logistics for explosives. Other activity included an IED that was found and cleared in the Himrin Mountains area on 25 December. Aside from this, ISF operations also resulted in a cache of weaponry discovered on 26 December. However, documents discovered in a bunker during a PMU operation on 27 December indicate that IS is struggling to recruit in the province, especially amongst the youth of Diyala. Nonetheless, the Himrin area remains a particularly difficult area to placate, due to the nature of the terrain, which makes manoeuvre by motorised forces challenging. The area will continue to provide a haven for Sunni insurgents, particularly in the Himrin Mountains. Local politicians and administrative officials have this week made statements about the lack of reconstruction monies allocated to the north eastern area of Diyala Province, specifically the Mansuriya area. This week the head of the provincial council expressed his surprise at the lack of reconstruction projects to rehabilitate infrastructure and schools, which had been damaged during fighting in 2014. So far, it was noted that non-governmental organisations had provided more in the way of reconstruction than the government, leaving many displaced families still to return. It was noted by one member of the provincial council that the continued neglect of the area is negative for public opinion.
Forecast

- **Short term:** Insurgent activity will remain high in the Diyala River Valley, with sporadic incidents also expected along the Diyala-Salah ad-Din border. Northern Salah ad-Din will remain a key driver of the North Central region’s incident levels. There, insurgents will continue to target Shirqat and nearby villages, including with occasional high-profile attacks. The momentum of the ISF operation along the left bank of the Tigris will remain stalled, awaiting the arrival of reinforcements, while insurgents continue efforts to push the security forces from this foothold. Salah ad-Din’s central and southern zones, including Samarra, will likely witness a steady increase in incident levels as IS rebuilds networks and reverts to a clandestine insurgency. It is probable that militant activity in Kirkuk will remain temporarily subdued following recent security operations, though political tensions will continue to build. Sporadic high-profile attacks are anticipated across the North Central region, particularly its urban zones.

- **Medium term:** Hostile activity across Salah ad-Din and Diyala will slowly build as IS reverts to a decentralised insurgency. In Tamim occasional high-profile militant attacks will likely result in continuing tension between the Arab and Kurdish communities. In Tuz Khurmatu and the immediate areas there is an underlying risk of inter-communal violence between Kurdish, Shia Arab, and Turkmen groups due to ongoing political disputes.

- **Long term:** In both Salah ad-Din and Diyala provinces, long-term stability depends on political efforts to engage moderate Sunnis and counter the influence of certain Shia elements to prevent sectarianism. Tensions between Baghdad and Erbil will remain over the status of Kurdish-majority parts of Kirkuk (Tamim) Province – the disputed areas – as well as between local stakeholders. Should IS eventually be pushed out of the Hawija area as expected, the post-conflict period will reflect localised competition and even inter-communal violence between Arab, Kurd and Turkmen as the future of the province is decided.
West

Incidents This Week 18  Weekly Trend Down

Figure 5: Reference Map & Incident Levels – West
Outlook

**High-profile attacks in Anbar.** There was a complex attack in Baghdadi this week, as well as three VBIED finds along the Ramadi-Falluja corridor, with two in Ramadi and one in Habbaniya. It is increasingly apparent that IS are rebuilding their insurgent capability in government controlled areas of Anbar, with a rising number of high-profile attacks spread over a wider geographic area. The attack in Baghdadi on 28 December occurred less than 10 kilometres from the Assad Airbase, which is home to ISF and supporting coalition troops. Insurgents mounted a significant attack against ISF positions just outside the town, beginning with a number of SVBIEDs, which were followed by a ground assault. It was reported that 13 tribal PMU members were killed, and that the attack was only repulsed following the arrival of reinforcements. In addition to this incident, there were three VBIED finds on 26 December. Two were reported in Ramadi – one in the centre of the city, and another discovered in a building in the Five Kilo area in the west of the city. Another was destroyed by controlled detonation in Habbaniya, a town between Ramadi and Falluja. The increase in attacks in Anbar’s urban zones has occurred despite last week’s announcement of troop deployments and the instalment of several Rapiscan scanning devices in the province. IS is likely to continue to increase asymmetric attacks in areas of Anbar now controlled by ISF and government aligned militias, in order to prevent troops being redeployed from these areas to either conduct offensive operations in Anbar, or be redeployed to assist with the battle for Mosul.

**Anti-IS attack in Rawa.** On 31 December, gunmen attacked IS militants in Rawa who were about to execute four people for collaboration with security forces. The attack resulted in significant clashes involving light and heavy weapons, with a number of IS casualties treated at the hospital in the town. The attack was reportedly conducted by members of the Albu Faraj tribe – the tribe of the four individuals about to be executed. The four were then taken away and a curfew imposed on the town. This is the latest anti-IS attack in Rawa, which also witnessed an attack on 21 December, when three IS members were stabbed to death and a vehicle burnt. In addition, weapons and communications equipment was stolen. Similar attacks took place in November and September, where multiple IS members were stabbed to death. Residents in Rawa are likely anticipating an operation to liberate the town from IS, which has been much talked about in the media. Just this week, Anbar officials commented that the operation to liberate the Upper Euphrates would commence soon. However, IS still have considerable capability in the region. On 27 December, a large IS convoy of approximately 20 vehicles was engaged by airstrike in vicinity of Anah, highlighting the strength of resistance any offensive force is likely to face.
Forecast

- **Short term:** Clearance operations will continue along the lower Euphrates, resulting in IED and cache finds. It is probable that hostile incidents will steadily increase in cleared zones, as IS reverts to a clandestine insurgency. This activity will largely consist of low-level IDF, IED and SAF events, though the number of high-profile attacks will gradually increase as militant cells gain capacity. IS operations in the Rutbah area will continue, and further efforts to seize the town are foreseeable. Hostile incidents will also take place along major transport routes in the province. Sporadic assaults are expected against towns and ISF positions along the lower Euphrates, including around Haditha, Kubaysa and Hit.

- **Medium term:** It is anticipated that militant attacks will build steadily, as reconstruction efforts lead to a return of displaced civilians, and as insurgents regroup. Political and tribal violence is likely to worsen over the medium term, particularly as groups compete for reconstruction contracts. In addition to the residual insurgent presence, these tensions will contribute to overall activity levels. It is likely that initial forays will begin into the Thar Thar and Rawa-Anah areas over the medium term.

- **Long term:** In the longer-term, security forces will achieve and maintain control over all of the population centres along the Euphrates River. IS remnants will remain present in desert areas near Thar Thar Lake and in the province’s western desert zones. Militants will engage in a high-intensity insurgency across Anbar through a network of decentralised cells, similar to previous patterns of insurgency before the “caliphate” was established. Western Anbar will remain susceptible to IS attacks in the long term, given the heavy IS presence in the Euphrates River Valley of eastern Syria.
South Central

Incidents This Week 3 Weekly Trend Up

Figure 6: Reference Map & Incident Levels – South Central
Outlook

- **Three hostile incidents in the South Central Region recorded this week.** There were three hostile incidents recorded this week, an increase on the previous week’s one incident. Two of these incidents were relatively low-level in nature. On 28 December, ISF arrested a man driving a stolen car in the centre of Kufa. The arrested man is accused of murdering the owner of the car. Two days later, a man was shot and killed in Karbala by his girlfriend after a personal dispute.

- **High-profile attack (HPA) in Najaf Province.** The third hostile incident in the South Central region occurred on 1 January at an ISF checkpoint in the town of Qadisiya, south of Najaf City. As five IS militants driving in two cars were stopped at the checkpoint, a SAF exchange occurred after which two militants detonated their SVIEDs. Five ISF members and three civilians were killed and 16 people were wounded in the incident. One of the cars the militants were driving in contained a VBIED, which was detonated at the scene. After the attack, ISF in neighbouring Qadisiya (Diwaniya) Province tightened security at entrances to the province. In the desert of Muthanna Province, to the southeast of Najaf Province, ISF was deployed at roads leading in and out of the province. This attack constituted the first HPA in the South Central region since November, when IS attacked Shia pilgrims in Karbala and Babil province. The Karbala attack caused the government to deploy IP units – reportedly equipped with thermal imaging cameras – to positions along the provincial border with Anbar in mid-December, to prevent militants from entering Karbala Province. Like Karbala Province, Najaf Province shares a border with Anbar and is therefore vulnerable to Sunni militancy. Both provinces are home to a Shia holy city - Karbala and Najaf respectively - which present important symbolic targets for IS. It is likely that the militants in the 1 January attack were trying to reach Najaf City, but were discovered by ISF before they could reach their target. The rate of HPAs in the South Central region has slowed during the second half of 2016, in large part due to an increased PMU presence in the region. However, despite the increase in PMU presence, IS remains capable of launching occasional HPAs. It is likely that as IS loses territory in northern and western Iraq, it will revert to insurgent tactics and focus on targets with a high symbolic value, such as Shia holy places.
Forecast

- **Short term:** low-level SAF incidents, murders and kidnapping incidents will continue to form the majority of activity in the South Central region. Incidents linked to Sunni militancy will remain only a minor proportion of activity in the region and will remain in-line with established patterns of activity. However, As ISF and PMU presence in Babil Province - as well as on the Karbala-Anbar border - has increased, IS militants will seek different routes to reach (symbolic Shia) targets in the South Central region, as the incident at the checkpoint in Qadisiya town has shown.

- **Medium term:** IS militants remain intent on attacking symbolic Shia targets – for example Najaf and Karbala – in order to increase sectarian tensions, as well as portray strength. The frequency of employment-related demonstrations is expected to incrementally increase throughout the medium term as budget cuts force the local economy to contract. Elevated levels of unemployment will also drive a gradual increase in acquisitive crime such as theft. Both employment-related demonstrations and acquisitive crime be slightly more prominent in Babil and Qadisiya.

- **Long term:** Progress by the Federal Government in political and economic reform, as well as anti-corruption measures, will have a considerable influence on the level of civil unrest in the South Central region. High-profile attacks will increase as IS reverts to insurgent tactics – after losing significant territory in northern and western Iraq – and re-establishes its clandestine networks. Because of the significant presence of ISF and PMUs in the area, however, it is unlikely that levels of violence will reach the scale witnessed during 2013-2014.
South East

Incidents This Week  12  Weekly Trend Up

Figure 7: Reference Map & Incident Levels – South East

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Outlook

♦ **12 hostile incidents recorded in the southeast.** This is a slight increase on last week’s 11 incidents, and in-line with established trends. These incidents consisted of six SAF incidents, three IED attacks, two murders and one body find. Additionally, the region is witnessing increased criminal activity, resulting from the difficult economic climate and higher levels of unemployment and a decline in living standards caused by low oil prices and budgetary cutbacks.

♦ **Tribal fighting in Basra Province.** Six SAF incidents were recorded this week, of which three were tribal in nature. On the morning of 30 December, a SAF exchange between two members of the Zargan tribe was reported near Shafi. Fighting renewed at 2320hrs that evening, again involving members of the Zargan. It is highly likely that these two incidents are linked to a dispute within the Zargan tribe, which began in October, following the discovery of a married woman’s affair and her subsequent honour killing at the hands of her brother. In November, hostilities continued with a number of SAF exchanges near Shafi. Local sources have reported that attempts to negotiate a settlement between the two parties have proven difficult. The family of the woman who was murdered in October has reportedly insisted on killing the woman’s extra-marital lover.

♦ **The southeast saw three IED attacks this week.** All three attacks occurred in Basra City and caused only material damage, as they were meant to intimidate rather than to cause death or substantial damage. On 26 December, a 150 gram locally-made IED detonated outside a tattoo shop in the Hussein District. Recently, establishments like coffee shops and residences known to sell alcohol have been targeted by religious hardliners in Basra seeking to discourage practices they consider *haram* (forbidden) in Islam. Tattoos are also considered *haram*, therefore tattoo shops present possible targets for the religious hardliners. It is therefore highly likely that this incident is a continuation of this campaign of intimidation. In other incidents, a 200 gram IED detonated outside a residence in Yassin Khaibat on 27 December, causing material damage only. The next day, a 50 gram locally-made IED detonated near the Rayan Mall in Jumhoriya neighbourhood, again causing only material damage. The weight and the placement of these IEDs indicate that they were meant to intimidate rather than to cause death or large scale destruction.

♦ **Two murders and one body find reported this week.** On 26 December, a family dispute escalated into a knife fight which resulted in the killing of one man and the wounding of two others in Basra City’s Muhallab neighbourhood. Three days later, a 74 year old Sunni man was shot and killed by two unidentified gunmen in Abu al-Khaseeb. According to a source with close ties to the Sunni community, locals do not consider this to have been motivated by politics or sectarianism. It is therefore highly likely that the killing was the result of a personal or tribal dispute. On 27 December, ISF found the body of an unidentified man in the Shatt al-Arab near Abu al-Khaseeb. The hands and feet of the men were tied, which rules out an accidental drowning.
Forecast

- **Short term:** The outlook for the south east remains stable. Activity is expected to remain formed of SAF incidents, intimidatory IEDs, kidnap, and low-level criminality. Tribal fighting is also expected to feature prominently, particularly in areas north of Basra City in light of ongoing tensions between the Halaf and Garamsha. While the truce between these tribes is expected to prove durable for the immediate future, underlying tensions are likely to remain following the murder of a Halaf tribesman on 9 December. In the Shafı area, tensions remain high owing to an ongoing internal dispute between families of the Zargan tribe. These tensions have resulted in multiple SAF exchanges since October, and are likely to continue since the family of the woman who was murdered in October reportedly insists on killing the woman’s extra-marital lover. Additionally, latent tensions between the Sadrist Trend movement and the Dawa Party will remain sensitive to incendiary political rhetoric in the near term. Elevated levels of political dissonance typically raises the likelihood of low-level intimidatory attacks on party offices across the south east.

- **Medium term:** Alongside reforms-led demonstrations, employment-related demonstrations are expected to form the majority of protest activity in the south east. Increased unemployment and lower wages are also expected to result in a gradual rise in financially motivated crime. The monthly disbursement of salaries will continue to present an attractive target for the targeted armed robbery of local nationals at the start of each month.

- **Long term:** The outlook for Southeast Iraq in the longer-term is stable. Hostile activity is most likely to arise in the form of low-level SAF. Criminality and tribal confrontations will continue to present a risk of kidnap for ransom, SAF exchanges, and intimidatory IEDs. Demonstrations are likely to be formed of both reform-led protest activity, and localised demonstrations driven by local or employment-related issues.
Forecast of Events 2017
Iraq Weekly Report

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<td>6 Jan 17</td>
<td>Armed Forces Day</td>
<td>National Holiday</td>
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<td>27 May 17</td>
<td>Ramadan Begins*</td>
<td>Month-long fasting period, considered the most holy period in the Islamic calendar</td>
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* Muslim holidays are often determined by local sightings of lunar phases; dates given are approximate.

** Sunni and Shia' celebrate the Prophet’s birthday on different days, though the Sunni date is usually used to designate the national holiday.

Abbreviations and Acronyms

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<tr>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>AAH</td>
<td>Asa‘ib Ahl al Haq (League of the Righteous)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AQI</td>
<td>Al Qaeda in Iraq</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CQA</td>
<td>Close Quarters Assassination</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EFP</td>
<td>Explosively Formed Projectile</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GOI</td>
<td>Government of Iraq</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HG</td>
<td>Hand Grenade</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IA</td>
<td>Iraqi Army</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IDF</td>
<td>Indirect Fire</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IED</td>
<td>Improvised Explosive Device</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ISF</td>
<td>Iraqi Security Forces</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ISIL / IS</td>
<td>Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant/ Islamic State</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IPS</td>
<td>Iraqi Police Service</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IZ</td>
<td>International Zone</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JAM</td>
<td>Jaish Al Mahdi (Mahdi Army)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JM</td>
<td>Jaish al Mukhtar</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JRTN</td>
<td>Jaysh Rijal al-Tariq al- Naqshbandia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LN</td>
<td>Local National</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MO</td>
<td>Modus Operandi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NSTR</td>
<td>Nothing significant to report</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PSC</td>
<td>Private Security Company</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PSD</td>
<td>Private Security Detail</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RPG</td>
<td>Rocket Propelled Grenade</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SAF</td>
<td>Small Arms Fire</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SVBIED</td>
<td>Suicide Vehicle Borne IED</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SVIED</td>
<td>Suicide Vest IED</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TTPs</td>
<td>Tactics, Techniques and Procedures</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UXO</td>
<td>Unexploded Ordnance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VBIED</td>
<td>Vehicle Borne IED</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Constellis is a leading provider of risk management, protective security, crisis management and enabling support services to governments, international organizations and major corporations across the globe. We specialize in serving the energy, construction, extractives, critical infrastructure, development and national security sectors—assisting our clients in understanding risk and in conducting their operations safely and securely, no matter their location. Constellis takes pride in our strict adherence to an exacting code of ethics and rigorous focus on standards and compliance—reinforcing the pioneering role we play in fostering stability, efficiency and sustainable economic development.

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