

**1 Germany will open two new training centers for Peshmerga near Arbil.** Peshmerga Zirvani Forces commander Maj. Gen. Aziz Wisi stated on July 20 that Germany will open two new training centers near Arbil to train Peshmerga forces named “German Village” and “Ghost House.” Col. Frank Wasgindt, commander of the German forces providing training in Kurdistan, stated that German Village will “simulate real-life conditions” for training, while Ghost House will additionally provide specialized training in urban warfare.

**7 Great Britain doubles troop count in Iraq to 500 total.** The British Ministry of Defense announced on July 20 that Great Britain will deploy an additional 250 military personnel to Iraq, joining the 300 soldiers already in theater. The deployment, consisting of trainers, base security, logistics, and engineers, will deploy primarily to Ain al-Asad Airbase, south of Haditha. Meanwhile, Canadian Minister of Defense Harjit Sajjan announced on July 22 that Canada will send 60 medical personnel to manage a Coalition field hospital in northern Iraq.

**6 PM Abadi accepts resignation of seven ministers.** Prime Minister Haidar al-Abadi accepted the resignations of six ministers on July 19 and a seventh minister on July 20. PM Abadi resigned the Ministers of Oil, Transportation, Water, Higher Education, Construction, Industry, and Interior, although he had already accepted the resignation of the Ministry of Interior, a member of the Badr Organization, on July 8. The ministers, all from the pan-Shi’a National Alliance, included the three ministers of the Sadrist Trend-affiliated Ahrar Bloc and two of the three Islamic Supreme Council of Iraq (ISCI) ministers. All of these ministers, as well as the Higher Education Minister Hussein Shahrstani (Dawa), previously submitted the resignation to PM Abadi in March and April in a show support for the Cabinet reshuffle, but their resignations unanswered until now.

**2 Popular Mobilization forces move towards Shirqat to participate in operations to retake the city.** Units from Kata’ib Hezbollah, Kata’ib al-Imam Ali, Saraya al-Jihad, and Saraya Ansar al-Aqida reported activity in the city’s environs. Sadrist Trend leader Muqtada al-Sadr called on July 22 for his affiliated militia, Saraya al-Salaam, to deploy to Shirqat and coordinate with security forces there. The Popular Mobilization will seek to insert themselves into operations in northern Iraq as condition setting for their participation in Mosul.

**3 ISIS detonates SVBIED at checkpoint in Diyala Province.** ISIS detonated a Suicide Vehicle-Borne IED (SVBIED) at a checkpoint in Khalis, northeast of Baquba in Diyala Province, on July 25. ISIS claimed the attack which killed nine people and injured 39 others.

**4 ISIS detonates SVEST near Shi’a shrine in northwestern Baghdad.** ISIS detonated a Suicide Vest (SVEST) in Aden Square in Kadhimiyah, in northwestern Baghdad at the location of a major Shi’a shrine on July 24. ISIS claimed the attack which killed six people and injured 20 others.

**5 Sadrist protests continue in Baghdad, southern Iraq.** Sadrist protests continued in Tahrir Square in central Baghdad, beginning late in the afternoon on July 22. Protests praised the recent ministerial resignations and demanded technocratic replacements. Sadrist Trend leader Muqtada al-Sadr did not make an appearance at the protest. Protests also occurred across southern Iraq, including Muthanna, Diwaniyah, Maysan, Dhi Qar, Basra, and Babil Provinces.



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ISIS detonated a Suicide Vest (SVEST) in Kadhimiyah in northwestern Baghdad on July 24, and a Suicide Vehicle Borne-IED (SVBIED) at a checkpoint in Khalis, in Diyala Province, on July 25 in order to distract from anti-ISIS operations and undermine the Iraqi state. The spectacular attacks undermine the narrative that recapturing Fallujah would increase security for Baghdad. The attack at an entrance of Kadhimiyah, the seat of a major Shi’a shrine, also demonstrates ISIS’s continued capability to infiltrate secured areas of Baghdad, despite increased security after the Karrada attack on July 3. ISIS last carried out a successful attack in Kadhimiyah on May 11 at a checkpoint. The Iraqi Security Forces (ISF) cannot allocate additional manpower to Baghdad without detracting from ongoing operations in northern and western Iraq. Successful ISIS attacks will likely increase in Baghdad and its environs as the ISF contests remaining ISIS terrain in northern and western Iraq. Meanwhile, the Popular Mobilization inserted itself into slowed ISF operations in Qayyarah and Shirqat in order to set conditions for their participation in Mosul. Shi’a militias, including Sadrist Trend affiliated Saraya al-Salaam, Iranian-backed proxy militias, and those affiliated with the Islamic Supreme Council of Iraq (ISCI) moved forces towards Shirqat starting on July 19. The deployment follows the announcement that 560 U.S. forces will deploy to Qayyarah airbase, which Shi’a militias have condemned. The Popular Mobilization will also attempt to insert itself into northern operations in order to avoid being boxed out of operations in Mosul. The Coalition, Kurdish officials, and the Ninewa provincial government strongly advocated for a lack of militia involvement in northern Iraq out of fear of Shi’a-Sunni sectarian reprisals in terrain already contested between Sunni Arabs and Kurds. So far, operations in northern Iraq have been largely conducted by the ISF, tribal fighters, and Peshmerga with Coalition support. Its presence may also make it difficult to deconflict Coalition and militia operations.

Prime Minister Haidar al-Abadi accepted the resignation of seven ministers on July 19 and July 20, suggesting that PM Abadi will seek to restart the Cabinet reshuffle process. The seven ministers, all from the pan-Shi’a National Alliance, include the three Sadrist Trend-affiliated Ahrar ministers and two of the ISCI ministers, who offered their resignations to PM Abadi in March and April as a show of support for the Cabinet reshuffle. PM Abadi left the offers unanswered until now. The timing of PM Abadi’s acceptance of the resignations may suggest that he intends to reopen the Cabinet reshuffle process. He may also seek to circumvent attempts by political competitors, primarily the Reform Front, led by former PM Nouri al-Maliki, and Muqtada al-Sadr, to set the terms of the reshuffle that would suit their interests. PM Abadi will need to maneuver the reshuffle process in order to appease reformers such as Sadr while maintaining cohesion with all political parties – namely the Kurds – in the Council of Representatives (CoR). PM Abadi may not survive a second failed Cabinet reshuffle or a re-fracturing of the CoR. Meanwhile, Maliki is working behind the scenes to garner a political support base and convince other political forces to support him as a candidate for the premiership should the reshuffle fail.