National Overview

Monthly Total 641  Monthly Trend Down

- Iraq recorded 641 incidents in December, a decrease from the 750 seen in November. These figures do not account for events classed as military action, which still dominates activity across northern and western parts of the country.

- Activity levels declined in Baghdad, the South Central and the West, coupled with an increase of detected incidents in the North, North Central and the South East.

Figure 1: Regional Incident Levels Jan 2017 – Dec 2017
As a result of the open conflict between ISF and IS in the north, central, and western regions of the country, the monthly 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 recorded.
Baghdad

Incidents 143  Monthly Trend Down

Figure 3: Incident Levels – Baghdad (Jan 2017 – Dec 2017)
Outlook

Insurgent activity continued to decline in Baghdad. The capital’s security environment remained relatively stable over the reporting month, with no High-Profile Attacks (HPAs) registered and only low-level violence recorded within the city limits. This prompted local authorities to announce that a number of long-running road closures would be lifted, and checkpoints reduced. The majority of activity in Baghdad city was comprised of low-yield explosive attacks, intimidatory IEDs, low-level SAF exchanges, celebratory SAF events, targeted killings and criminality. Notable attacks attributed to insurgency include IED detonations in Wahida, which wounded five civilians, Dawanim, injuring three, near a café in Jisr Diyala, wounding six civilians and near a shopping district in Bayaa, wounding a further three. Targeted attacks over December include UVIEDs against a Ministry of Electricity employee, a foodstuffs agent and a real estate office owner. Tribal SAF was also reported over the month, the most notable incident of which was recorded on 25 December when gunmen fired at the residence of a Tribal Sheikh in Hay Mekaneek, Dora, wounding his son. Another prominent feature of the reporting month was the relative growth in grenade attacks. The vast majority of these are assessed to be intimidatory in nature, targeting victims’ residences and causing material damage only, though two targeted attacks in Adhamiyah on 21 and 27 December wounded two civilians. Overall, 21 grenade detonations were recorded over the course of the month.

Higher levels of hostile activity in the ‘Baghdad Belts’. Lower levels of activity within Baghdad city largely indicates that the security environment remains robust. Districts surrounding the capital on the other hand have traditionally been harder to secure, particularly considering recent insurgent infiltrations from the north in Diyala and the south in Babil. Explosive attacks were recorded in Zaidan, Radwaniya, Arab Jabour, Maidaan Nahrawan, and Abu Ghraib. Most IEDs were however low-yield and caused relatively few casualties. Following a series of security operations north of Baghdad in Taji and Tarmiyah from mid-November, hostilities in the area resumed toward the beginning of December. Several IED attacks and ambushes against ISF/PMU forces were recorded, prompting a rare series of airstrikes in the region on two consecutive weeks. Security forces stated that these killed several insurgents and destroyed a number of hideouts. Local media sources reported that civilians were also amongst the casualties, though this allegation was not corroborated officially. Following airstrikes and continued security operations in the ‘Baghdad Belts’, levels of insurgent violence dropped midway through December. Indicative of this, ISF announced on 12 December that they had discovered and destroyed 33 IEDs in western Baghdad. Activity toward the south began to increase in the latter half of the month, with multiple IED attacks predominately targeting densely-populated soft targets such as markets and shopping districts. For instance, on 22 December, a roadside IED detonated near a popular market in Suweib, wounding four civilians, while on 21 December, a Tribal PMU member was killed when a UVIED detonated underneath his vehicle in Latifiyah. As security operations in Taji and Tarmiyah drew down toward the end of December, a slight uptick in insurgent activity was also observed here.

Political Stalemate with the KRG. Tensions between Baghdad and the KRG remained elevated over December with no formal dialogue observed. Occasional military build-ups and allegations of PMU violence against Kurds continued to heighten tensions, as did the Federal Government’s announcement that the international flight ban on Kurdish airspace will be extended to 28 February 2018 (originally due to expire on 29 December 2017). Whilst Baghdad was willing to coordinate with the KRG on military operations against insurgents operating in the north, Prime Minister Hader al-Abadi reiterated his position that dialogue would not be entertained with Erbil until the KRG commits to submitting authority of border crossings and airports to the Federal government, as well formally annulling the referendum result.
Insurgent violence will persist in central Baghdad. A potential threat of VBIEDs and suicide attacks remains in the urban areas of central Baghdad as IS de-centralises and reverts to asymmetric tactics. HPAs have however reduced drastically in the capital over recent months owing to an enhanced security posture. The majority of the violence in Baghdad city will likely result from low-level SAF/explosive attacks associated with personal or tribal disputes and criminal activity. Retaliatory tribal violence following the wounding of an al-Akidat Sheikh’s son in Dora is likely considering the attack resulted in a casualty.

Insurgent violence is expected to dominate reporting in the ‘Baghdad Belts’. Of particular note is the Tarmiya area, which is located in close proximity to militant hotspots in Diyala and Salah ad Din. Whilst there has been ISF activity in the northern peripheries of the province, in the absence of a sustained campaign of high profile operations, insurgent violence persists. It is highly likely militant operational capability in this area will rise further, particularly with security in Diyala and southern Salah ad-Din declining. In other areas of the province, IEDs against civilians in markets in Madain, Suwaib, Radhwaniya, Abu Ghraib and Nahrawan are inevitable over the coming months.

Political tensions will continue to increase. Current tensions will gradually intensify over the coming months in the run up to the elections. The situation with the KRG is likely to remain fraught. While strong rhetoric is expected to persist, dialogue tracks are likely to gain ground although additional outbreaks of violence remain plausible. Protest activity and isolated violence against Kurdish interests in Baghdad is also possible. Sadrists will continue their pressure through large-scale and disruptive protests. Their criticism of IHEC will continue, although Sadr will also exploit other single issues and likely populist causes in order to generate support. Intra-Shia divisions represent a risk to the long-term political and security outlook in Baghdad and the country’s southern governorates.
North

Incidents 107  
Monthly Trend Up

Figure 5: Incident Levels – North (Jan 2017 – Dec 2017)
IS declared officially “defeated” in Iraq. The first phase of the western desert campaign was concluded in late November, and combed 175 villages, including the removal of hundreds of explosive devices. Official statistics also indicated that at least 18 VBIEDs or SVBIEDs were destroyed. On 7 December, ISF launched the final phase of the “Messenger of Allah, Last of the Prophets” operation. This was intended to clear the last IS territorial holdings in Iraq’s western desert, before securing the border with Syria. ISF and PMUs pushed west from positions near Hatra, complemented by an advance from northern Anbar. Only minor resistance was encountered, and it is assessed that most IS elements had escaped to Syria. Within a couple of days, ISF announced they had cleared 90 villages and recaptured 16,000 km² of land. On 9 December, Prime Minister al-Abadi announced “full victory” over IS, leading to celebrations across Iraq and a parade in Bagdad. Despite Abadi’s declaration however, insurgent forces have already been seen to be redeveloping in many liberated areas. Those currently situated across the border in Syria also continued to harass PMU forces stationed on the Iraqi side, with a number of expeditionary and IDF attacks reported over the remainder of the month. Notably, on 16 December, insurgents crossed the Iraqi-Syrian border into Tal Safouk in seven vehicles, and launched a complex attack on a PMU faction, claiming to have killed seven militiamen.

Slight increase in incidents over December. A marginal increase in activity is largely attributable to military operations in the western desert, as well as heightened levels of protest activity against corruption in the KRG. Clashes early in the month between ISF and PMUs in the Ninawa Plains, though isolated, are indicative of widespread tension among security components in the Ninawa Plains, with further reports of infighting between rival PMU factions and abuses against civilians. With the demise of Islamic State, there will likely continue to be a resurgence in entrenched societal divisions, with future outbreaks of associated violence expected. Indeed, violence between Yazidi PMU members and Arab tribesmen was reported in Sinjar midway through month. A notable attack was recorded against a Kurdish refugee camp in Makhmour, south-west of Erbil, on 6 December. Initially reported as a VBIED, the attack, which killed five people, was later assessed as an attack from the air, leading Kurdish elements to suspect it was a Turkish airstrike. Ongoing attacks in Mosul indicated the presence of insurgent cells, including newly-emplaced IED detonations and small-scale SAF assaults targeting ISF and security checkpoints. This has led some to believe that the draw down of IA forces, and their replacement by local and federal police units, has decreased security in the city and enabled cells to regenerate. On 13 December for instance, a UVIED detonated beneath a vehicle in west Mosul inflicting several casualties, and IS shot and killed two civilians in east Mosul reported by IS to be ‘Government Spies’. Security operations in Mosul and Tal Afar were however widespread over December, resulting in numerous cache finds and arrests of militants, and largely contributed to reduced levels of violence toward the end of the month. On 30 December for instance, an ISF SWAT team killed five members of IS in Albu Seif, south of Mosul. When IS militants tried to flee the area, they were shot by Coalition helicopters, killing a further 12 members.

Turkey increases military activity in Iraq. Over 14-15 December, Turkey carried out a series of air and artillery strikes in the Sidkan district, Erbil, against suspected PKK-locations, followed by ground operations which resulted in clashes between military and PKK personnel. Air and artillery strikes continued over the month, and a residual Turkish military presence has remained in Sidkan. In late December, Turkey reportedly killed 17 PKK members in a series of airstrikes along the Turkey-Iraq border. Airstrikes recorded over December follow heightened levels of activity observed last month against PKK positions in the mountains of northern Dahuk province and the Asos Mountains, in the north-east of Sulaymaniya, and form part of a renewed surge of anti-PKK operations in Iraq by Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan.
Foreca**

- **Mosul/Tal Afar:** Ongoing clearance operations in Mosul will result in numerous weapons seizures, IED finds and residual detonations. Sporadic attacks carried out by IS remnants are almost inevitable, including suicide attacks launched by sleeper cells. Mosul will see a patchwork of armed and political actors attempt to strengthen their position and gain localised authority. This will likely result in sporadic violence between rival groups. Clearance operations are also expected to continue in Tal Afar. The enduring presence of Iranian-backed PMUs in Tal Afar is likely to increase tensions with local Sunni actors, as well as with Turkey and the US.

- **Sinjar:** The re-emergence of sectarian divisions is highly likely as the transfer of power to federally administered territory ensues, particularly in light of the heavy PMU presence. These divisions may result in continued sporadic outbreaks of armed conflict, and are also expected to heighten regional tensions with Turkey. Residual IS elements in the western desert and those situated across the border in Syria are expected to continue to mount expeditionary attacks targeting PMUs securing the border zone.

- **Kurdish Region:** Tensions are likely to remain fraught regarding the Kurdistan crisis over the coming weeks, following fragile territorial agreements occasional military escalations. Demonstrations against the KRG are likely to persist into January 2018 owing to the scale of the movement. Outbreaks of violence should not be discounted. Turkish operations against the PKK are expected to continue in Dohuk, and escalate in the short term. This will involve further airstrikes and possible cross-border ground offensives.
North Central

Incidents This Month 231  Monthly Trend Up

Figure 7: Incident Levels – North Central (Jan 2017 – Dec 2017)
Outlook

- **Tensions escalated in Kurdish disputed territories.** Tensions continued to rise between Federal forces of the Iraqi government and Kurdish Peshmerga over December. Early in the month, ISF and PMU units deployed near Peshmerga frontlines in the Garmiyan area, on the Sulaymaniya – Diyala border, wishing to impose sole control over jointly administered checkpoints in the region. Peshmerga forces responded with their own deployment, but no physical confrontations were reported. In late December, tensions arose again when Haider al-Abadi reportedly authorized ISF to move into disputed territories between Jalawla and Kalar, eliciting a response by the Peshmerga to increase defence at the Naqshbandi Crossing between Sulaymaniyah and Diyala. Furthermore, the KRG released a series of photographs depicting increased ISF presence in Makhmour, which they deemed an indication that Baghdad was planning to advance on the Khurmala Oil Field. A military ‘stand-off’ was then reported near Tuz Khourmatu between ISF and Peshmerga forces in the district of Kifri on 26 December. The situation was subsequently resolved after commanders from both sides met and agreed to coordinate operations against IS in the district. Though no clashes were reported during the above episodes, tensions remain high and given the precarity of the situation, outbreaks of violence are possible if dialogue does not resume. Significant violence was reported in Tuz Khurmatu over December, where PMUs were targeted repeatedly with mortar strikes. A newly-formed group known as the ‘White Banners’ is thought to be behind the violence reported against PMUs in the district, including a number of armed kidnappings of PMU members. The group is believed to consist of former Peshmerga fighters and displaced Kurdish civilians.

- **IS resurgence in Hawijah.** Hawija has seen a steady increase in incidents since it was declared liberated in October. Although most attacks have been in the form of IEDs, targeting ISF and PMUs, there was a marked shift towards offensive insurgent operations during early December, including a series of attacks against the civilian population. Notably, IS militants assaulted several hamlets east of Hawija on 5 December, killing several civilians and kidnapping nine others, including the Mayor of Khazifi village. Two days later, insurgents wearing ISF and PMU uniforms attacked two villages in the Riyadh area, killing six civilians and wounding eight. Following a string of attacks in Hawijah over the rest of the months, Kurdish officials expressed fears that the district may once again fall to Islamic State.

- **Lower incident levels for Salah ad-Din but significant increase in Diyala.** Incident levels saw a decline in Salah ad-Din, likely a result of the operation to clear the western desert, which has hampered IS activity in the district. Most evident was a reduction in hostile incidents along the Bayji – Shirqat corridor, previously the site of near-daily IDF attacks. Despite the overall decline, however, there were several incidents of note in the province, including a VBIED attack in central Tikrit, which only killed one and wounded two as a result of a premature detonation. Following the resurgence of IS cells on the Salah ad-Din/Diyala border, ISF commenced new operations to liberate the Mutaybijia area on 16 December, supported by coalition aircraft. This area has been particularly difficult to secure over the past year, and following the conclusion of the operation on 18 December, militants reportedly soon re-infiltrated the district. Indeed, despite widespread security operations targeting insurgents in the Diyala River Valley in late November, violence in the area resumed this month with a number of IED and SAF attacks recorded against ISF and PMUs.

- **Mass-protest movement in Sulaymaniya.** Over 16-19 December, mass protests were recorded in multiple cities in Sulaymaniya. Disgruntled by the fallout of the Kurdish Independence Referendum and allegations of corruption within the KRG, Kurdish civilians gathered in great numbers in Sulaymaniya city, Kalar, Ranya, Taqtaq, Chamchamal, Koya, Rawanduz, Halabja, Said Sadiq, and Qaladze. Several events turned hostile, with
reports that government buildings had been set alight including the regional headquarters of the PUK, KRG, Kurdish Islamic Group and Gorran. Activity also spread to Erbil, notably in Rawanduz. On 19 December, authorities responded heavily against protestors as they attempted to set fire to a PUK office, shooting five dead and wounding twenty. To quell the unrest, KRG PM Nechirvan Barzani announced a new regional election in three months. This subdued protest activity in the short term, though tensions remain elevated, and mass demonstrations resumed from 23 December onwards, with further reports of KDP-Peshmerga forces clashing with protestors.

**Incident Types**

![Figure 8: Incident Types – North Central](image)

**Forecast**

- **Security across southern and central Salah ad-Din will continue its decline.** The number of hostile incidents will slowly rise, as IS consolidates its local networks. IS have demonstrated the ability to vacate areas during security operations and re-infiltrate them when the security posture is relaxed. Insurgent activity is also expected to slowly build in neighbouring Kirkuk province, causing instability and political friction. The recent military campaign between Ninawa, Salah ad-Din and Anbar is likely to disrupt insurgent capability in central and northern Salah ad-Din, resulting in a temporary decline in asymmetric attacks in the Shirqat-Bayji corridor.

- **Diyala Province will see a steadily emboldened insurgency.** Insurgent violence will grow in frequency in the northwest of Diyala Province, particularly in rural or semi-rural areas. Violence will persist in the Diyala River Valley. Between Maqadadiya and Khanaqin in north-eastern Diyala, militants will continue to conduct attacks targeting ISF operating in the area.
West

Incidents This Month 38  Monthly Trend Down

Figure 9: Incident Levels – West (Jan 2017 – Dec 2017)
Outlook

- **Significant drop in incidents for December.** Hostile activity was largely subdued in Anbar over December, resulting in the lowest monthly incident figures reported this year. This was linked to the elevated security posture in urban areas, and the pressure militants faced elsewhere in the province. For instance, counter-IS operations were conducted in Houran Valley, Rutbah and along the Lower Euphrates. Large cache finds were also made in Ramadi, Fallujah and along the Anah - Qaim corridor. Midway through the month, ISF and PMU factions conducted clearance operations west of Tharthar Lake, killing a number of IS militants and seizing light and medium weapons. Following a series of attacks in Hit, airstrikes were conducted in the Jazira area, targeting IS militants who had withdrawn into the sparsely populated desert area. West of Rutbah, coalition airstrikes also destroyed four IS weapon warehouses, a refueling truck and vehicles. Over month, ISF cleared hundreds of legacy devices across the province, as well as a number of booby-trapped houses in Anah.

- **Operations to remove IS from the ‘Jazira’ desert concluded but IS still a threat.** Operations to remove IS from the ‘Jazira’ desert area continued in early December toward the north of the province. This included a series of Coalition and Iraqi airstrikes, designed to destroy IS positions and a complex of underground tunnels. Following the reported withdrawal of hundreds if insurgents from the Jazira desert into Syria, PM Haider al-Abadi announced the military defeat of Islamic State on 9 December. Despite this announcement and the conclusion of the Upper Euphrates liberation operation last month, IS remnants continued to demonstrate an operational presence in al-Qaim and Rawa. On 2 December for instance, ISF discovered found and cleared a VBIED emplaced in Rawa al-Jadeed. Three roadside IED attacks were also reported in Hit, which killed and wounded 10 people, including three PMU members. In Qaim, unknown gunmen attacked a residential property in the newly liberated area of Karabla, killing five civilians, on 13 December. It is possible however that this attack was part of a number of retaliatory attacks in the area on individuals with known or suspected links to IS. Notably, on 23 December, Anbar Police announced they had intercepted a VBIED and detained the driver of the vehicle at a checkpoint, west of Fallujah. It is assessed likely that the device originated from the desert areas surrounding Habbaniyah Lake, where insurgents have long been embedded in this largely ungoverned territory. Another VBIED was intercepted in Qaim on 31 December, along with five suicide bombers who were killed before they could detonate their explosive devices. It is likely the militant cell originated from the largely ungoverned desert area between Rutba and Qaim, providing militant cells with a substantial degree of operational freedom.

- **Victory announced over IS, though the Iraq / Syrian border area remained insecure.** Despite Abadi’s declaration of IS’s defeat in Iraq, the group still posed a significant threat, particularly from cross-border attacks in Syria. Notably, on 8 December, IS conducted assaulted north of the Walid Border Crossing using VBIEDs and SVIEDs. Although the attack was repelled by ISF, seven soldiers were killed during the clash. Over the latter half of December, the border area adjacent to Albu Kamal in Syria continued to be subject to cross-border attacks. Indeed, ISF securing the border near Qaim sustained two bouts of IDF, resulting in the death of one soldier and injuries to two others. Further south, PMU forces announced they had repelled a cross border incursion by IS militants, during which an IS vehicle was destroyed and a number of militants killed. An ISF patrol on the border was also targeted with a thermal missile fired from Syrian territory, wounding three soldiers. Late in December, ISF near Husaybah Border Crossing in Qaim came under sniper fire from across the border in Syria. Continued cross-border violence is expected to continue in the short term, largely targeting ISF and PMUs.
Incident Types

Figure 10: Incident Types – West

Forecast

- **Militant threat still apparent despite strong ISF presence.** Although overall incident levels continue to decline, underground cells operating in Anbar’s rural, less governed areas, are expected to remain a threat. Sporadic HPAs will continue, mostly in urban centres with Hit, Fallujah and Ramadi representing the primary targets. Recently liberated territories will likely remain subjected to residual IED detonations and sporadic attacks conducted by regrouping IS cells. Furthermore, until the areas north of Albu Kamal in Syria are completely cleared of IS militants, attempted cross-border incursions and low-level strikes against ISF are expected to continue.

- **Insurgent operations in the Rutba area will continue.** Attacks will persist along the International Highway, particularly in the Rutba and 160 Kilo areas, despite ISF having announced that they have fully secured the road. Anbar’s desert regions have long-permitted insurgents to have relative freedom of movement from which to mount expeditionary attacks.

- **Decentralised insurgency in the province over the long-run.** IS remnants will remain present in desert areas near Tharthar Lake and in the province’s western desert zones. Militants will engage in a high-intensity insurgency across Anbar through a network of de-centralised cells, similar to previous patterns of insurgency before the “caliphate” was established. North-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 Month 26  Monthly Trend Down

Figure 11: Incident Levels – South Central (Jan 2017 – Dec 2017)
Outlook

- **Hostile incidents decreased over December.** Activity remained subdued this reporting period, with most incidents low-level and in line with established trends, largely characterised by low-level criminality and violence linked to localised disputes. Although overall incident levels decreased in South Central Iraq over December, a number of notable attacks were reported. On 7 December for instance, an IED detonated outside the residence of one of Parliamentary Speaker Salim al-Jabouri’s bodyguards in Sabbaghia, Babil. This is assessed to be related to al-Jabouri’s vocal opposition to policies of the Babil Provincial Council, and was therefore likely an intimidatory attack. Two IEDs were recorded in Wasit and Karbala, also assessed to be intimidatory in nature as they detonated in front of civilian residences causing material damage only. In Babil, an IED find was recorded at a petrol station in the centre of the capital, while another was dismantled during a security operation in Fadiliya, northern Babil. These were likely emplaced by insurgents, who are thought to have retained an operationally capable presence in the area. Another possible insurgent attack in the province was the shooting of civilians by unknown gunmen in Hilla, resulting in one death and one injury. A targeted sectarian attack was reported in Babil on 25 December, in which a lawyer, a recently released detainee, and two female members of the detainee’s family were shot and killed by an armed group whilst leaving a provincial court. Tension over sectarian divisions have steadily built in the province, with local security leaders having previously blamed returning IDPs for the rise in militant activity.

  Tribal SAF was reported in Diwaniyah midway through the month, resulting in three people receiving injuries and the arrest of a number of individuals. In Karbala, a tribal dispute near the Central Karbala-Hindiyyah Road resulted in an exchange of gunfire, though no casualties were reported. On 16 December, a police officer was killed during an operation to capture members of a criminal gang in Shaafiya district, Qadisiya. Meanwhile, personal dispute led to two separate shootings in which three civilians were wounded in the Shurta and Rahma neighbourhoods of central Najaf. In Qadisiyah, a gunman shot and killed an ISF member, whom was trying to arrest him. Additional SAF events were also reported in Qadisiyah toward the end of the month, with a man killed during celebratory SAF in Diwaniyah, as well as the murder of a civilian in Asalahiya district.

  - **Trump’s Jerusalem announcement causes multiple demonstrations.** Widespread protest activity was observed across many cities in South Central Iraq following US President Donald Trump’s Jerusalem announcement on 6 December, in which the United States recognised Jerusalem as the capital of Israel, and asked the State Department to begin plans to relocate the US Embassy there from Tel Aviv. On 8 December, protests against this declaration were held in Wasit, Karbala, Najaf, Diwaniyah and Babil. None of these demonstrations were reported to have escalated violently however.

  - **Political disarray in Diwaniyah Provincial Council.** Over December, the Diwaniyah Provincial Council experienced significant turmoil following their decision to remove the Diwaniyah Director of Education, Aqeel al-Jubouri, though the Governor, Sami al-Hasnawi, refused to remove his political ally. This led to the dismissal of several other officials on 16 December, which were justified by accusations of economic mismanagement. Whilst there is probably some truth to these allegations, it is almost certain these actions were politically motivated. The following week, the Head of the Council, Jubair Salman al-Jubouri, was removed from his post. Governor al-Hasnawi subsequently retained his position despite a campaign instigated by the Badrist bloc to oust him. Whilst he looks set to fill the Head of the Council position with an ally, it is highly likely further political wrangling will continue.
**Incident Types**

*Figure 12: Incident Types – South Central*

**Forecast**

- **Reporting in the region will involve mostly low-level incidents.** Established patterns of activity are expected to continue with SAF, IEDs, and kidnaps informing much of the activity. The majority of this will be driven by low-level criminality as well as personal and financial disputes. Protest themes will include employment-related grievances, service provision, plans to privatise the electricity sector, the water crisis and calls for electoral and IHEC reform. Reducing temperatures will see a reduction in energy consumption and therefore protests relating to electricity shortages are expected to decline.

- **Northern Babil will remain the most affected by insurgent activity.** Sporadic HPAs are also likely to occur in the South Central, particularly in Babil and Karbala. The political fallout of any HPA will fuel localised political instability, as security officials and politicians seek to displace blame. This will result in further disagreement over the return of Sunni IDPs.

- **Protests will continue in the region.** It is highly likely that low-level protests regarding proposed changes to Iraq’s voting system and its state electoral organization will continue at their current rate. 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.
South East

Incidents This Month 95  Monthly Trend Up

Figure 13: Incident Levels – South East (Jan 2017 – Dec 2017)
Outlook

- **Increased number of SAF and IED incidents in Basra province.** Tribal violence heightened over December, including several heavy clashes involving light and medium weapons, once again attracting significant media attention. From the 29 SAF events recorded in November in Basra, of which 10 were attributed to tribal conflict, shootings in December increased to 49. Of these, 22 were directly related to tribalism. The most significant series of clashes was sparked off by members of the Shagamba tribe, who gunned down two Ga’abna tribesmen in Alwa Village on 13 December. Heavy fighting was subsequently recorded between the two tribes in the marsh areas of Qurna district, reportedly involving upwards of 200 tribesmen. Fighting between the Shagamba and Ga’abna resumed on 15, 17 and 19 December, with light and medium weapons deployed on each occasion. Explosive attacks also saw an increase in Basra province this month, with two casualties reported. Whilst all IEDs were low-yield, locally manufactured devices intended to intimidate, two grenade attacks were likely intended to harm. The first was a grenade emplaced outside the home of a senior police officer in Hay al-Jihad, which was set to detonate once the front gate was opened, though it was cleared without incident on 14 December. On 20 December, a grenade was thrown at a group of people in Abu al-Khasib by two individuals on a motorcycle, wounding a 19-year-old student in what was likely a targeted attack resulting from personal dispute. Finally, on 29 December, an UXO detonation near the Iraq/Iran border in Shatt al-Arab district killed an individual on a hunting trip.

- **Protest activity related to electricity privatisation continued in South East.** Following electricity-related events in Dhi Qar from late November, increased activity was subsequently observed in Basra. Turnout at the Friday protest on 1 December was notably larger than usual over this issue, with local sources estimating turnout at 1,000. Approximately 400 people joined a protest against electricity privatisation in al-Labani Square, Abu al-Khasib, on 6 December. The next day, a similarly sized demonstration was held outside the Electricity Distribution Office in Sa’i. Additionally, smaller events to protest against electricity privatisation were held in Qurna, Dayr, Zubayr and Imam al-Sadiq, while in Tanuma, Shatt al-Arab, approximately 200 people gathered. A sustained period of anti-electricity privatisation activism in Dhi Qar eventually culminated in the Provincial Governor, Yahya Naciri, announcing the suspension of the work of private company Himalaya. The company had been contracted to supply electricity and collect bills, which was met with vociferous objection from the local electorate. Nevertheless, protests continued in Dhi Qar late into December amidst widespread public condemnation of electricity privatisation, with the Federal government continuing to enact reforms regardless of Provincial opposition. Tyres were burnt and riot police deployed at four events in Nasiryah: one in Haboubi Square, two in Sumer and one outside the Electricity Directorate Building. Tensions have continued to rise across the province over electricity privatisation and it is highly likely further protest activity will occur.

- **Remaining activity across the South East corresponded to establish trends.** An increase of violence in Basra province resulted in the overall uptick of incidents for the South East, though hostile activity in Maysan and Dhi Qar actually saw a slight decline. The reduction in violence is likely to be linked to the onset of the festive period, which involved provincial security plans being put in place across the South East. Only a small number of incidents were reported in Muthanna, consistent with November. The majority of recorded incidents related to criminal arrests, including that of a high-profile drug-dealer in Maysan following a shoot-out between ISF, demonstrations and sporadic SAF events, all of which were either related to tribalism or personal dispute. An IED detonation in Amarah on 16 December injured a civilian when it detonated near his residence,
though the attack was likely intimidatory as the current insurgent threat is assessed to be low. In Dhi Qar, hostile incidents were largely linked to criminality. For instance, a kidnap-for-ransom occurred in a market in Nasiriya on 24 December. Tribal SAF was also reported in Dhi Qar and Maysan. In the former, a murder provoked a large tribal skirmish in Gharraf resulting in 11 casualties while in Maysan, ISF responded to heavy fighting in the Sadiq area and further south in Kahla. On 25 December, reinforcements from across the region arrived in Maysan to assist in a large-scale disarmament operation. During operations, ISF reportedly arrested 118 individuals under charges related to drug trafficking, weapons trafficking and possession, as well as murder, though a tribal skirmish was recorded in Qalat Salih whilst operations were ongoing, casting doubt on their effectiveness.

**Incident Types**

![Incident Types - South East](image)

**Figure 14: Incident Types – South East**

**Forecast**

- **The outlook for the Southeast region will remain 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, SAF exchanges, and intimidatory IEDs. Tribal SAF will remain most prevalent in areas north of Basra City and to a lesser extent in southern Maysan and northern Dhi Qar. Extended periods of tribal hostilities will result in widened media coverage, and the possibility of political fallout, particularly in the case that significant incidents take place inside urban centres.

- **Struggling local economies and lack of employment opportunities will continue to drive protest activity.** Alongside demonstrations focused on reform and corruption, there will be ongoing protest activity regarding employment-related concerns over the perceived lack of investment and job opportunities provided by oil
companies. Opposition to the Ministry of Electricity’s plans to privatise electricity will also remain a key driver of public anger. The water crises observed over November has not abated and is likely to provoke further unrest in the short-term.

- **Political rivalries will continue to build.** Rivalries will intensify ahead of the elections, including between the Sadrist Movement and the Dawa Party. The expected intensification of these conflicts will likely result in an increase in low-level activity against party interests in southern governorates. In the past, this type of activity included small IEDs detonating outside party offices, UVIEDs targeting affiliated persons or SAF against offices or private residences.
### Forecast of Events 2018

Iraq Monthly Report

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<tr>
<th>DATE</th>
<th>EVENT</th>
<th>COMMENT</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>6 January 18</td>
<td>Army Day</td>
<td>National Holiday</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 May 18</td>
<td>al-Sha’baniyah</td>
<td>Religious Event, Karbala</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Abbreviations and Acronyms

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>AAH</td>
<td>Asa’ib Ahl al Haq (League of the Righteous)</td>
<td>JM</td>
<td>Jaish al Mukhtar</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AQI</td>
<td>Al Qaeda in Iraq</td>
<td>JRTN</td>
<td>Jaysh Rijal al-Tariq al-Naqshbandia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CQA</td>
<td>Close Quarters Assassination</td>
<td>LN</td>
<td>Local National</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EFP</td>
<td>Explosively Formed Projectile</td>
<td>MO</td>
<td>Modus Operandi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GOI</td>
<td>Government of Iraq</td>
<td>NSTR</td>
<td>Nothing significant to report</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HG</td>
<td>Hand Grenade</td>
<td>PSC</td>
<td>Private Security Company</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IA</td>
<td>Iraqi Army</td>
<td>PSD</td>
<td>Private Security Detail</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IDF</td>
<td>Indirect Fire</td>
<td>RPG</td>
<td>Rocket Propelled Grenade</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IED</td>
<td>Improvised Explosive Device</td>
<td>SAF</td>
<td>Small Arms Fire</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ISF</td>
<td>Iraqi Security Forces</td>
<td>SVBIED</td>
<td>Suicide Vehicle Borne IED</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ISIL</td>
<td>Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant/ Islamic</td>
<td>SVIED</td>
<td>Suicide Vest IED</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IPS</td>
<td>Iraqi Police Service</td>
<td>TTPs</td>
<td>Tactics, Techniques and Procedures</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IZ</td>
<td>International Zone</td>
<td>UXO</td>
<td>Unexploded Ordnance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JAM</td>
<td>Jaish Al Mahdi (Mahdi Army)</td>
<td>VBIED</td>
<td>Vehicle Borne IED</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
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