This document provides complex coverage of global events from 06 – 12 November, with hyper-links to source material highlighted in blue and underlined in the text. For more information on the topics below or other issues pertaining to events in the region, contact the members of the Complex Coverage Team, or visit our website at www.cimicweb.org.

**Iraq**

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Despite calls from human rights groups for a moratorium on executions in Iraq, the Ministry of Justice announced the executions of ten convicted terrorists on 11 November, according to CNN. Since November 2011, more than 120 people have been executed in Iraq. Earlier in 2012, UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Navi Pillay stated that she was shocked at the reports of mass executions in Iraq. In other justice news, a senior Iraqi official told the US government that Iraq no longer has a legal basis to hold a Lebanese Hezbollah member who stands accused of killing US troops in Iraq, according to the New York Times (NYT). US military officials have accused the Hezbollah member, Ali Musa Daqduq, of working with the Iranian paramilitary Quds force to train Shi’ite militias in Iraq during the Iraqi war. Reuters reports that former governor Sinan al Shibibi of the Iraqi Central Bank denies parliament’s allegations of corruption and accused the government of fabricating charges in an effort to take control of the autonomous bank’s foreign reserves. Shibibi fled Iraq to Geneva after local authorities issued arrest warrants for the bank head. On 10 November, Prime Minister Nouri al Maliki announced he had decided to review a recently signed USD 4.2 billion arms deal with Russia citing possible corruption in the contract terms, according to United Press International (UPI). Maliki indicated that if corruption was found in the contract, it would be renegotiated.

The head of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) General Yukiya Amano met with Iraqi Prime Minister Maliki on 11 November to commend the October ratification of the Additional Protocol which strengthens and extends safeguards against nuclear proliferation first outlined in the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty, according to UPI.
A car bomb, detonated near an Iraqi military base in Taji, killed 33 people and wounded 56 others, according to Associated Press (AP). Officials report that the attacker blew up the vehicle during a base shift-change which resulted in the high number of causalities. Three car bombs detonated on 08 November killing four people and injuring sixteen others, reports Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty (RFE/RL). Two bombs were detonated in the Shi’ite town of Mahmudiya south of Baghdad while the third car bomb exploded in the southern city of Hillah. On 08 November, Turkish helicopters attacked Kurdish PKK militants along the Turkish-Iraqi border killing thirteen, reports Reuters. The attack was launched after a Turkish drone identified a group of Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK) militants in Turkey’s southeastern province of Hakkari, bordering Iraq and Iran. After two additional days of attacks on the PKK stronghold, Ankara announced it had killed a total of 42 militants while one Turkish soldier was killed in the military operation, according to Reuters. Inspired by the Free Syrian Army, a shadowy Sunni opposition group focused on overthrowing the Shi’ite-dominated Maliki government in Iraq has taken shape and call themselves the Free Iraqi Army, reports Daily Star. Analysts suggest that the group has forged ties with al Qaeda elements still operating in the Sunni heartland of Anbar province Iraq. Some suggest that the group is composed of former officers of the Sahwa (Awakening) Councils who claim to have been marginalised by the Maliki government.

Gulf Keystone Petroleum, a UK energy company, has confirmed the discovery of oil in the Sheikh Adi-2 block in Kurdistan Iraq, reports UPI. Preliminary tests of the well yielded a flow rate of 4,235 barrels of heavy crude per day. On 09 November, BBC reported that the Iraqi government has told the Russian energy company Gazprom to cancel their energy contracts written directly with the Kurdish government or face losing a lucrative Badra oilfield contract. The government in Baghdad views the autonomous region of Kurdistan signing oil and gas deals with foreign companies as illegal and contrary to the country’s constitution. Earlier in the week, Baghdad signed an oil exploration deal with Lukoil and Japan’s Inpex in two southern provinces of Muthana and Dhi Qar as Western oil companies continue to withdraw from deals in southern Iraq while opting to work with officials in Kurdistan, reports UPI.

At the al Qaim border crossing in Anbar province, a third camp is now under construction to house the continued flow of refugees fleeing violence from the Syrian conflict, reports the Daily Star. The camps in al Qaim are currently stretched beyond capacity and as a result, the Iraqi government has closed the Anbar province border crossing until the completion of another camp. Meanwhile, hundreds of families and young men are huddled on the Syrian side, awaiting their turn to enter Iraq.

Mali

The Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) agreed to deploy 3,300 soldiers to retake northern Mali from Islamist extremists and “dismantle terrorist and transnational criminal networks” pending the approval of a plan developed by experts from Africa, the UN and Europe is approved by the UN Security Council, reports BBC. Malian sources told Reuters that the plan covers a six-month period, with a preparatory phase for training and the establishment of bases in southern Mali, followed by combat operations in the North. The Malian army will be responsible for ground fighting while international forces would be responsible for providing air strikes, logistical and intelligence support, and soldiers and police to secure areas captured by the Malian army, according to Reuters. The international force will comprise 600 to 700 soldiers from Nigeria and approximately 500 from Niger, with additional forces provided by the other 13 countries in the 15-country ECOWAS bloc, reports the Associated Press (AP). Air power is expected to be provided by either France or the United States. International soldiers are standing by to deploy as soon as the UN Security Council approves the military plan. The Security Council is expected to meet later in November to review the proposal; however, some security analysts and diplomats believe that once the plan is approved it may still take months to implement.

ECOWAS has agreed to the latest intervention plan but said it still hoped to avoid conflict through mediation. Foreign powers are divided on the methods and pace of effective intervention. According to Reuters, countries such as France want a swift war while neighbouring Algeria, which has regionally superior military, counter-terrorism and intelligence capabilities, prefers a negotiated solution. Lead mediator, Burkinafaso President Blaise Compaore, met with delegates from the Islamist group Ansar Dine on 06 November to discuss plans for an armed intervention into northern Mali and to encourage the group to break ties with its jihadist allies, reports AFP. Ansar Dine, along with al Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) and the Movement for Oneness and Jihad in West Africa (MUJAO), took control of the North in March of this year. Ansar Dine representatives insist their group is independent from the other two groups and has not committed “any acts of terrorism”. Authorities believe Ansar Dine is more open to negotiations because its fighters is mostly Tuareg Malians from the region rather than AQIM and MUJAO, which are primarily composed of foreign fighters, reports AP. Earlier in November, Ansar Dine denounced extremism and stated the group wanted to join a political dialogue. The declaration did not address any changes regarding the group’s implementation of Sharia law in recent months, which has included whippings, amputations and public executions.

French prosecutors are investigating a French citizen of Malian origin who entered Mali with a false passport to allegedly establish a jihadist cell in the country, according to Reuters. French diplomatic sources reported in October 2012 that several French nationals had travelled to Mali in order to train for Islamic jihad, causing France to express concern that there is a risk of militants planning an at-
tack on French soil. In response to the threat of terrorism, the French government has presented a draft law that would allow police to arrest those believed to have been involved in terrorism-related activities outside France.

Approximately 500,000 people are living in a dire situation in northern Mali because of security risks, food shortages and the breakdown of political structures, according to reports by Peter Maurer, president of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC). Maurer cautioned that state structures in the North were “falling apart” and that mounting an aid operation would be “delicate given the insecure situation”. Though providing aid in southern Mali and neighbouring countries is easier than in the North, the situation in southern Mali is in danger of rapid deterioration and the area is now “getting to a threshold where there is nothing left” to give because of the high numbers of displaced people. Maurer also cautioned that a military intervention in northern Mali will have a high humanitarian cost, reports Reuters. The Islamist extremist group Ansar Dine, has announced that it will allow aid groups into its territory to deliver humanitarian aid, reports BBC. The group has also called for refugees to return home to facilitate the creation of a more stable and peaceful region. The UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) reports that 4.6 million people remain at risk of food insecurity in Mali and access to food for people living in the North is deteriorating. The child malnutrition rate has exceeded the alert threshold and pastoral communities are also at risk of malnutrition. More than 209,888 persons from Mali are refugees in neighbouring countries and more than 203,843 are internally displaced within Mali. Additionally, access to education remains a major challenge for thousands of children in northern Mali. According to Saran Keita Diakité, President of the Women’s Peace and Security Network for ECOWAS countries (REPSFECO/Mali), women are the main victims of the various crises that Mali is experiencing, yet they “are still not involved in the various bodies managing the transition”, reports UN Women, the UN agency for gender equality and the empowerment of women. As of 07 November, donors have provided USD 105 million to respond to the crisis in Mali, 49 per cent of the USD 214 million required by the UN Consolidated Appeals Process (CAP).

Syria

Panos Moumtzis, the UN High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR) coordinator for the region reports that the Syrian humanitarian crisis is rapidly deteriorating. According to the Guardian, between 08 and 09 November, over 11,000 refugees fled Syria. During this 24-hour period, the UN indicated that 9,000 Syrians had fled to Turkey while 1,000 travelled to Jordan and another 1,000 to Lebanon for protection. The UN said that the total number of refugees in neighbouring countries would likely hit 700,000 by early 2013, according to Agence France-Presse (AFP). Turkey reports that it currently runs fourteen refugee camps, according to al Jazeera. The International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies responded to the mass influx of refugees by launching an emergency appeal for USD 34 million to help Turkey with its refugee population.

Syrian rebels, who have long claimed the moral high ground in battling the Assad regime, are losing crucial support from civilians who are increasingly angered by the actions of some rebel groups, according to NYT. Citing poorly planned missions, senseless destruction, criminal behaviour and the execution of prisoners, the shift in mood towards the opposition poses a significant public relations problem for the Free Syrian Army (FSA). One civilian said “they [the rebels] were supposed to be the people on whom we depend to build a civil society”. Meanwhile, Syrian rebels launched an attack on the Mazzeh 86 district of Damascus, home to ardent Assad supporters of the Alawite sect, according to RFE/RL. In the attacks, a minibus carrying passengers was hit by a mortar, killing at least three people and wounding twelve others. Meanwhile, Syrian President Bashar al-Assad insists that he still has the support of the Syrian people and army, even as reports emerged of additional military defections and continued violence throughout the country, reports Voice of America (VOA). In an exclusive interview with Russian news outlet RT, Assad said that the conflict in Syria was not a civil war, but proxy terrorism by Syrians and foreign fighters. Going further, Assad accused the Turkish Prime Minister of eyeing Syria with imperial ambitions. Additionally, Assad vowed to “live in Syria and die in Syria” warning that foreign intervention in the conflict would have dire global consequences, reports AFP.

Syrian opposition leaders report they have made progress forging a broad-based leadership coalition at meetings in Doha, Qatar, according to AP. The Syrian National Council (SNC) signaled that during talks, members of the SNC accepted the idea of setting up a new 60 member leadership group in which SNC would receive 22 seats in order to make room for activists within Syria. On 11 November, opposition leadership unveiled the National Coalition for Syrian Revolutionary and Opposition Forces headed by Moaz al Khatib, a former imam who fled Syria last year, according to BBC. Al Jazeera indicates that the new opposition has headed to the Arab-League headquarters in Cairo to seek diplomatic recognition. Russia was quick to call on Syria’s new coalition to seek a negotiated solution to the conflict without interference “from abroad”, reports AFP.

On 09 November, Israeli leadership warned Assad, after the Golan Heights was hit by stray Syrian ordnances, it was prepared to defend the country if unrest continued, according to Reuters. On 12 November, Israel fired a warning shot into Syria after the second day

1 An alert threshold is the critical number of cases (or indicator, proportion, rate, etc.) that is used to sound an early warning, launch an investigation and prepare to respond to the epidemic/issue.
of mortar rounds struck the Israeli-occupied portion of the Golan Heights, according to AFP. Similarly, Turkey is drawing up contingency plans with its NATO military alliance to protect the Syrian border, according to CNN. The deployment of Patriot missiles is one option currently being discussed in efforts to counter the risks from the Syrian conflict. The Turkish Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan was quick to deny that Ankara was considering acquiring Patriot missiles from NATO and communicated that it did not plan to take offensive action against its southern neighbour. Meanwhile, on 11 November, a Syrian fighter jet bombed a rebel-held town of Ras al Ain, only metres from the Turkish border, killing six and wounding scores more, according to Al Jazeera. A rocket propelled grenade also landed inside Turkey as Assad forces attempted to take control of the border town, prompting Turkey to return fire into Syrian territory, reports Reuters. In other regional events, in Tripoli, Lebanon, gunmen opened fire on the house of a Sunni leader on 12 November, reports Reuters. While most Sunnis in Lebanon support the Syrian rebels’ struggle to overthrow the Alawite Assad regime, the attack of the house of Sheikh Bilal Shaaban, head of the Islamic Tawheed Movement, which is politically aligned with the Syrian government and the Shi’ite group Hezbollah, pointed to rivalries within Lebanon’s Sunni community itself.

IED & Demining

The CFC now publishes a weekly IED and Demining Events map. This global compilation identifies and links to articles pertaining to IED events as well as demining efforts.

GLOBAL NEWS

Afghanistan – A mother and her newborn baby were among six people killed in a roadside bombing in Khost province, reports BBC. According to the United Nations, 1,145 civilians have been killed in Afghanistan during the first six months of 2012.

United States – A Saudi citizen was sentenced to life in prison for attempting to build a bomb and for considering various targets in the Dallas area, including the home of former President George W. Bush, according to Reuters.

India – A flight preparing for takeoff at the Mumbai airport returned to the gate after officials received a suspected bomb threat, reports the Times of India. Passengers were screened and sniffer dogs were escorted onboard to ensure there were no explosives.

For more IED & Demining news click here or click on the map above.