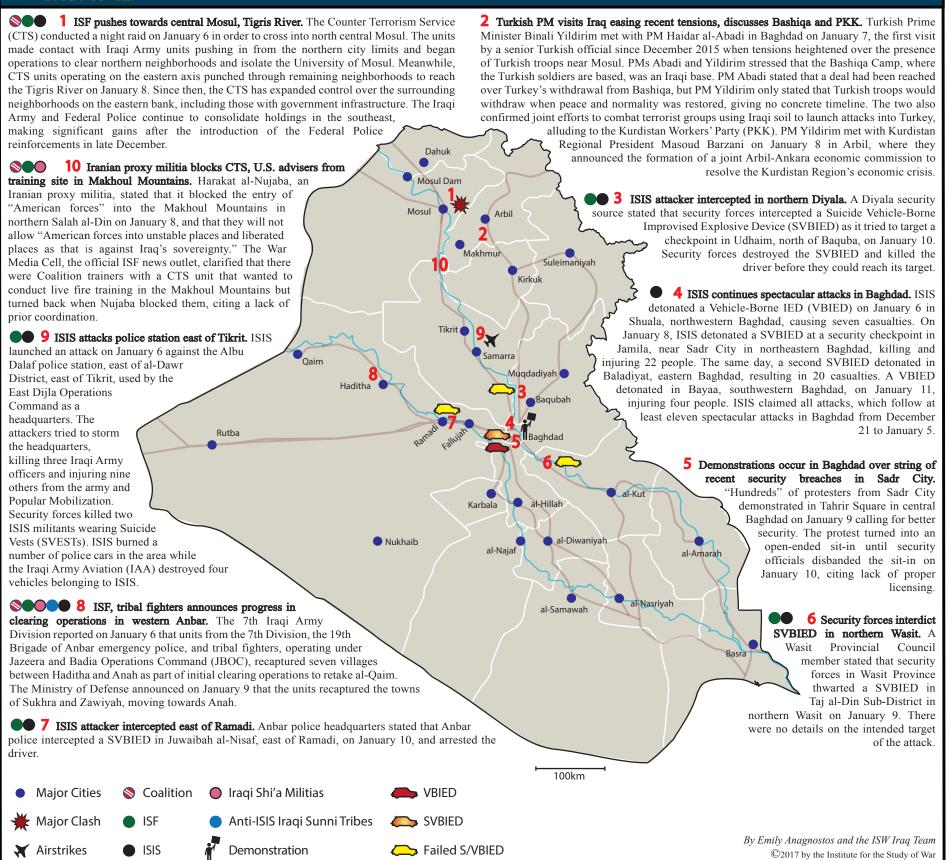


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## Iraq Situation Report: January 6-11, 2017



ISIS continued to demonstrate its ability to carry out spectacular attacks inside Baghdad from January 6 to 11, following weeks of increasing activity in the capital in response to its losses in Mosul. These attacks indicate that ISIS retains the freedom to maneuver in and around the capital. Residents from Sadr City, which witnessed several major attacks in the past weeks, staged a protest in central Baghdad on January 9 and 10 demanding better security. Meanwhile, foiled attacks in northern Wasit, Diyala, and Ramadi, and an attack near Tikrit, underscore that ISIS is capable of reviving networks in historical support zones which have been recaptured by the Iraqi Security Forces (ISF).

ISIS historically uses its attacks in Baghdad to drive doubts in the Iraqi Government, in particular the Abadi administration, over its ability to protect the capital. In May 2016, major ISIS attacks in Sadr City led to a local but organized demonstration storming the Green Zone. The protest revealed the degree of frustration with Prime Minister Haidar al-Abadi and his administration and undermined its legitimacy. ISIS carried out similar attacks in Sadr City this week that also provoked a local but organized protest, a possible indication that recent ISIS attacks in the capital are accomplishing the group's intent to undermine the Abadi government. ISIS is likely also trying to draw the security forces away from or prevent them from going to Mosul in order to protect the capital, limiting the possible reinforcements for the Mosul operation. Meanwhile, the political situation remains uneasy as the Council of Representatives resumed this week and will return to contentious issues, such appointments for vacant ministries, which put PM Abadi's premiership in the crosshairs in early 2016 when he attempted a Cabinet reshuffle. If ISIS continues to successfully attack Baghdad, and if those attacks coincide with political upheaval as they did in 2016, mass protests and discontent could further weaken PM Abadi's authority or, in the most dangerous scenario, lead to his dismissal.