ENHANCE UNDERSTANDING
Key Takeaways:

- **New KRG Cabinet Sworn In; Baghdad And Erbil Agree On Security Arrangements In Disputed Territories; Parliament Fails To Amend Local Elections Law** - On July 10, Masrour Barzani and 22 other candidates were sworn in as the new prime minister and cabinet of the KRI. The new ministers are all affiliated with the KDP, PUK, and the Gorran, except for two representing Turkmen and Christian minority communities. On July 10, PM Abdul-Mahdi announced that the Iraq Defense Ministry has reached an agreement with the KRG over security arrangements in the disputed areas. On July 10, Iraq's parliament failed to vote on amending the local elections law due to lingering disagreements over elections in Kirkuk. On July 5, the Defense Minister ordered an investigation into allegations of treason against the Anbar operations commander, who's accused of collaborating with the CIA against the PMF. On July 10, KRI President Nechirvan Barzani visited French President Emmanuel Macron in Paris. On July 11, Iraq's Defense and Foreign Ministers, and the chief of Iraqi intelligence concluded a visit to Turkey, where they met with Turkish leaders, including President Erdogan, to discuss counter-terrorism cooperation. On July 4, the National Union of Iraqi Journalists protested demanding protections for freedom of the press after a senior commander threatened to arrest journalists for covering what he described as "illegal protests" demanding better services. more...

- **Iraq Launches Major Anti-ISIS Operation; Iranian Shelling, Turkish Airstrikes Impact KRI; Militant Attacks Cause Casualties in Multiple Provinces** - On July 7, Iraq launched operation "Will of Victory" targeting ISIS sleeper cells in Ninewa, Salah ad-Din, and Anbar. About 20,000 fighters from the army, Popular and Tribal Mobilization Forces have participated in this operation which discovered and destroyed numerous ISIS targets. On July 4, an IED killed four people and injured five exploded in the Tamriyah district, north of Baghdad. On July 6, gunmen attacked a checkpoint south of Fallujah, killing two policemen and wounding another; On July 7, three IEDs detonated near vehicles belonging to a Kuwaiti company in Basra, wounding one person. On July 7, a "sticky bomb" attached to a vehicle used by the PMF exploded killing four fighters and wounding one. On July 7, a car bomb in northeastern Diyalah killed a civilian. Two policemen were wounded in a subsequent ambush. On July 9, three mortar rounds struck the town of al-Sharqat, north of Salah ad-Din province, killing three and wounding four. On July 10, Turkish media announced new airstrikes targeting PKK sites in the KRI, killing 15 PKK members. On July 10, a KDP source reported that Iranian forces have shelled the party's sites in Choman area in Erbil province, killing 3 people. more...

- **HRW Urges Solution To Crowding In Ninewa Prisons; The Netherlands To Stop Repatriating Yazidi Refugees; Babylon Recognized As World Heritage Site; UNDP Helps Restore Services In Mosul** - On July 4, HRW said that three prisons in Ninewa were holding almost twice the numbers they are designed to hold. On July 5, the Netherlands said it would halt the repatriation of Yazidi refugees to Iraq and that the refugees would be classified as a vulnerable minority, making it easier for them to claim asylum. On July 4, the Norwegian Refugee Council, warned that over 300,000 Mosul residents are still IDPs, many of whom are both homeless and stateless due to loss of ID cards. On June 5, UNESCO classified Babylon as a UNESCO World Heritage Site. On July 10, Norway donated $9 million to the UN Development Fund to support Iraq's reconstruction. The money will be dispersed through the UNDP restructuring program and funneled into areas recaptured from ISIS. In total, Norway has donated $45 million to the fund. On July 11, the Government of Ninewa reopened a variety of public and community services in Mosul rebuilt with the help of the UNDP. To date, UNDP has completed or started 847 stabilization projects in Mosul city. more...

- **Iraq To Sign Power Contract With Siemens; Iraq Discusses Oil Cooperation With Oman; World Bank Loans Baghdad $200 Million** - On July 4, the German Ambassador to Iraq said Siemens will sign a contract with the Iraqi Government to construct two 800 megawatt power stations. On July 4, Iraq's Minister of Oil met with his Omani counterpart and agreed to increase cooperation between their oil and gas sectors, including establishing a joint oil refinery in Oman. On July 7, Iraq and the World Bank signed an agreement for a $200 million loan to improve energy distribution in the provinces of Basra, Dhi-Qar, Maysan, and al-Muthanna. On July 8, the Central Bank of Iraq raised the ceiling of loans for small and medium businesses to one billion dinars (approximately $840,000). On July 8, al-Sumaria reported that nine Iraqi and foreign companies have ceased operations in Iraq today due to demands for "royalties", kickbacks, and other benefits by certain influential parties. more...

For more background on most of the institutions, key actors, political parties, and locations mentioned in our takeaways or in the stories that see the ISHM Reference Guide.

New KRG Cabinet Sworn In; Baghdad And Erbil Agree On Security Arrangements In Disputed Territories; Parliament Fails To Amend Local Elections Law

On July 10, Prime Minister Abdul-Mahdi announced that the Iraqi Defense Ministry has reached an agreement with the Peshmerga Ministry of the Kurdistan Region of Iraq (KRI) over security arrangements in the disputed areas. According to the agreement, the forces would cooperate to protect and eliminate security gaps along 500 kilometers of internal borders in disputed areas and along Iraq's borders with Syria and Iran. Peshmerga forces would not operate in urban areas, which would be controlled by federal police, Abdul-Mahdi said. The agreement also does not cover any other topics, such as oil operations in Kirkuk, a source of chronic disputes between Baghdad and Erbil. The agreement followed an announcement on July 4 by the Deputy Speaker of Iraq's parliament, in which he stated that a committee had been formed to address stabilization of the disputed areas between federal authorities and the Kurdistan Region of Iraq (KRI). Deputy Speaker Bashir Haddad said the UN would oversee the work of that committee. Haddad stressed the need for the return of Peshmerga to disputed territories and coordination with Iraqi security forces, warning that "Baghdad cannot solve the issue of those areas alone."

On July 4, the National Union of Iraqi Journalists held a protest outside the Basra government building, demanding protections for freedom of the press. The union asked Prime Minister Abdul-Mahdi to step in and protect them against threats of arrest and prosecution. Protesters were referring to comments made by the Basra operations commander, General Qasim Nazazi, who recently threatened to arrest journalists for covering what he described as "illegal protests" demanding better services. The Iraq Ministry of Defense issued a statement saying that the commander's warning was only meant for was journalists who spread "fake news."

On July 5, the Defense Minister ordered the formation of a commission to investigate allegations of treason against the Anbar operations commander, General Mahmoud al-Falahi. Al-Falahi was accused of communicating with a CIA agent and giving the U.S. forces information to conduct strikes against Iran-backed militias in the Anbar area. Al-Mudo Paper reported that Kata'ib Hezbollah leaked the alleged recording of al-Falahi that drew the accusations. The paper also cited sources claiming that the powerful militia group sought to punish al-Falahi because he continues to hold the group responsible for mass kidnappings of civilians that took place in 2016 in the al-Nishab area between Anbar and Karbala provinces.
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