Complex Coverage

11 June 2013

This document provides complex coverage of global events from 04 – 10 June 2013 with hyperlinks 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.

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Iraq

Iraqi Prime Minister Nouri al Maliki visited Kurdish leadership in Erbil in a symbolic gesture to reset relations and discuss long-standing disputes over oil and land between the regions, according to Reuters. Maliki’s government, facing a surge of violence from Sunni insurgents emboldened by the Syrian conflict, could benefit from improved Kurdish relations. Historically, the Kurds have at key times served to mediate conflict between Iraqi Sunnis and Shi’ites. Resolving the many issues between Kurdish leader Massoud Barzani and Prime Minister Maliki, however, will not be easy, reports Today’s Zaman. Recently Barzani warned that unless talks with Baghdad succeed, the semi-autonomous region of Kurdistan would seek “a new form of relations” with Baghdad.

Iraqi Foreign Minister Hoshyar Zebari stated that Baghdad is not sending fighters to support the Syrian regime of President Bashar al Assad, reports Al Arabiya. Zebari qualified his remarks saying, “Iraq does not deny that there are Iraqi volunteer fighters who are heading to fight in Syria”. Baghdad’s official position regarding the Syrian conflict has been one of a “peaceful transition” of power. Syrian opposition leaders dispute Iraq’s assertion and instead claim that the Assad regime is actively recruiting “sectarian” militia fighters from Iraq and Iran.

The Qatar-based Al Jazeera TV reported that al Qaeda leader Ayman al Zawahri urged leaders of the Iraqi al Qaeda branch (AQI) and al Nusra Front in Syria to end their on-going
disagreements and to “stop any verbal or actual attacks against one another”, reports Associated Press (AP). In April, AQI announced it had joined forces with the Nusra Front and the two had formed an alliance renamed the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant. On 09 June, Zawahri announced the abolishment of the merger, adding that the Nusra Front would remain a separate branch of al Qaeda. Zawahri further stated that AQI’s leader, al Baghdadi, would continue in his position for another year at which time a decision would be made on future leadership roles.

09-Jun-13: A wave of attacks mostly against Sunni areas of Iraq killed 70 people and wounded at least 230 others, reports Middle East Online. Mosul experienced the most attacks with a series of five car bombings primarily targeting security forces.

08-Jun-13: Four people were killed by two car bombs in Shi’ite neighbourhoods of Baghdad, according to The Guardian. Also, one police officer was killed, and two others wounded, after a car bomb struck a police convoy in the northern city of Mosul.

07-Jun-13: Shi’ite pilgrims were targeted in attacks as they travelled to holy shrines in Najaf, reports BBC. At least thirty people were wounded, and ten Iranian Shi’ite pilgrims were killed. In separate attacks the same day, car bombs exploded at checkpoints in Fallujah and Ramadi killing at least four police officers.

06-June-13: Fourteen people, including seven police officers, were killed in car bomb attacks in and around Baghdad, reports AP.

05-Jun-13: Gunmen killed fourteen people in Nukhaib at a phony checkpoint. The City Council of the Shi’ite holy city of Karbala issued a statement after the killings, accusing Sunni insurgents and the Ba’ath party of perpetrating the attack, reports New York Times (NYT).

Iraq commenced test pumping on the Kirkuk-Ceyhan pipeline after repairing sections damaged by sabotage on 04 June, reports Reuters. Crude flows from the Kurdish region of Iraq to Turkey are expected to resume once testing is completed. In other oil news, a Sudanese delegation met with Baghdad leadership on 06 June to discuss possible oil cooperation, according to United Press International (UPI). Sudan has struggled to meet oil needs in its country since South Sudan gained independence in July 2011. Sudan’s investment minister, Mustafa Osman, announced that the Iraqi government agreed to sell its oil to Sudan but that payment for the oil would be settled at a later date, reports Sudan Tribune. In only a few weeks, the final section of the new Taq Taq (Kurdish region) – Fishkillbour (Turkey) pipeline will be completed, allowing the flow of 300,000 barrels of crude per day to Turkey, reports The Guardian. The pipeline project has proceeded without the approval of the central government in Baghdad, and is likely to complicate the current disputes between Baghdad and the Kurdish Regional Government (KRG) over oil and revenue sharing.

Lebanon

Former Hezbollah Secretary-General Subhi al Tufayli criticised the Lebanese militant group for its military participation in Syria, stating the group’s recent activities have “provoked the whole world”, reports Al Arabiya. Tufayli added, “Hezbollah’s project as a resistance party that works to unify the Islamic world has fallen. It is no longer that party that defends the Umma [Islamic nation]; instead it plagues the Umma”. The former leader also asserts that Iran fully controls “Hezbollah’s project as a resistance party that works to unify the Islamic world” in Syria and warned that Lebanon’s political bloc “blasted Hezbollah’s dangerous and criminal role” in Syria and called for Lebanon’s political bloc to stop the group’s intervention, according to BBC. Palestinian refugees sheltering in Lebanon’s Bekaa Valley voiced their anger over the party’s role fighting alongside the Syrian regime. Twice in recent days, Palestinian refugees from Syria sheltering in Saadnayel burned Hezbollah food aid, reports The Daily Star.

1 The Future Movement is a Lebanese political movement led by Member of Parliament Saad Hariri and the son of assassinated former Prime Minister of Lebanon Rafik Hariri. The movement is the largest member of the March 14 Alliance, a political bloc, which also includes Christians with the Lebanese Forces and Kataeb parties. The majority of the Future Movement members are Sunni Muslims.

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In Beirut, a protester was shot and killed while demonstrating outside the Iranian embassy, according to NYT. Anti-Hezbollah demonstrators claim they were attacked by pro-Hezbollah crowds that reacted violently when protesters organised near the Iranian embassy. The incident resulted in Lebanese troops blocking streets in Beirut with tanks and barbed wire to cordon the city centre and neighbourhoods controlled by Hezbollah for several hours after the attack, according to Reuters. Two rockets hit near the historic ruins of Baalbek in the Bekaa Valley, a Hezbollah stronghold, on 05 June, hours after the Assad regime seized control of the strategic border town of Qusayr in Syria, according to France 24. After the rocket attacks, gunmen took to the streets while other gunmen headed for the Syrian border ready to engage in the conflict. Syrian helicopters fired six rockets into the Bekaa Valley on 07 June, targeting the Wadi Hmeid region near the border town of Arsal, a Sunni rebel haven, reports The Daily Star. The helicopter attacks were the second time in several days the Syrian government has attacked the Sunni-majority regions of the Bekaa Valley. Rockets and shells from Syria struck northern Lebanon on 07 and 08 June but resulted in no casualties, according to The Daily Star. Syrian rockets struck villages of Hiker Janine, Janine, al Arama and Qishliq in Akkar district. Shells from the Syrian side of the border also sparked fires in Ammar Bikat. On 10 June, Lebanese officials were investigating a roadside explosion that damaged a van and car in Taanayel, east Lebanon, reports The Daily Star.

On 07 June, France’s ambassador to Lebanon Patrice Paoli reiterated the need for Beirut to abide by its disassociation policy regarding the Syrian conflict, reports The Daily Star. Paoli underscored Lebanon’s need to stay out of the Syrian crisis and pledged France’s support in realising this objective. The same day, Lebanese Foreign Minister Adnan Mansour stated that Lebanese leadership objected to a strongly worded statement released by the Arab League condemning Hezbollah’s role in the Syrian conflict, according to The Daily Star. Mansour said “the Arab League statement was unjustified, arguing that over two dozen countries were intervening in Lebanon’s neighbour”. Further, Mansour said, “[i]t is unfair to single out Hezbollah”. Meanwhile, Gulf Arab countries issued a travel warning for Lebanon cautioning citizens to avoid the popular tourist destination now affected by the Syrian conflict, according to Reuters.

Lebanon is considering restricting Syrian refugee arrivals as it struggles to host more than 500 million refugees, reports Al Bawaba. Previous discussions focusing on controlling the flow of refugees entering Lebanon was met with international criticism that suggested such an action violates international norms. According to a government statement, the meeting also addressed “means to confront the burdens of the surge of Syrian refugees into Lebanon and the increasing social, security and health problems in Lebanon due to the influx of refugees”. In the village of Arsal in the Bekaa Valley, the refugee population has swelled as a result of fighting in Qusayr, reports The Daily Star. Arsal’s deputy mayor reports the number of refugees in the town is double that of the town population of 35,000. However, he further stated that the sudden influx of refugees made it virtually impossible to obtain accurate arrival statistics.
George Sabra, acting head of the Western-backed Syrian National Coalition, warned that Hezbollah involvement in Syria is transforming the conflict into a sectarian war, reports AP. The NYT reports that as Hezbollah guerrillas fought alongside Syrian troops, Syrian Sunni Muslim rebels and civilians in Qusayr announced that the social fabric that binds sects, ethnicities, friendships, tribes and families together were broken, perhaps irrevocably. Now, Sunnis in Syria say their struggle to topple the government has become a sectarian war. An amateur video posted by online activist depicts Hezbollah fighters raising a flag inscribed with “Ya Hussein”2, over a mosque in Assad-controlled Qusayr, lending credence to the rising sectarianism trend in Syria’s civil war, according to Al Arabiya. On 08 June, a Muslim union headed by prominent Sunni cleric Yusuf Qaradawi called for a “Day of Rage and Support” for the Free Syrian Army (FSA) battling Syria troops, “backed by a Shi’ite axis”, reports Arab News. The Association of Muslim Scholars urged its millions of supporters to demonstrate, stage peaceful sit-ins, make speeches and pray for the Syrian fighters on 14 June.

Syrian troops, fortified by Hezbollah fighters, continued their offensive against rebels on 07 June, reports Gulf Today. Assad forces appear to have focused efforts in the country’s heartland, attempting to drive rebels from cities such as Aleppo and Homs. Regime forces faced little resistance in retaking Salhiyeh and Masoudiyeh while they continued to edge closer to Al Buwaida village after rebels relinquished Qusayr to Assad forces earlier in the week. In Aleppo, an unidentified Islamist rebel group shot and killed a 15-year-old boy selling coffee on 08 June after the group claimed the child blasphemed the Prophet’s name, reports Al Jazeera. Syrian Observatory for Human Rights director Rami Abdel Rahman said the rebel group spoke “classical Arabic, not Syrian dialect” and was likely a foreign group. A car bomb exploded in an Alawite-majority city in the region of Homs on 08 June, killing eight, according to AP. The bombing occurred while government troops pressed an offensive against fleeing Syrian rebels in nearby areas. On 10 June, Syrian rebels converged on Minnigh airbase in Aleppo where Assad forces gathered to prepare for an assault on Aleppo, according to Agence France-Presse (AFP). Early reports of clashes indicated that opposition fighters had seized control of the radar tower, while state media reported that the attack had been repelled.

Reuters reports that on 06 June, UN peacekeepers took cover in bunkers when Assad forces engaged with rebel fighters who had previously seized the Quneitra crossing in the Golan Heights. The attack prompted Austria to recall soldiers from the Golan Heights peacekeeping mission.

The UN thanked Russian leadership for offering to replace peacekeepers from Austria in the Golan Heights operation, but indicated that an agreement between Israel and Syria bars all permanent UN Security Council members from the mission there, according to Reuters. Austrian peacekeepers on the Golan Heights comprised 380 of the 1,000 forces stationed there. In Israel, Austria’s decision was largely viewed as a betrayal of the United Nation’s commitment to regional security, according to The Guardian. On 07 July, the UN launched the largest humanitarian appeal in the organisation’s history in efforts to assist the growing number of people affected by the Syrian conflict. The USD 4.4 billion appeal covers relief activities for the Syrian Humanitarian Assistance Response Plan (SHARP) and the Regional Response Plan (RRP). UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (UN OCHA) Under-Secretary-General Valerie Amos estimates that 6.8 million people in the region are affected by the Syrian conflict and that one in three Syrians are in need of “urgent humanitarian assistance”. Amos also states, “[t]hese are massive figures, but those figures mask a human tragedy”. In other UN news, High Commissioner for Human Rights Navi Pillay told The Telegraph “President Assad was deeply implicated in the growing toll of atrocities in Syria”, and cautioned Assad that he would not be permitted to “trade justice for peace” in any future negotiations.

US leadership will decide later this week whether or not to arm Syrian rebels in the on-going conflict, reports NewEurope. The White House meetings are taking place as the Assad regime is poised to attack the city of Homs, with as many as 5,000 Hezbollah fighters supporting operations. Opposition leaders have indicated that rebel forces could face “devastating and irreversible losses without greater support”. Bernadette Meehan, White House spokesperson, indicated that Obama advisers were considering all options to hasten a transition in Syria. European Union (EU) countries pledged to step up cooperation in hopes of keeping the more than 600 EU citizens currently fighting in Syria from returning home and commencing terrorist operations there, according to AP. French Foreign Minister Manuel Valls states that the number of EU citizens fighting abroad with possible links to terrorist organisations “has never been seen at this scale”, far outpacing recent wars and conflicts in Afghanistan, Somalia and the Sahel region. Once these EU fighters are fully trained, radicalised and traumatised in the conflict, there is concern they could pose a danger for home country populations upon their return. Meanwhile, French leadership is considering options to provide advanced weaponry to

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2 Muslim Shi’ites highly revere Hussein, who is the grandson of the Prophet Mohammed and is understood as the rightful successor in the Caliphate, an issue that divides Shi’ites and Sunnis.

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Syria’s rebels, reports *Christian Science Monitor (CSM)*. France is considering a way of “technologically leashing advanced weapons” to prevent their use against the West. The urgency of the weapons debate was underscored on 05 June when Assad forces retook the strategic town of Qusayr. On 06 June, London was host to a meeting of the Friends of Syria group where preparations for the *Geneva II Peace* Conference were to be discussed, reports *The Guardian*. The opposition is, however, in disarray, divided over whether to participate in negotiations with the Assad regime while Assad’s departure is not a precondition to negotiations. Recent Assad victories, such as Qusayr, have emboldened the Syrian president, making him less likely to consider concessions, suggests *The Guardian*. Senior officials from Egypt, France, Germany, Italy, Jordan, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Turkey, the United Arab Emirates, United Kingdom, and the United States are participating in the London talks.

Russia announced on 06 June the deployment of a naval unit to the Mediterranean Sea, according to *Reuters*. President Vladimir Putin explained the move as a defensive measure for Russian security, but this comes as Moscow faces off with the West over the fate of Syria. The deployment is Russia’s first permanent naval deployment in the Mediterranean Sea since Soviet times, comprising sixteen warships and three ship-based helicopters into the region. *CNN* reports that US intelligence agencies have identified three Russian amphibious warships in the eastern Mediterranean carrying weapons shipments that could be used to resupply the Syrian regime, according to a US Pentagon official. It is believed that these Russian warships may be carrying the controversial S-300 air defence missile system among other weapons to Assad.

Jordan leadership threatened to expel Syrian Ambassador Bahjat Suleiman following his warning that Syrian missiles could be used against Patriot batteries soon to be deployed along Jordan’s shared border with Syria, according to *Reuters*. Suleiman’s comments, made on 06 June, were considered by some Jordanian senior officials as “almost a threat of war…[that] is totally unacceptable”. Also, Jordan’s army said it had foiled an attempt to smuggle a large quantity of arms from Syrian into Jordan, without providing additional details on the incident. *CNN* reports that the US Navy aircraft carrier USS Eisenhower will be in the Mediterranean region on a scheduled rotation before returning to port on the US East Coast.

Israel’s intelligence minister Yuval Steinitz suggested that the Assad regime, backed by Iran and Lebanon’s Hezbollah, may prevail in the current conflict, reports *Reuters*. Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu’s coalition government quickly distanced itself from the comment, dismissing it as “Steinitz’s personal informed – or rather, misinformed – position”.

## IED & Demining

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*The CFC publishes a weekly IED and Demining Events map. This global compilation links to articles reporting significant IED related-events and demining efforts. This report covers 04 - 10 June 2013.*

### GLOBAL NEWS

**Greece:** A woman was wounded in Athens on 07 June when a bomb placed under the car of a prison director detonated, reports *Agence France-Presse (AFP)*. Click on the map for more IED events.

**Japan:** An unexploded bomb from World War II has been found near a busy train line in Japan and successfully detonated, reports *The Telegraph*. Click on the map for more IED events.

**Tunisia:** A roadside bomb killed two Tunisian soldiers in the mountainous border region with Algeria, reports *AFP*. Click on the map for more IED events.

### Have a Question?

ASK US

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**The Re-Awakening of Anbar**

**Iraq**  
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