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Baqubah Assessment

04 July 2007

~~(S//REL TO USA, MCFI)~~ *The purpose of this paper is to provide an assessment of the impact of Operation Arrowhead Ripper on AQI in Baqubah and their subsequent movement to other areas.*

~~(S//REL TO USA, ACGU)~~ **MND-N Assessment:** *It is assessed that the majority of fighters who fled have gone to the DRV and Muqdadiah (Breadbasket) areas. Reporting indicates C2 and fighters have dispersed throughout Diyala and into Salah ad Din (SaD). The traditional support zone in the DRV allows for AQI to disperse into the small villages from Zaganiyah up to Muqdadiah. AQI in Baqubah are reliant on the LOC from the DRV as they move between the two areas and plan operations. The Hamrin lake area and northern Diyala may also likely be an area where increased AQI presence will be seen due to Operation Arrowhead Ripper. Khalis remains a sectarian flashpoint and limited AQI elements continue to vie for influence within the village to counter Shia aggression. Khan Bani Sa'ad (KBS) witnessed an initial push of fighters; however, there is limited reporting to suggest an increased amount of AQI elements are operating in the KBS area. Attacks are elevated in SaD likely due to MNF-W Operations in AO Anaheim and Arrowhead Ripper which is forcing elements into SaD. SaD will continue to see elevated attacks, to include complex, across the province and specifically in Bayji and Samarra. The possibility also remains that AQI will increase their activity south of Kanan and Balad Ruz; however, the lack of CF presence and reporting makes this difficult to confirm or deny. The Jibouri and Samarra areas, especially the area between them, may see an influx of AQI; however, there is limited reporting to support this.*

(U) Recent Reporting:

- ~~(S//REL TO USA, MCFI)~~ Reporting has identified AQI members operating in the Khalis area. This group is involved in attacks against the Iraqi Army (IA) and Iraqi Police (IP). The groups set IEDs on the Khalis-Baqubah road, known as RTE Victory.
- ~~(S//REL TO USA, ACGU)~~ As of late June 2007, individuals were identified as AQI members in Diyala governorate. The AQI members were being instructed to leave Ba'qubah, Khalis, and al Muqdadiah to more rural areas in order to avoid anticipated U.S. Military operations in the governorate. A significant group of AQI members were planning to leave al Qatun and temporarily relocate to the al Zur area.
- ~~(S//REL TO USA, MCFI)~~ As of early July, interrogation reports have indicated the possible change in network leaders and an AQI command and control network reportedly operating between western Baqubah and Hashmiyat.
- ~~(S//REL TO USA, ACGU)~~ Early June reporting indicated some AQI fighters had migrated to hotly contested areas in Diyala and SaD governorates to wrest control of mixed Sunni-Shia neighborhoods; their presence and activities there have caused more sectarian strife.
- ~~(S//REL TO USA, ACGU)~~ JAM members in Husaniyah recently learned AQI members have appeared in Rashidiyah and anticipated possible attacks because it is primarily Shiite. The AQI members are believed to have fled the Diyala and Taji regions. According to JAM members in Rashidiyah, AQI members are noticeable because they have beards and are dressed in Afghan-style clothing. JAM has estimated there are approximately 50 to 100 AQI members.

~~(S//REL TO USA, ACGU)~~ **CACE Assessment:** *As a result of Operation Arrowhead Ripper, AQI has been pushed into the northern DRV and SaD province. The operational importance of these two areas increases as CF denies AQI freedom of movement in Baqubah. The preliminary isolation of west Baqubah has significantly disrupted AQI's defensive strategy. The successes have been two fold; they*

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have hindered AQI short term operations and has also served to embolden Sunni Insurgent Group (SIG) activity against AQI while encouraging them to reach out to ISF and CF. Pressure from Arrowhead Ripper operations have forced AQI members in Baqubah to reportedly shave off their beards to blend in with local students to escape areas currently targeted by operations, in an attempt to regroup in other neighborhoods not currently the focus of CF. AQI members are relocating every few days to avoid capture, with a large number of the group's members going to the New Baqubah neighborhood. Additional destinations are the Hamrim Mountains, the smaller villages in the DRV, and crossing to Salah Ad Din. Despite recent ISF/CF operations, it is assessed that AQI still has a large number of caches and retains the ability to conduct harassing attacks in the Baqubah area.

~~(S//REL TO USA, ACGU)~~ MNC-I C2/CACE concurs with MND-N's assessment on the situation in Baqubah.

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Approved for Release

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