

BASRA

Weekly Insight Report

19 May – 25 May 2018



Summary

Incidents this Week | **8**

Weekly Average | **13**

Weekly Trend | **Down**

- ◆ Detected SAF incidents fell from 15 to six, of which three related directly to tribal conflict. This represents a significant decrease in both categories, likely due to the commencement of Ramadan.
- ◆ Explosive events remained consistent, with one recorded. This comprised one grenade which was related to a tribal dispute.
- ◆ Protest activity remained subdued, with only two protests recorded. These were driven by political and local issues.
- ◆ The level of recorded crime also remained relatively consistent, dropping from 92 to 88.

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Basra Weekly Incident Levels - 12 Months

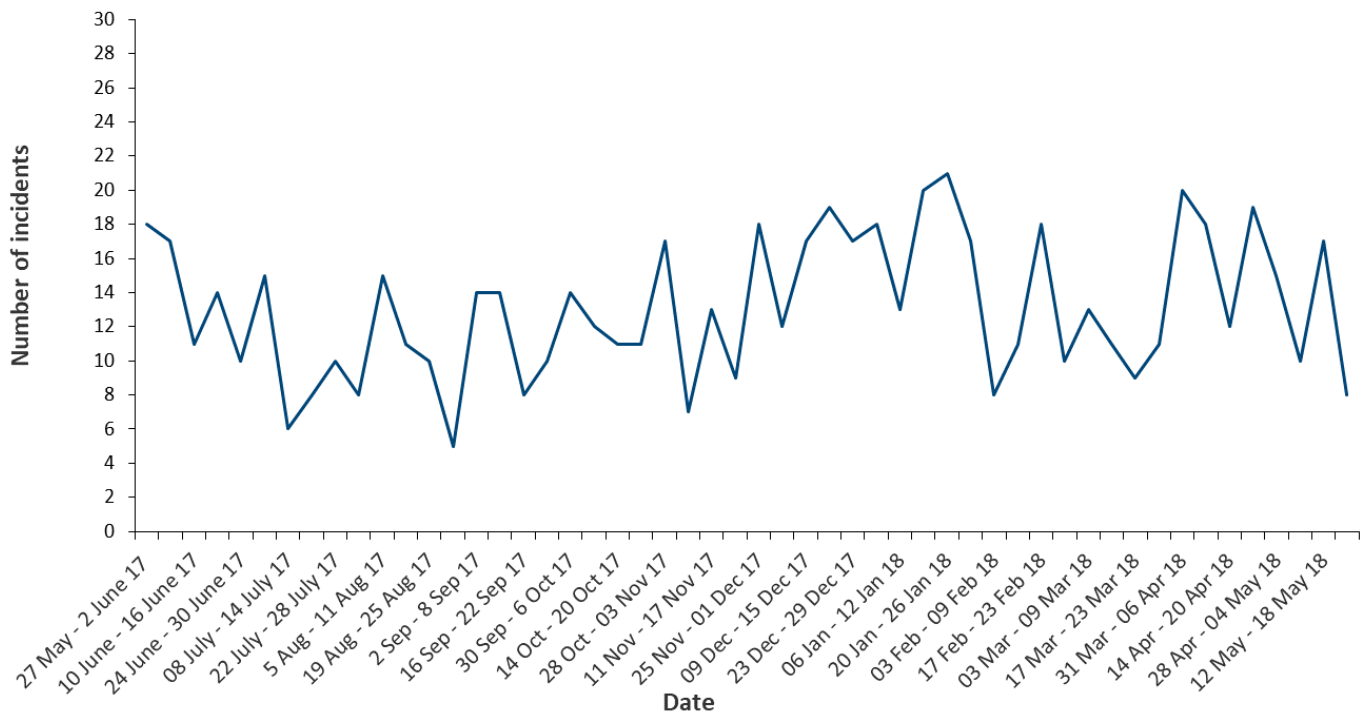


Figure 1: Basra Weekly Incident Levels 27 May 2017 – 25 May 2018

Incidents Overview

Detected hostile incidents decreased this week from 17 to eight. This brings the overall number below the established weekly average of 13. As per established trends, this was largely driven by SAF incidents. Indeed, six SAF events were recorded, a notable decrease of nine compared to the previous reporting period. Three of these were related directly to tribal conflict, also representing a decline in tribal affiliated SAF. However, tribal SAF did represent a larger portion of overall hostility this week. The number of explosive incidents remained consistent, with only one recorded event.

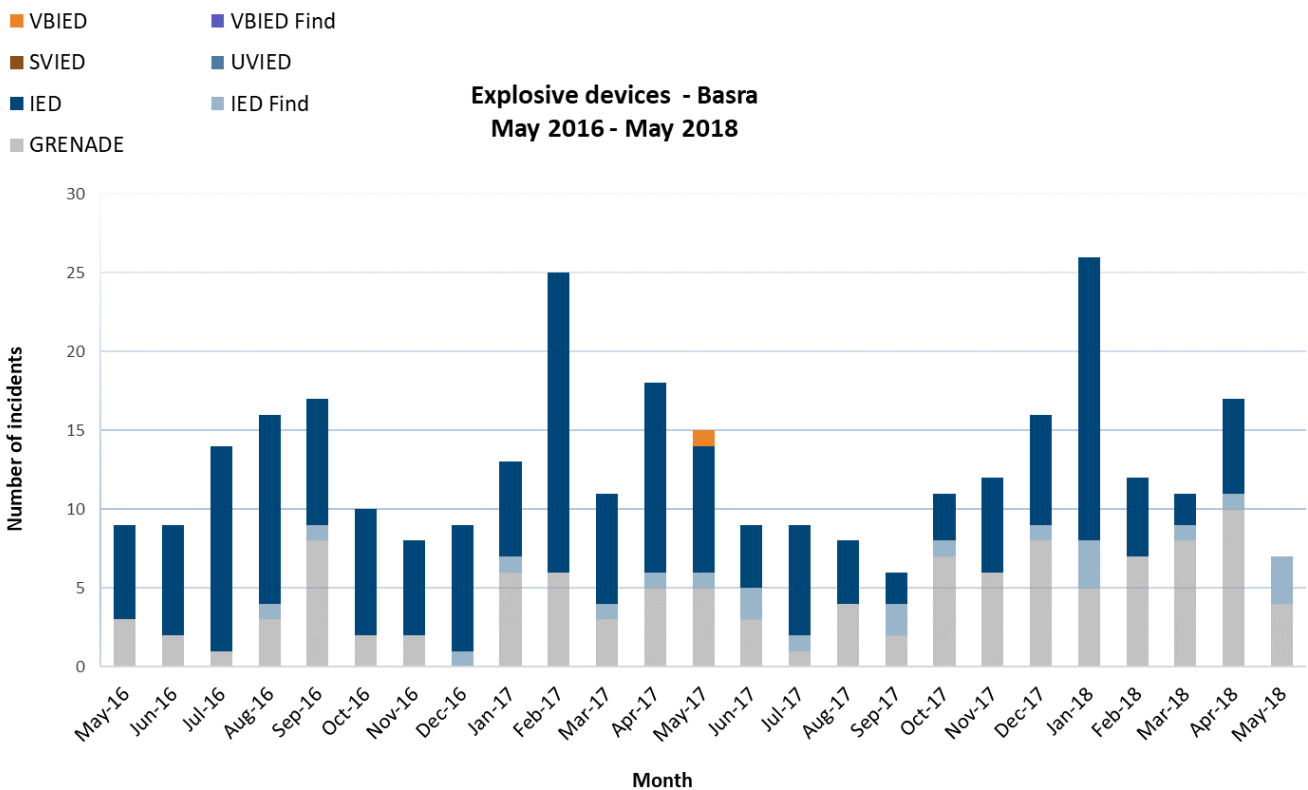


Figure 2: Explosive Devices in Basra, May 2016 – May 2018

SAF

SAF decreased markedly this week from 15 to six. Three of these incidents were driven by low-level criminality and personalised disputes. For instance, on 23 May, a SAF engagement took place between two neighbouring families in Nasir, Qurna. Official sources reported that the incident was the result of a personal dispute between the families and that five men were arrested. On the same day, a Bani Sikeen tribesman was shot and killed by his brother in Zubayr. A man was also arrested for shooting at a residence in Abu al Khasib on 24 May, injuring the homeowner.

Three of this week’s SAF incidents were driven by tribalism in Basra. For instance, on 21 May, members of the Emergency Police Battalion and BaOC QRF were dispatched to Hartha, following reports of an armed tribal dispute between al Suba’eh and Albu Besairi tribesmen. On 22 May, three members of the Sa’idi tribe were shot and killed whilst travelling in a vehicle to a funeral in Hay al-Hussein. Local sources reported that the assailant waited outside the location that the victims were travelling to, before opening fire on their vehicle, highlighting that this was a

premeditated and targeted attack. Given the fatalities, tensions are likely to remain elevated, increasing the likelihood of further related violence. Lastly, a man was arrested after firing a Glock sidearm at a civilian in Hamdan, Abu al Khasib. It is unclear if the victim survived the attack, though, official sources confirmed the attack was the result of an old tribal dispute.

Grenade

On 22 May, a grenade detonated outside the residence of an al-Nu'aimi tribesman in Faw. No casualties were reported, just material damage. Due to the lack of casualties, and timing of the attack, this is assessed as highly likely intimidatory violence.

Protest Activity

Protest activity remained subdued, with only two protests recorded this week. On 18 May, a large group of Sadrists demonstrated IVO al-Arosa roundabout in Tuwaysa. Local sources reported that they were protesting in support of Muqtada al-Sadr's Sa'irun list being able to form the next Government of Iraq. Lastly, a small group of sewerage workers gathered in front of the BPC in Ashar over unpaid wages.

Outlook

The outlook for Basra Province remains stable. Kidnaps, SAF, murders, and intimidatory IEDs will form the majority of activity. These will be driven primarily by personal and financial disputes, as well as general criminality.

The Iraqi National Election was held on 12 May. Following the announcement of the election result on 19 May, a period of horse trading will continue as political blocs attempt to gain a majority and form a Government. Previously, parties have used ministerial positions to solidify alliances, making them lucrative assets for patronage networks. An attendant rise in low-level political violence against party interests during this period is also expected, as rival parties attempt to intimidate opponents in order to increase their bargaining power. Candidates who fail to secure a seat are expected to use reported issues at polling stations, such as voters not being registered, computer problems (systems overheating, or fingerprints not being read), and poorly-trained staff to call into question the result.

Ramadan began on 17 May, and will continue until Eid al-Fitr, which is expected to occur between 15-17 June. During this period, hostile activity is expected to subdue, alongside an increase in arrests against those suspected of participating in haram practices, such as alcohol vendors and narcotics dealers. Sporadic attacks against these premises by conservative religious groups are also likely to continue.

Security operations will continue in Basra City, Zubayr, and areas north of the province such as Qurna, Hartha, Dayr, Nashwa, and Madaina. The operations will include battalions from the 9th Armoured Division, the MOD Intelligence Directorate, the Counter Terrorism Service, Military Police, local Police Units and BaOC troops. The campaign has remained relatively targeted, with reports that ISF are arresting individuals from a Baghdad-issued list based on outstanding arrest warrants. Initially stated goals such as a wide programme of tribal disarmament have failed to eventuate, likely prompting the renewal of typical levels of armed tribal conflict. It is expected that reported incidents of tribal affiliated SAF will continue to fluctuate at levels witnessed prior to the commencement of this operation, despite the ongoing elevated ISF presence in the province. This is likely to elicit political commentary, and, alongside a recent increase in explosive attacks, will place security leaders under mounting pressure. Reactive

security operations are expected should the perception of elevated levels of tribal hostility and explosive incidents persist.

With temperatures continuing to rise, electricity consumption will begin to put a strain on infrastructure, likely prompting localised protest activity. Additionally, public anger over the government's privatisation program endures. It is certain that further civil action relating to this issue will take place, particularly as tribal leaders have endorsed protest activity. Overall, demonstrations on other issues such as jobs, services, and reforms are likely to steadily build in the near to medium term. Reports have emerged that water levels in the Euphrates and Tigris are well-below expected levels, with resultant water shortages and high levels of salinity also expected to provoke demonstrations.

Crime

Incidents this Week | **88**

Weekly Average | **97**

Weekly Trend | **Down**

Due to the violent nature of some criminal incidents (such as SAF, grenade attacks, murder and kidnap), it is necessary to include them in both incident and crime figures.

Overall levels of crime decreased negligibly this week, assessed as highly likely due to the continuation of Ramadan, which commenced on 17 May. One violent incident of note occurred. Official sources reported on 21 May that a Garamsha tribesman’s white Toyota land cruiser was found abandoned behind a Mosque in Jameat. Initial reports were unclear, though it was confirmed that the man had been kidnapped by his father-in-law on 20 May following a business dispute. Open sources subsequently reported that a Hawks Intelligence Cell had uncovered a body in an undisclosed location in Basra. On 22 May, official sourced confirmed that the body had been found in a freezer unit under a pile of rubble at the side of the Muhammad al-Qassim road, a notorious dumping ground for bodies. The body showed signs of decomposition and had a black bag tied around the head.

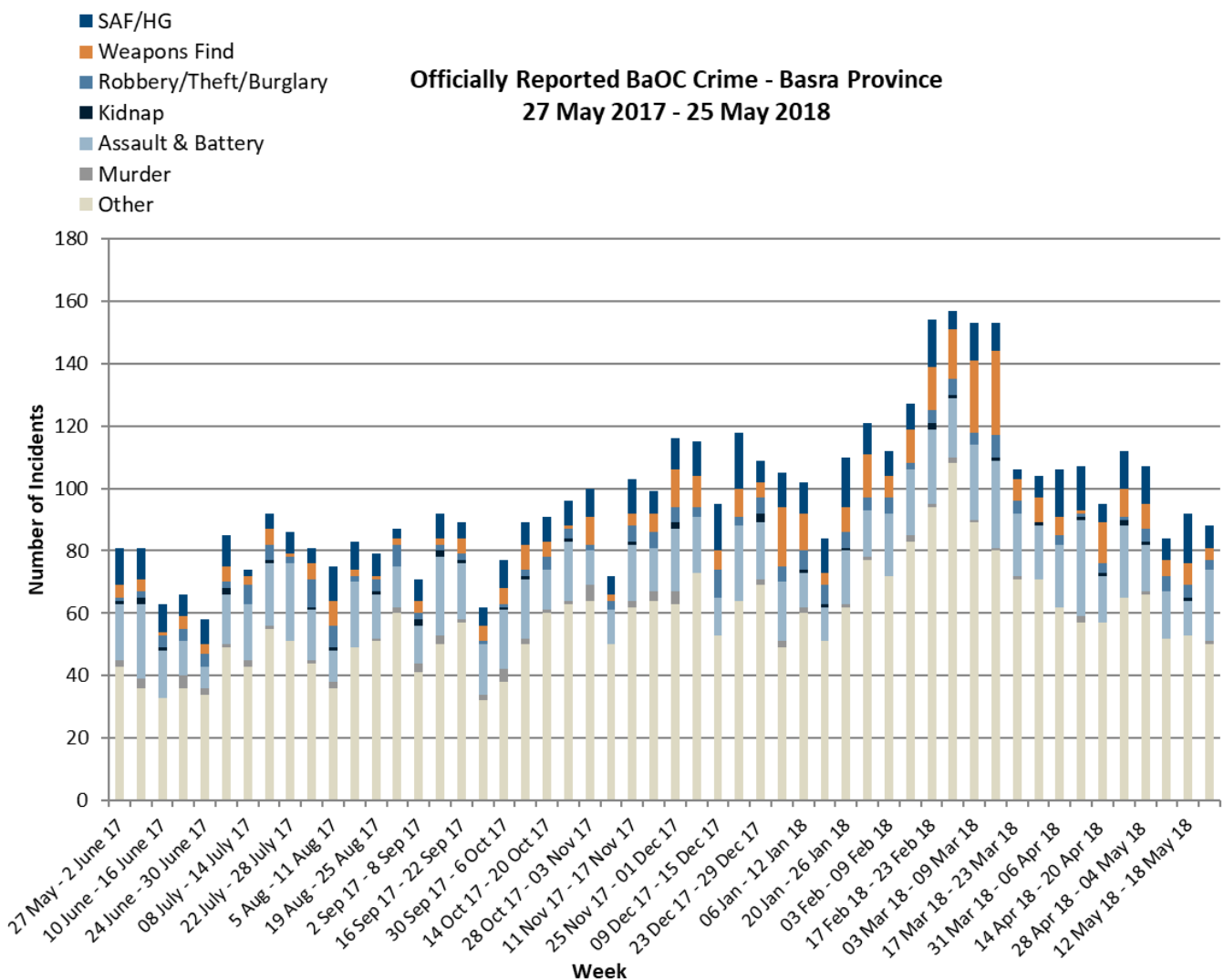


Figure 3: BaOC officially reported crime in Basra Province 27 May 2017 – 25 May 2018

Basra football team to withdraw from the Iraqi Premier League

The Basra football team, al-Mina, are to withdraw from the Iraqi Premier League, due to a financial crisis. The announcement comes following a decision by the Ministry of Transport to pull all funding from the club. (*al-Ghad Press, 22 May*)

COMMENT: Consternation over the running of al-Mina has been a long-standing issue in Basra, as Executive Director, Jalil Hanoun continues to resist efforts to call an election for the Directorship of the club. Hanoun is currently involved in a power struggle with the Ministry of Transport (MoT), who oversee funding of the club, as they try to apply leverage in the hope of ousting him from his position. This conflict has escalated over a significant period of time and has prompted sporadic civil unrest by supporters of the club. For instance, on 19 January 2017, a crowd gathered outside the residence of the then Transport Minister in Maqil following a decision to reduce the club's budget due to financial mismanagement. The crowd were eventually dispersed by the Minister's Guards firing warning shots into the air. It is highly likely this latest decision by the MoT to withdraw funding is an attempt to force an election for the Directorship of the club, a process they have no direct control over. They are also blaming Hanoun for the financial mismanagement of the club, whilst citing his refusal to provide financial expenditure reports for audit as evidence. Both these issues have also resulted in protest activity. Indeed, on 18 February 2018, a demonstration was held outside the al Mina club in Maqil to demand financial transparency and that an election be held. Whilst the decision by the MoT to pull all funding from the club will likely be deeply unpopular amongst supporters, the MoT appear to be counting on Hanoun's poor approval ratings to garner support. Nevertheless, acrimonious scenes of al-Mina players being evicted from the al-Maha hotel in Basra City have been met with disdain by locals. However, a recent decision by Hanoun to sack the Head Coach, Nadhil Shaker, who was a famous player for the Iraq National Team, was equally unpopular. Whilst the future of the club currently remains in the balance, local sources report that the BPC have previously provided funding as a stop-gap measure to keep the club afloat. Even if this measure was to be taken again, it is highly unlikely to pacify disillusionment amongst supporters over the running of the club. As such, there is an increased likelihood of protest activity by supporters demanding funding and/or an election outside the al Mina Sports Club in Maqil in the near future.

Ministry of Water Resources report increased salination in the Shatt al Arab

The Ministry of Water Resources announced that a lack of strategic water reserves is driving an increase in salinity in the Shatt al Arab. (*alMirbad, 21 May*)

COMMENT: Ministry of Water Resources (MWR) official, Zafer Abdullah, has called for Iran to release 10% of the water held in the Karun River dam, upstream from the Shatt al Arab, to reduce salinity levels in Basra's main water source. Historically low levels of rainfall mean that Iraq has less than 8 billion cubic metres of water held in reserve, therefore reducing the MWR's ability to flush out the river itself and drive the salt tide into the sea. Abdullah noted that the Ministry's main priorities will be the provision of potable water, irrigation of 1 million acres of farmland countrywide, and cultivation of 100,000 acres of land for vegetable growth. However, implicit in the official's statement is that if Iran does not agree to help flush out the Shatt al Arab, then all three priorities will be adversely affected in Basra. Water security in Basra is a persistent problem that consecutive governments have failed to resolve, despite comprehensive infrastructural development programmes being approved. For instance, the Basra Water Project is considered to be one of the Ministry of Municipalities and Public Works' most vital ventures and saw a \$375 million USD project awarded to a consortium of Japanese and European companies in 2014. The three-phase project siphons off water from the Shatt al Arab in Hartha, which is then processed through a desalination/purification plant before being pumped to consumers. Despite the work being scheduled to commence in 2015, the project has been continuously delayed, leading to Prime Minister Abadi publicly calling for the project to be expedited in February 2018. Moreover, the failure to make significant headway with the Basra Water Project is not atypical. More manageable tasks such as routine dredging to remove the build-up of sediment in the riverbed and the removal of pollution, also fail to be conducted on a regular basis. As such, Iraq's reliance on neighbouring countries to adjust their own water flows is representative of the enduring critical situation in Basra, and indeed across the southern region with regard to their water security.

Forecast of Events

| DATE | EVENT | COMMENT |
|-------------------|-------------------------------|--------------------------|
| 15 – 17 June 18 | Eid al-Fitr | National Holiday |
| 21 – 24 August 18 | Eid al-Adha | National Holiday |
| 11 September 18 | New Hijiri Year | National Holiday, Shia |
| 21 September 18 | Ashura | National Holiday, Shia |
| 30 October 18 | al-Arba-iniyah | Religious Event, Karbala |
| 11 November 18 | Birth of the Prophet Mohammad | National Holiday |

Abbreviations and Acronyms

| | | | |
|-------------|---|--------------|------------------------------------|
| AAH | Asa'ib Ahl al-Haq (League of the Righteous) | LN | Local National |
| BFA | Basra First Alliance | MO | Modus Operandi |
| BPC | Basra Provincial Council | NSTR | Nothing significant to report |
| EOD | Explosive Ordnance Disposal | PMU | Popular Mobilisation Units |
| GOI | Government of Iraq | PPL | Provincial Powers Law (Law no. 21) |
| HG | Hand Grenade | PSC | Private Security Company |
| IA | Iraqi Army | PSD | Private Security Detail |
| IDF | Indirect Fire | RPG | Rocket Propelled Grenade |
| IED | Improvised Explosive Device | SAF | Small Arms Fire |
| ISF | Iraqi Security Forces | SoL | State of Law coalition |
| IS | Islamic State | SVIED | Suicide Vest IED |
| IP | Iraqi Police | UVIED | Under-Vehicle IED |
| IZ | International Zone | UXO | Unexploded Ordnance |
| IGFC | Iraqi Ground Forces Command | VBIED | Vehicle Borne IED |

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