



Armed Conflict

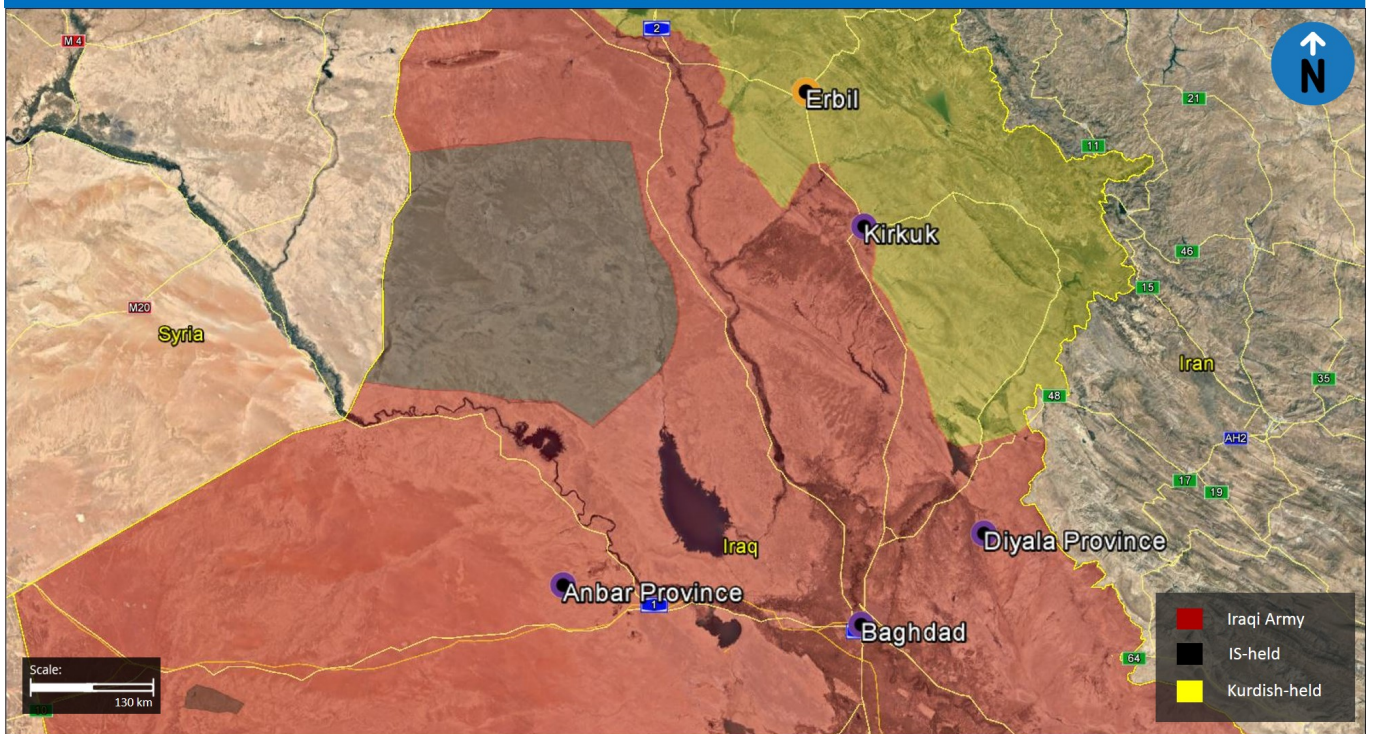
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Iraq SITUATION UPDATE: Iraqi Security Forces (ISF) seize Anbar Province's town of Rawa from Islamic State (IS) on November 17

Executive Summary

Focal points in Iraq



- The Iraqi Army seized control of Anbar Province's Rawa from Islamic State (IS), which represents a major setback for the group as it was its last remaining significant urban stronghold in Iraq.
- IS staged an attack near Kirkuk Province's al-Riyadh, thus underscoring the group's efforts to take advantage of conflict between Baghdad and the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) for its own benefit.
- Kurdish blocs in the Iraqi parliament called for the disarming of Shiite militiamen in Tuz Khurmatu. Such a development is unlikely to happen given Baghdad's growing reliance on these forces.
- Overall, IS is likely to elevate its activities in Salahuddin, Diyala, and Kirkuk Provinces given its recent losses and the Iraqi army's concentration of troops in Anbar. That said, the jihadist group will struggle in retaking significant territories as their capabilities have been greatly reduced.

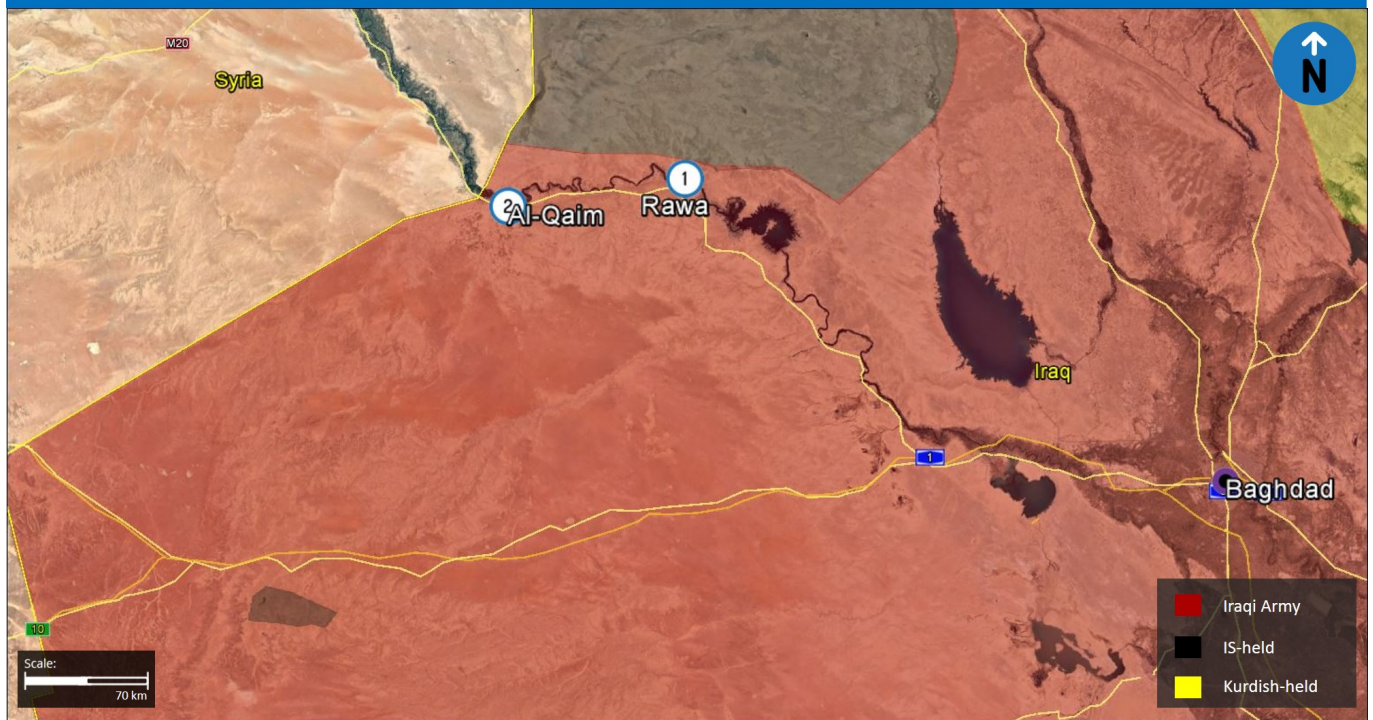
Please be advised

Across the country, the following incidents have been reported:

Anbar Province

Map #	Date	District/City	Brief Description
1	November 17	Rawa	Iraqi Army takes control of Anbar Province's Rawa from Islamic State (IS). Reportedly, the operation, which was heavily assisted by US-led coalition airstrikes, lasted only a few hours.
2	November 16	Al-Qaim	IS-linked media reports killing of Popular Mobilization Units (PMU) commander during clashes in area

Iraqi army seizes Anbar Province's Rawa

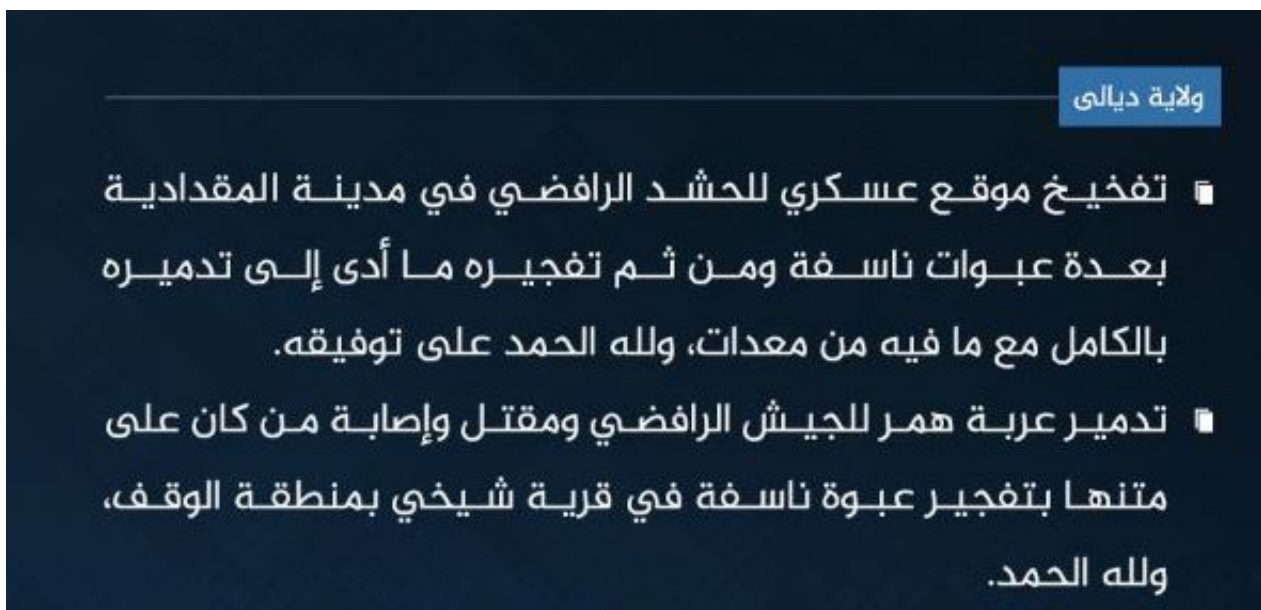


Baghdad environs

Date	District/City	Brief Description
November 16	Al-Tarmiyah	IS-linked news agency reports wounding of two Iraqi troops with sniper fire

Diyala Province

Date	District/City	Brief Description
November 14	al-Miqdadiyah	IS claims responsibility for detonating IEDs inside PMU base, resulting in its destruction and killing multiple Shiite militiamen.
November 14	al-Waqf area	IS claims responsibility for targeting ISF vehicle with IED, killing, wounding 'everyone inside'

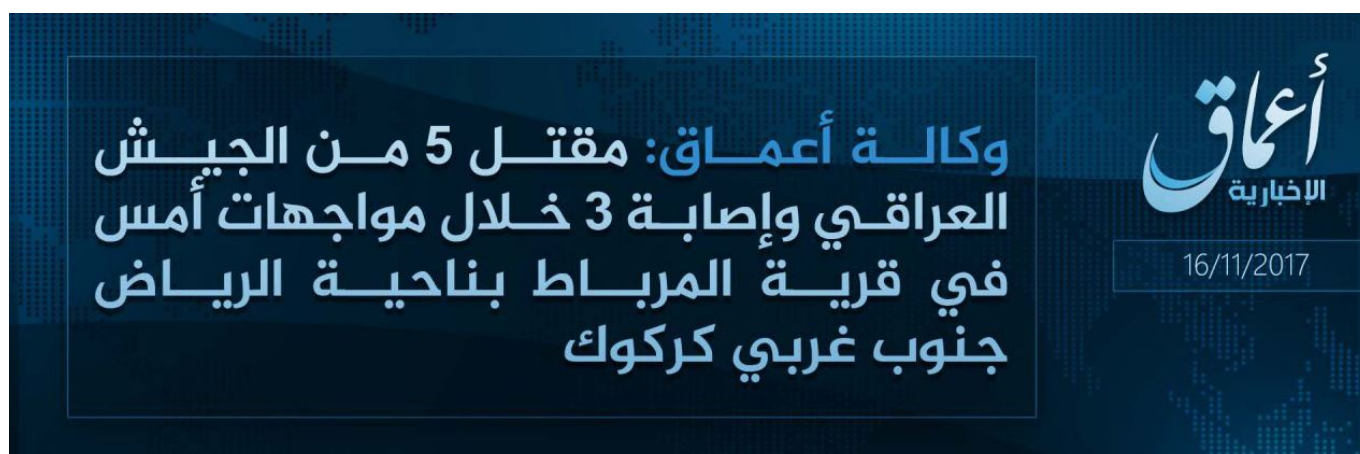


claimed attack in Diyala Province

IS

Kirkuk Province

Map #	Date	District/City	Brief Description
3	November 16	Al-Riyadh	IS-linked news agency reports killing of five Iraqi Security Forces (ISF) troops, wounding of three others during clashes near Kirkuk Province's village of al-Riyadh, located about 45 km southwest of Kirkuk



IS-linked media reports killing of five ISF troops in Kirkuk Province

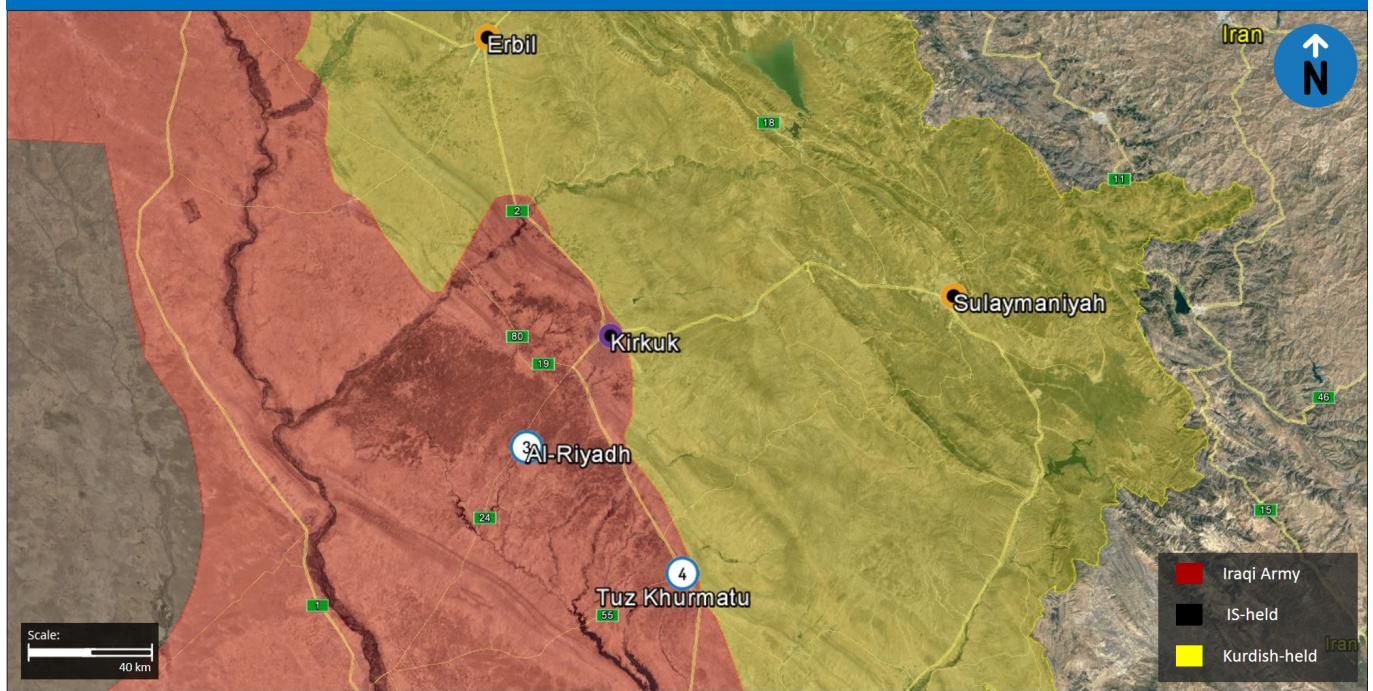
Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG)

Date	District/City	Brief Description
November 16	Dohuk Province's Sarsang District	Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) militants ambush bus carrying Turkish soldiers

Salahuddin Province

Map #	Date	District/City	Brief Description
4	November 17	Tuz Khurmatu	Kurdish blocs in the Iraqi Parliament call for Iraqi prime minister to disarm Shiite militias operating in area due to alleged "aggression against citizens"

IS stages attack near al-Riyadh



Assessments & Forecast

1. Rawa was IS' last-held town in Iraq, thus making its capturing a very significant victory for Iraqi forces. Iraqi forces' seizure of the town compels the jihadist militants back into the remaining pocket of control that they have in the country, which consists mostly of desert and few urbanized areas. However, even with this Iraqi victory, IS militants are likely to stay active in the country in the short to medium term, which is evidenced by two current fronts. In this context, continued fighting at the Iraqi-Syrian border near al-Qaim suggests that the militants will continue efforts to infiltrate the border and stage attacks in western Anbar against ISF targets. Additionally, as part of its effort to exacerbate sectarian tensions in such regions, IS will likely continue its elevated frequency of assaults in Diyala and Salahuddin provinces, with the goal of ultimately re-establishing a foothold in these areas. Regardless, further hostilities between IS and pro-government forces in western Anbar Province remain likely over the coming days and weeks.
2. The IS attack in Kirkuk Province underscores the jihadist group's continued efforts to take advantage of disarray in the area in order to make its own gains. Since the Iraqi army has seized Kirkuk from Kurdish Peshmerga forces, IS increased its activity in the province, most notably on November 5 when the group launched twin suicide bombings against PMU offices in Kirkuk City. Even though hostilities between Baghdad and the KRG has largely halted, confusion regarding administration of specific territories still exists, thereby allowing IS to capitalize on the disorientation to launch attacks against both pro-Iraqi government forces and Peshmerga troops. While such attacks are likely to continue in and near Kirkuk in the coming days, IS is unlikely to be able to gain significant territory in the area given its reduced capabilities due to multiple setbacks in the country.
3. Kurdish blocs' calls for Shiite militias to be disarmed in Tuz Khurmatu are unlikely to be answered given Baghdad's dependence on the troops in maintaining its territorial control in the area. In addition, pressure from Iran would likely dissway Baghdad from making such a move as Tehran has invested many resources into strengthening elements of the PMU. The Kurdish blocs' demands call into question the level of control Baghdad has over PMU units, as the Iraqi government has largely halted all hostilities in the region. The constant perceived aggressive actions by Shiite militiamen against Kurdish citizens may suggest their willingness to proceed forward in seizing KRG territory, despite results achieved by Baghdad in negotiations. Such a development would destabilize the region further, as well as allow Tehran an even stronger platform in determining the future of the KRG, given that these militias have commonly acted on its behalf.

Recommendations

1. It is advised to defer all travel to Baghdad at this time due to the daily threat of militancy in the capital, violence in areas surrounding the city, and the risk of a broad deterioration of security conditions.
2. For those remaining in Baghdad, it is advised to ensure that contingency and emergency evacuation plans are updated. Contact us for itinerary and contingency support options.
3. We advise against nonessential travel to Basra. If travel is essential, contact us for itinerary-based consultation and on-ground support.
4. Travel to areas outside of Baghdad and Basra should be avoided at this time, particularly to the north and west of the country, including the Anbar, Nineveh, Salahuddin, Kirkuk, and Diyala Governorates due to ongoing combat operations. This is in addition to avoiding the Babil Province, south of Baghdad. Those operating in these regions are advised to contact us for itinerary and contingency support measures, including evacuation options, given the deterioration in the security situation. Consult with us before traveling to Kirkuk City.