

Security incidents between 16-22 June

Summary

Levels of violence continued to rise in Iraq last week, to levels not seen in years. At least 112 people were killed and 193 injured in nationwide incidents, although note that this figure does not take militant casualties into account. The reporting climate is also extremely poor at present so the true number of dead and injured is likely to be much higher.

A total of 36 bomb attacks left 26 people dead and 69 injured. Small arms attacks left 13 people dead and 48 injured, including members of the security forces shot during clashes with militants. Indirect fire incidents (rockets, mortars and military artillery shelling) left 27 people dead and 76 injured.

Militants continue to consolidate their presence in central and northern parts of Iraq. The most severe violence remains concentrated in urban areas with large Sunni Arab populations, including the area surrounding Mosul, south and south-west of Kirkuk, northern Babil province, parts of Diyala province as well as most of urban Anbar and Salah ad-Din provinces. Baghdad also continues to see sporadic incidents, although it is less affected than the ring of hostile districts now surrounding it.

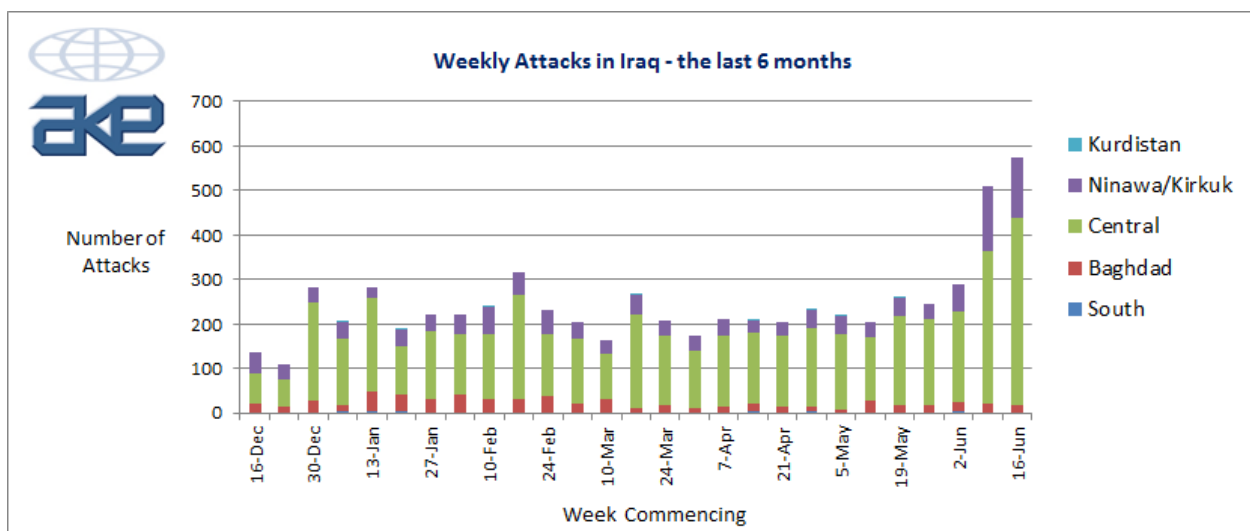
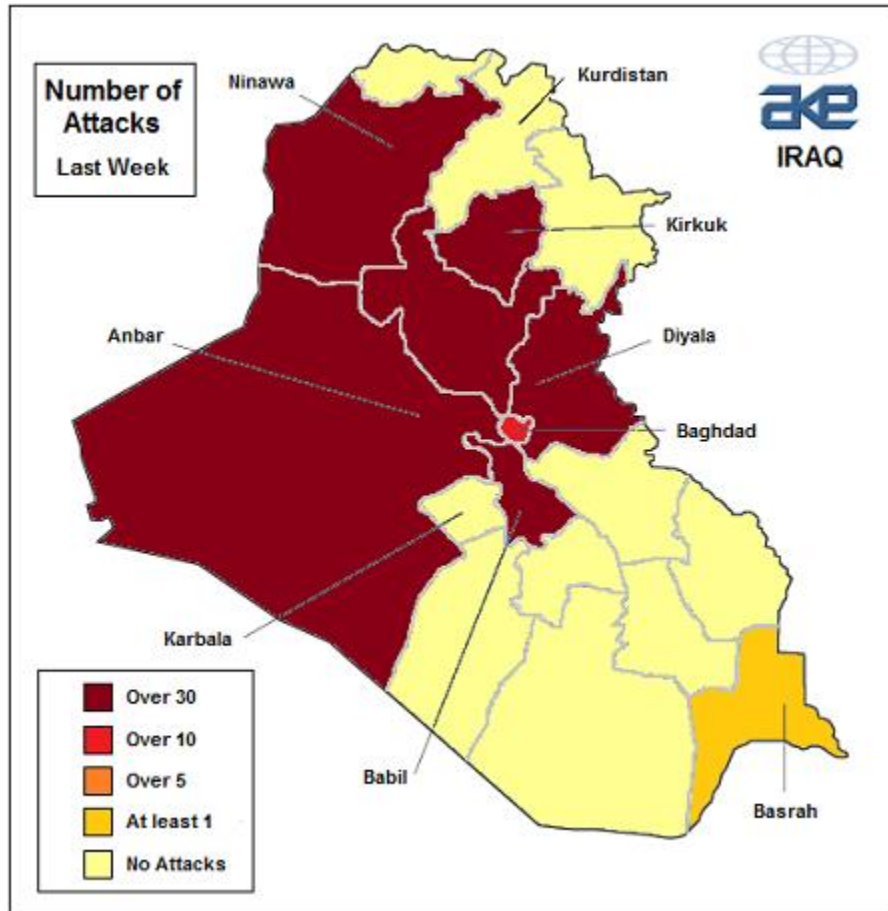
Kurdish Regional Government (KRG) territory and the oil-rich south remain far quieter, although they are not immune from the rising levels of instability in the country. Organisations based in these areas are advised to continue monitoring conditions closely, review security measures and contingency plans and be prepared to take action at short notice in case the situation deteriorates further.

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National Overview

The following map show incidents last week while the graph shows incidents over the past six months.



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Countrywide Analysis

Evacuation Concerns

Last week the United Nations began withdrawing its staff from Baghdad with many employees moving to Erbil, the capital of the Kurdish Regional Government (KRG), and several more relocating to Jordan. Foreign employees from companies such as Exxon Mobil and BP, as well as Turkish workers have also begun to leave Iraq in greater numbers as the violence worsens and ISIL fighting continues around the hinterland of Baghdad. The US has also reportedly sent 275 military personnel to the country, many to the embassy in the International Zone in Baghdad. They arrived to provide assistance to embassy staff, many of whom are being relocated. The personnel will also remain in the country for an additional period of time to provide further unspecified assistance.

The US and UN will be concerned about the deteriorating situation in the country but the staff relocation and arrival of additional military personnel does not necessarily denote that they expect an imminent worsening of conditions in the capital itself. After the UN compound bombing in 2003 and other incidents at US consular facilities, such as the 2012 attack on the Benghazi consulate in Libya, both will likely want to exercise as much caution as possible. Other organisations in the capital are similarly advised to review security, contingency and evacuation plans. Continue to monitor conditions on a regular basis and stay in communications with colleagues both in the country and overseas.

AKE sources on the ground report that foreign embassies will only be able to provide very limited evacuation assistance to private organisations in the event that security conditions deteriorate further. Organisations are strongly advised to review their contingency plans as a result. Do not assume that government bodies or any companies you might be contracting for are obliged to evacuate you.

AKE sources on the ground also report that long queues are forming at the entrance checkpoints to Baghdad International Airport with local residents evidently intent on leaving the city. Personnel travelling to the facility to catch flights should factor in additional time for their journey so they can get through the security checks on time.

Abductions

AKE documented the abduction of at least 152 individuals in Iraq last week, most of whom were taken in Salah ad-Din, Ninawa and Ta'mim provinces. It is likely that more people have been abducted but it is difficult to verify the figures.

A large number of Indian nationals are reportedly missing in Mosul. It is suspected that they may have been kidnapped following the fall of the city. There are a large number of Asian workers in many parts of central and northern Iraq, including in many areas seeing heavy fighting. Consular assistance for these nationals can often be very limited, which means that it will be very difficult for them to get out of the country.

In Salah ad-Din province on 17 June it was reported that militants had kidnapped 15 employees of a Turkish construction company building a hospital near Dawr. Although it was not clear when they were taken, the workers were from several countries including Bangladesh, Nepal, Pakistan and Turkmenistan. On 18 June militants suspected of belonging to the ISIL kidnapped three Turkish engineers and their Iraqi driver near Hamrin. It was reported that they had been attempting to escape fighting in Tikrit and had been heading for Kirkuk.

On 19 June ISIL militants released 44 foreign workers who were kidnapped while working for a Turkish construction company. The workers, who included individuals from Turkey, Nepal, Bangladesh, Turkmenistan and Azerbaijan were released at a checkpoint in a village on the main road between Kirkuk and Tikrit and taken by the Peshmerga security forces to Kirkuk.

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Suicide Bombings

The past week was notable for several reasons, but one issue which may have been overlooked was the fact that no suicide bombings were recorded in Iraq. Given the pace of such attacks over recent months a pattern has emerged. A lull in attacks for a few days normally precedes a spate of suicide bombings, often deployed in co-ordination against high profile targets. It should also be expected that any potential suicide bombers may be preparing to blow themselves up during the holy month of Ramadan (a period associated with victory, during which time those who martyr themselves believe they will have a better chance of reaching Paradise in the afterlife).

Given that Islamist militants now control several parts of the country, the likely targeting of suicide attacks will now be more concentrated than before. Potential targets will include Iraqi security force interests in the districts surrounding Baghdad, as well as Kurdish Peshmerga security force interests around Kirkuk and the frontier of KRG territory with the rest of the country. Attacks may also be planned against central Baghdad, potentially against security force or political interests, Shi'ah militia groups, high profile assets and areas where civilians gather such as mosques, marketplaces, busy roads, cafes and restaurants. Attacks should also be anticipated around Shi'ah shrines such as in Samarra, Kadhimiyah, Karbala and even Najaf, despite heightened security measures in these areas. Any significant attack against an emotive Shi'ah target could prompt a significant backlash against the Sunni community by armed Shi'ah individuals.

Ramadan

- Ramadan is an Islamic holiday celebrated by Muslims worldwide on an annual basis.
- The holy month takes place every year according to the lunar calendar, after the month of Sha'aban and before the month of Shawwal.
- It is due to commence around 28 June, depending on lunar sightings.
- It is marked by a month-long period of fasting from sunrise to sunset, increased communal gathering and reading of the Qu'ran.
- Each day when fasting ends at sunset, large meals are often shared with friends and extended family, which sometimes last into the early morning hours.
- It is important to observe cultural sensitivities during the course of the month.
- Personnel should avoid eating, drinking or smoking in public during daylight hours.
- The period often sees heightened sensitivities. Small disputes could escalate into violence.
- It may be more difficult for security guards to maintain vigilance whilst fasting, particularly during the hot summer heat.
- This could provide greater opportunity to Islamists planning attacks.
- Refugees may become increasingly desperate and could engage in demonstrations, even in normally quiet areas such as around Erbil in KRG territory.
- Bureaucratic processes may be delayed as administrative staff may be observing reduced or unusual working hours.
- Some commercial transportation timetables may be adjusted to allow more time for prayer and religious activity. It is best to check-in with airlines ahead of time in order to ensure flight availability.
- Road traffic accidents have also traditionally increased in frequency over the period, particularly towards the end of the month.
- Although Ramadan is considered a time of religious reflection and piety for the general Muslim population, it is also associated with 'victory' and is therefore used as an opportunity for some Islamist extremists to conduct violent attacks.
- Those martyred in the name of Islam during the month consider themselves to have more chance of securing a place in Paradise.
- Radical, potentially mass casualty attacks involving suicide bombers are therefore considered at elevated risk during the time.

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- The headquarters of the International Committee of the Red Cross were bombed in Baghdad during Ramadan in 2003.
- There has been a lull in suicide bombings in Iraq over the past week. It may be that would-be bombers are saving themselves until the month begins.
- Any lull in suicide bombings is normally followed by a spate of such attacks in Iraq, often involving co-ordinated attacks on high profile targets, usually with multiple casualties.
- Organisations and personnel are therefore advised to exercise caution and be prepared for possible attacks, including on what might normally be considered well-defended targets, such as hotels, security force installations or civic buildings.

The United States

Secretary of State John Kerry arrived in Baghdad on 23 June to meet with senior political figures and reassure the country of Washington's commitment to providing assistance. He has previously signalled his openness to talks with Iran to discuss support for the Iraqi government against the militants. On 18 June US Vice-President Joe Biden also telephoned Iraqi Prime Minister Nuri al-Maliki, and Sunni and Kurdish leaders to press for the formation of a national unity government. This reflects the Obama administration's view that the crisis in Iraq requires an inclusive political solution alongside any military support. However, the involvement of Iranian elements and rise of Shi'ah militia forces in the country could antagonise the Sunni community even more, making it much more difficult for any sort of reconciliation, dialogue and collaboration to take place.

It was announced on 19 June that Washington will send 300 military advisers to help the Iraqi government tackle the militancy. Special Forces personnel will set up joint-command centres in Baghdad and the north of the country. They will begin training and advising the security forces as Iraq continues its push to retake ground lost to the ISIL. They will also be deployed in the field which could theoretically result in them being engaged in combat. The US has already begun to fly manned and unmanned aircraft over Iraq for reconnaissance purposes. The US could provoke greater Sunni animosity if it is seen as supporting the predominantly Shi'ah government in its operations. If it engages in air strikes there will also be a high likelihood of civilian casualties if they are not based on accurate and up-to-date intelligence (which will be extremely difficult to obtain). Any casualties would likely harm the US' reputation and relationship with the Sunni community and make it harder to achieve dialogue and meaningful reconciliation.

Saudi Arabia

Nuri al-Maliki commented that Saudi Arabia should be "held responsible" for financing militant groups in Iraq. While several governments and private citizens in the Gulf are believed to have provided groups with funding, Maliki's comments echo previous statements he has made to deflect attention from his own administration's policy failures. This will likely provoke counter statements from Saudi Arabia and Qatar and further strain their relations with Iraq.

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Projections

- In general, conditions are likely to worsen over the coming days in districts surrounding Baghdad.
- The long-term forecast is uncertain given the extent of current volatility but major conflict within the country is highly likely (although levels of violence have already been extremely high for well over a year).
- Personnel should also note that Ramadan is due to begin around 28 June (depending on lunar sightings).
- The de facto borders have already been altered, which may eventually lead to a revision of the de jure borders of the country. With competing demands for sensitive areas and the country's extensive natural resources (which are concentrated in specific areas such as around Kirkuk and in the far south) the competition will be intense, the stakes high and the propensity for wider violence a definite.
- In the shorter term levels of violence are expected to remain extremely high as ISIL militants attempt to consolidate their position and Shi'ah militia groups, allied with the Iraqi security forces, attempt to fight back.
- The fighting will be most notable in areas with mixed populations, such as Shi'ah-Sunni areas in the central region around Baghdad. Non-Sunni Arab communities in the north of the country will also likely be targeted in sectarian violence.
- Terrorist attacks on civilian, security force and government interests will also continue in government-held and predominantly Shi'ah areas as ISIL fighters will want to maintain pressure on the authorities. They will also want to stir up public animosity and a sectarian backlash, which will polarise the Sunni and Shi'ah communities and likely drive more Sunnis to support the Islamists in return for protection from Shi'ah sectarian attacks.
- A significant attack on the Shi'ah community, such as a shrine, could provoke a massive backlash. Shi'ah militia groups are set to grow in strength and will pose an increasing risk to sectarian relations. They could also pose more of a risk to Western personnel.
- Radical Islamist terrorists will remain intent on conducting attacks in Kurdish Regional Government (KRG) territory (including the recently seized city of Kirkuk). These attacks will be particularly focused on the security forces although political figures, even energy, infrastructure and foreign personnel could also be singled out, although the frequency of attacks will likely remain relatively low on account of tight security measures in place in the territory.
- The government will attempt to tackle the insurgency using air strikes, but they are likely to lead to numerous civilian casualties which will antagonise the Sunni community and make reconciliation even harder to achieve.

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Route Security

Kurdistan

- Checkpoints manned by Kurdish Peshmerga.
- Routes largely safe although terrorists may attempt to infiltrate the territory to conduct attacks.

Non-Kurdish North

- Extremely hazardous journey conditions with widespread militant presence.

Central

- Extremely hazardous journey conditions with widespread militant presence and ongoing clashes in districts surrounding the capital.
- Shi'ah militants hostile towards Westerners are maintaining security on the Baghdad-Samarra road at present.
- There is a high risk of roadside bombings, small arms fire and kidnapping in the area.

Baghdad

- Hazardous journey conditions, even on short routes.
- Risk of roadside bombings, shootings, small arms fire, kidnapping.
- UVIEDs pose a risk to vehicles left unattended and those stuck in traffic.
- Congestion is a daily occurrence in the city centre.
- Security will be heightened for the foreseeable future amid the risk of further terrorist attacks.
- Curfews will be subject to change at short notice.
- Note that queues are common at checkpoints leading to Baghdad International Airport.
- Personnel should schedule in additional time for all airport journeys.
- Note that conditions could also worsen significantly in the city.

South

- Violence less common but still a concern.
- Risk of roadside bombings, small arms fire and occasional kidnapping.
- There is little in the way of support in the event of a breakdown or security incident.
- Route closures and curfews an occasional occurrence, particularly after attacks or during protests.
- The return of Shi'ah militia groups could raise the risk for travellers in the area.

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Kurdish Regional Government (KRG) territory (Arbil, Dahuk, Sulaymaniyah)**Current Analysis**

There were no violent incidents reported last week. In general, the region sees very little violence but it should not be regarded as a risk-free environment.

The large number of refugees arriving in the territory, especially around Erbil province, will put a massive strain on the authorities. Tensions could escalate and lead to sporadic demonstrations over the coming weeks, particularly as summer temperatures are rising. Sensitivities could also become especially high when Ramadan begins (around 28 June).

Long queues were reported at petrol stations in the area over the course of the weekend. These have the potential for turning violent as tempers could flare. Demand for electricity is also likely to be high as summer temperatures rise and air conditioning usage increases.

It was reported by one Iraqi channel in Baghdad that ISIL had reactivated a sleeper cell in Erbil which was possibly intent on targeting the Hotel Rotana in the city. However, this was from one source only and it has not been verified nor backed up by other sources. The report has also been denied by Kurdish officials.

Furthermore, it is uncommon for ISIL to announce specific targets ahead of an attack, although it is not unprecedented. The group has specifically threatened to attack holy Shi'ah interests such as the shrines in Samarra, Kadhimiyah, Karbala and Najaf. However, such announcements are more likely aimed at stirring up sectarian tensions.

It is also uncommon for the group to announce the re-activation of a sleeper cell in advance of an attack. They would normally make such an announcement after any such cell had executed a successful attack, so as to maximise its publicity.

Nonetheless, radical Islamists have attacked hotels and other civilian interests in KRG territory in the past (incidents occurred in 2004 and 2005 for example), so an underlying risk exists. There was also a slight uptick in terrorist attacks against the Kurdish security forces in the last half of 2013.

KRG territory will likely remain at risk of sporadic terrorist attacks, mostly focussed on the security forces, political buildings and areas where civilians gather, including hotels, restaurants, mosques, markets and cafes. However, the overall impact and frequency of attacks will be minimised by the security measures of the Kurdish Peshmerga forces.

On 18 June a government was formed nine months after elections took place in the region. The Kurdish Democratic Party (KDP) led by Massoud Barzani will lead the government as the party with the most votes, but it will partner with the two other main parties in the region, the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK) and

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the Gorran (Change) party. Barzani called for industry and tourism to be prioritised but the deteriorating security environment elsewhere in Iraq will likely pose a major concern for the new government. According to open sources Barzani also called for Peshmerga veterans to sign up to help the security forces protect the southern borders of the region.

The Non-Kurdish North (Ta'mim and Ninawa)



Current Analysis

- Levels of violence remained extremely high over the past week.
- However, the poor reporting climate makes it difficult to determine how extensive the violence has been.
- At least 11 people were killed, which is moderate when compared to the usual figure range of 7 and 17, but it is likely that dozens more people were killed.
- It should be assumed that conditions are highly hazardous in parts of Ninawa and Ta'mim province not under the control of the Kurdish Peshmerga forces.

It should be noted that while the ISIL currently appears to be strong, there is potential for fragmentation in the group further down the line, particularly if the fighting becomes bogged down in certain areas and the morale of the group falls. ISIL fighters and the Ba'athist Naqshbandiya militant groups have reportedly begun fighting each other in parts of northern and central Iraq. The ISIL may succeed in establishing itself as the dominant militant force in the area but if it loses the support of the Sunni community in the region its power will likely become eroded over time.

Kirkuk

ISIL fighters continue to clash with the Peshmerga security forces around southern and western Kirkuk and along the frontier between areas of militant and Kurdish control.

On 17 June the security forces and tribal militia thwarted an ISIL attack on a Shi'ah shrine to Imam Reza south of Kirkuk. It was reported that one civilian was injured during the clashes. Further attacks on Shi'ah religious interests should be expected as the militants are trying to stir up sectarian animosity. A backlash from the Shi'ah community in response to an attack on a Shi'ah interest will force many Sunnis to seek ISIL support and protection from what could be indiscriminate violence against Sunni civilians.

Tensions in the area also go beyond the Sunni-Shi'ah and Arab-Kurdish divisions often seen in Iraq. The President of the Iraqi Turkmen Front (ITF) political party, Arshad Salihi, announced the creation of a Turkmen militia as heavily armed men gathered outside the ITF office in Kirkuk on 17 June. Salihi commented that the militia would fight Kurdish Peshmerga forces if they refused to hand control of the city back to the central government in Baghdad. At the same time the Kurdish Regional Government (KRG) parliamentary speaker, Yousif Mohammed Sadiq, reported that the KRG had no intention of handing the city back to the central government. This exchange suggests that ethnic tensions in the diverse and

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contested city may continue to rise, which could lead to sporadic conflict in the coming days, weeks, months and even years.

Mosul

A security source quoted in open Iraqi media reported that fighters from the ISIL had ordered the demolition of all churches in Mosul although the accuracy of the report could not be determined. On 18 June ISIL militants stormed the Younis and Shet shrines in Mosul, stealing ancient artefacts and damaging the shrines before leaving. The damage will likely intimidate minority communities in the area and polarise society. The stolen goods will also likely be sold to raise further finance for the group (it has done the same thing in Syria).

Within Mosul city itself it is being reported that ISIL militants have begun tearing down statues of cultural figures deemed un-Islamic. Shops selling alcohol have been destroyed and a number of mosque imams, likely to be moderate in their outlook, have reportedly disappeared and replaced by more hardline speakers. Fuel and electricity shortages are being reported although there has been no significant increase in the price of food. Otherwise it is difficult to verify conditions on the ground. Several sources report that conditions are largely calm, although anyone who is not a Sunni Arab observing relatively conservative religious practises will be at significant risk of harm, while government airstrikes could also cause significant indiscriminate casualties in built-up areas.

Tal Afar

This strategically important settlement lies on the main highway between Mosul and northern Syria. Fighting is likely to persist in the area as ISIL militants are keen to secure the town while many of its ethnic Turkmen residents have formed a local militia to protect their homes. Its capture will allow ISIL militants to transfer resources between these fronts more easily. With the stakes high for both sides, the fighting is likely to be bitter and casualty numbers high.

Central Iraq (Anbar, Babil, Diyala, Karbala, Salah ad-Din, Wassit)



Current Analysis

- Levels of violence rose further over the past week.
- At least 85 people were killed, which is much higher than the pre-2013 figure range of 5 to 30 weekly fatalities.
- The true number of casualties is also likely to be greater, but it is difficult to verify figures amid the poor reporting environment.
- Note that AKE does not take militant casualties into account.
- In total, explosive attacks left eight people dead and four injured.
- This is a decline from recent months. It would appear that the militants are more intent on open fighting with the Iraqi security forces, rather than conducting explosive terrorist attacks.
- Bombings will remain a risk primarily in areas still controlled by the government.
- Otherwise, small arms attacks left five people dead and 40 injured.

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- Indirect fire attacks (including rockets, mortars and military artillery assaults) also left 27 people dead and 76 injured.
- The military continues to use artillery shelling to target built-up areas suspected of housing militants.
- Hospitals report that many civilians are being killed and injured in the operations.
- Medical supplies are insufficient in numerous parts of the region and the actual casualty figures may be much higher.
- The tactic will likely cause a significant increase in resentment towards the government over the coming months.

Anbar

Heavy clashes continue to take place across Anbar province, with ISIL fighters seizing a number of towns and cities. Over the course of the weekend ISIL fighters reportedly seized control of much of Qa'im district, including the local border crossing point with Syria. A security source quoted in open Iraqi media also commented that many Syrian refugees have returned to Syria to flee the fighting. It will now become much easier for the militants to move weapons, supplies and fighters across the Iraq-Syria border. This will allow them to consolidate their presence in the provinces surrounding Baghdad. Fighting is therefore likely to intensify in the central region.

On 16 June the Iraqi air force used helicopter air strikes against a military fuel depot, to prevent the fuel stores falling into the hands of militants, near Habbaniyah air base. This sort of tactic may be used in several parts of the country threatened by militant capture, including facilities at Baiji oil refinery.

Salah ad-Din

Heavy fighting continues throughout Salah ad-Din province. Clashes continue around Baiji refinery. It will be a major strategic gain for the ISIL if it seizes the facility (which normally produces around 170,000 bpd) although the army has threatened to destroy it before letting it fall into their hands. It will be difficult to defend the site if the group still holds any part of it, not least because it is so far from other major military assets.

Shi'ah militia forces are reportedly gathering around Samarra with the intention of protecting the al-Askariyyah mosque. An attack against the site could prompt a massive backlash against the Sunni community by armed Shi'ah individuals as was the case when the shrine was attacked in 2006. Shi'ah militia groups, included the anti-Western organisation Asa'ib Ahl ul-Haq are also reportedly patrolling the road between Samarra and Baghdad. While these groups will strive to protect the facility they are poorly trained, hard to control, unaccountable and potentially hostile to Westerners.

On 20 June 45 unidentified bodies with gunshot wounds were discovered in Samarra district. Once the fighting subsides the authorities may discover numerous mass graves in the aftermath of the killings suspected of being performed by ISIL fighters.

The militants are in control of large parts of the Tuz Khurmatu area, where they are likely to clash with Kurdish Peshmerga forces defending areas with significant Kurdish populations.

A security source quoted in open Iraqi media denied reports that ISIL fighters were still in the Dhulu'iyah area. The source claimed that the security forces and the local population and tribal fighters drove militants from the area on 16 June, although this report remains unconfirmed. Further fighting throughout the urbanised belt of the province should be anticipated.

Diyala

The ethnically and religiously mixed (and therefore volatile) province of Diyala is likely to be hotly contested. The past week has seen heavy fighting around Ba'qubah. The mixed city was once regarded as a major hotbed of Islamist violence and ISIL fighters will likely be intent on securing it once again. Many have been based in the outskirts of the city for months, with militant operations believed to have been taking place in

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the Hamrin Mountains further north for a considerable period of time. The wider province is likely to be divided up between Kurdish controlled areas, Shi'ah areas with possible Iranian support and Sunni areas with a strong ISIL presence.

Kurdish Peshmerga forces, backed by heavy artillery and tanks, continue to fight suspected ISIL fighters for control of Jalawlah and its environs. The Iraqi air force also continue to target militant positions with air strikes. Two Kurdish Peshmerga fighters were reportedly killed in a shootout with ISIL militants in the Rabi'ah area on 16 June.

ISIL militants are also reportedly detaining civilians, including ethnic Kurds, for unknown purposes. It is not known if they are being held for ransoms or if they are being interrogated, tortured or murdered for the purposes of gathering information or intimidating the local community. Around 10-15 Kurdish civilians were reportedly taken on 18 June. Whatever the purpose of the abductions, it has resulted in widespread fear in the Sa'adiyah area.

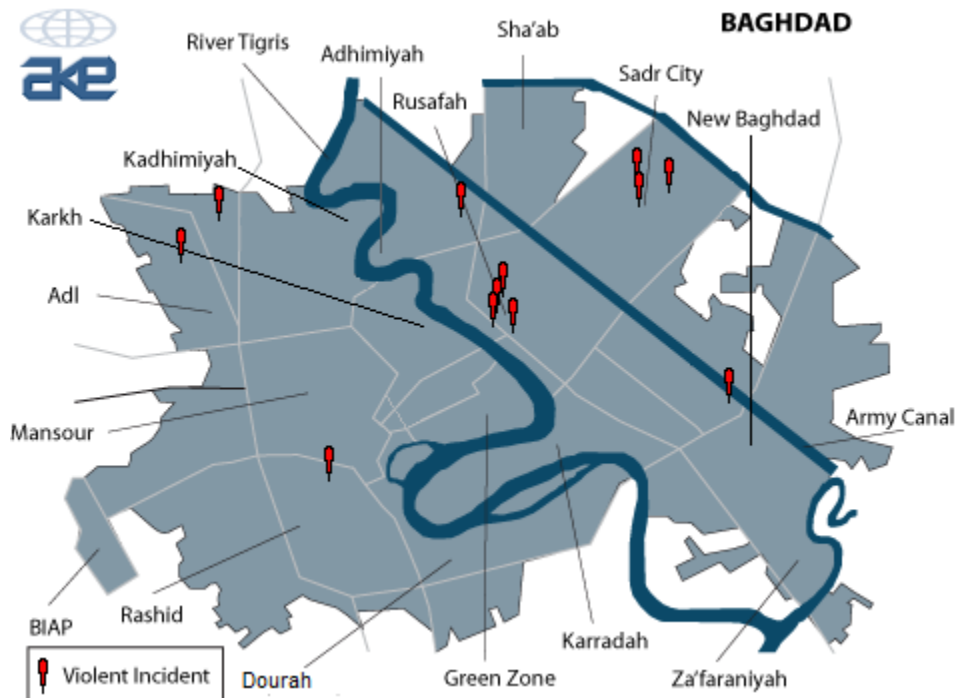
Babil

The Jurf as-Sakhr area and surrounding towns should be regarded as hazardous with the potential for escalation over the coming days and weeks. If ISIL militants are intent on encircling Baghdad this part of Babil province will likely become more of an area of focus. What is concerning is that an expansion of militant activity in this area would threaten the movement of traffic between Baghdad and provinces further south, including oil-rich Basrah and the holy city of Najaf. Both of these cities host the only other secure airports that can be reached from the capital by car in the event that Baghdad International Airport becomes closed. However, local Shi'ah residents are reportedly signing up to fight alongside the security forces. There could be a rise in sectarian tensions and even the targeting of civilians over the coming days and weeks.

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Baghdad



Current Analysis

- Levels of violence fell slightly in Baghdad over the past week but the city will remain a major focus of militant attention.
- ISIL fighters will likely want to maintain pressure on the Iraqi authorities.
- As such they will continue to try and conduct terrorist attacks in the city.
- At least 16 people were killed last week, which is still high when compared to the 2012 average of 13 per week.
- Explosive attacks left 13 people dead and 40 injured.
- Small arms attacks left three people dead and two injured.
- The rapidly rising influence of Shi'ah militia groups will also pose a major concern, both for the government which no longer holds monopoly over the use of force, as well as the Western organisations working in the capital, given that such groups are endorsed by Iran and have previously attacked Western interests on numerous occasions.

On 16 June the Baghdad Operations Command denied reports in Iraqi media that mortar shells targeted Baghdad International airport (the BIAP), although such attacks will become more of a risk in the event that militants are able to encroach on areas surrounding the capital in the future. Mortar fire has been reported sporadically further west in the Abu Ghraib area. Anecdotal evidence also indicates that politicians have largely left the International Zone. If a large number have left the country it will make it very difficult for any major political decisions to be made.

Personnel should also note that large queues are being reported at the checkpoints leading in to Baghdad International Airport (the BIAP). It is advisable to factor in additional time for all journeys to the facility in case of delays.

On 17 June a car bomb in a marketplace killed seven civilians and injured another 21 in Sadr City. A bomb killed at least three people and injured five others at a market selling military clothing in Tahrir Square. Two

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further bombs detonated within moments of each other, injuring five people, near shops selling military clothing in Bab al-Sharji. These attacks were likely aimed at those volunteering for military service and joining militias in the city.

Future attacks are likely to focus on security force interests, civic and political facilities and areas where large numbers of civilians gather such as mosques, marketplaces, restaurants, cafes, bridges and busy transport intersections. Bear in mind that the number of suicide bombings may increase following the start of Ramadan around 28 June.

The South (Basrah, Dhiqar, Muthanna, Maysan, Najaf, Qadissiyah)



Current Analysis

Southern Iraq is generally quieter than the rest of the country. Nonetheless, security remains a major issue and significant threat groups still operate in the area. On 19 June several senior security officials made a statement to deny rumours that suspicious activity such as the movement of unknown vehicles was taking place in the deserts between the southern Iraqi provinces and Saudi Arabia. In Qadissiyah province, a security source also reassured the public that the prison in Nassiriyah was secure and well-defended. ISIL militants have conducted several prison raids over recent years with the intent of freeing dangerous inmates to join their cause.

The Turkish government warned its citizens to avoid travel to the southern and predominantly Shi'ah provinces of Babil, Dhi Qar, Karbala, Maysan, Muthanna, Najaf, Qadissiyah and Wassit. Ankara is likely concerned at rising Shi'ah militancy. While dozens of Turkish citizens are currently being held by Sunni militants in the north of the country, Shi'ah militants in the south could also oppose Turkish interests on several grounds, such as the country's perceived links to the West, the Kurdish region and the Sunni community for example.

In Basrah province it was reported that a special protection force was being prepared to protect oil and gas infrastructure last week. Open sources also report that non-essential staff are being removed from energy operations in the southern region, although oil companies have stated that production remains unaffected. The energy sector is crucial to Iraqi government revenue and will therefore be an attractive target for any organisation which opposes it. However, for now it will remain difficult for ISIL militants to infiltrate the region.

Armed men reportedly gathered in the centre of Basrah city to show their support for marching north to engage with ISIL fighters. Attendees of the demonstration reportedly fired their weapons into the air, bringing a risk of stray bullets. In Dhi Qar province it was reported that several thousand volunteers had been sent to fight ISIL militants in Salah ad-Din province. In Muthanna' province the provincial governor, Ibrahim al-Mayali, stated that the local government would not allow for the formation of armed groups such as local militias beyond the control of the provincial government. Muthanna province has historically been one of the quietest parts of Iraq.

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