



Spotlight on Global Jihad

March 5-11, 2020



Highlights of the events

► On March 5, 2020, **an agreement was signed in Moscow between Russia and Turkey, which is intended to end the fighting in the Idlib region.** According to the agreement, a **ceasefire will enter into effect** on March 6, 2020. The agreement also stipulates that a section of the M-4 highway (the Aleppo-Latakia highway) will **constitute a Security Corridor** where Turkey and Russia will carry out joint patrols. Following the agreement, there was a relative lull in the fighting, which was occasionally violated by sporadic incidents (with each side accusing the other of violating the ceasefire).

► **The Headquarters for the Liberation of Al-Sham**, the dominant organization in the Idlib region, issued a statement condemning the Russian-Turkish agreement. The statement claims that the agreement permits the “Russian conqueror” to engage in “aggression” once again. The statement ends by stressing that **the fighting in the Idlib region would continue.** The Al-Qaeda-affiliated Guardians of Religion Organization also condemned the agreement, calling on its operatives to stand firm **and wage a guerrilla war against the Syrian army and the other enemies.**

► In the ITIC’s assessment, **this is a shaky ceasefire (like its predecessors).** This ceasefire may, even if only temporarily, halt the escalation process that has developed in the Idlib region (which Turkey has been dragged into) and give the warring sides **a timeout that will be utilized to prepare for the continuation of the campaign.** In the meantime, **Turkish army reinforcements and Iran-supported Shiite militias have reportedly reached the fighting zones in the Idlib region.** In the ITIC’s assessment, by the end of the timeout, **the Syrian regime is expected to renew its offensive initiative, with the strategic goal of eliminating the control of rebel organizations in the Idlib region and restoring control and sovereignty to the Syrian regime.**

► **In the Euphrates Valley**, ISIS’s intensive attacks continued, mainly in the form of activating IEDs. **In Iraq**, ISIS’s activity consisted mainly of activating IEDs, sniper fire and targeted killings. With regard to noteworthy ISIS activity abroad, **the Khorasan Province** recently

resumed its activity and carried out two showcase attacks in the capital Kabul: The province's operatives fired rockets near the presidential palace and carried out a mass-casualty attack at a ceremony held by Shiites (about 150 fatalities, according to ISIS; 32 fatalities, according to the Afghan Interior Ministry). ISIS also carried out intensive activity in **northern Sinai and Nigeria, and operated in Mozambique, The Democratic Republic of the Congo, Niger, Somalia, Yemen, and the Philippines.**

Idlib region

Ceasefire agreement between Russian and Turkey

On March 5, 2020, after meetings in Moscow, the presidents of Russia and Turkey signed a **ceasefire agreement to stabilize the situation in the Idlib region**¹. According to the agreement, **the ceasefire entered into effect on March 6, 2020, at 00:01**. The agreement stipulated that **a Security Corridor 12 km wide would be established on both sides of the M-4 highway**. The specific details of the supervision over the Security Corridor will be finalized between the defense ministers of both countries within seven days. According to the agreement, **starting on March 15, 2020, Turkey and Russia will hold joint patrols on the M-4 highway, from the area between the city of Saraqeb and Ein al-Hour**, about 40 km southwest of Idlib (Russian Foreign Ministry's website, March 6, 2020). **On March 6, 2020**, Russian President Vladimir Putin called Syrian President Bashar Assad and updated him about the agreement. Assad thanked him for supporting the fight against terrorism (TASS, March 6, 2020).



Russian President Vladimir Putin and Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan at the press conference in Moscow where they announced the ceasefire agreement in the Idlib region (Speda, a Kurdish news website operating from Iraq, March 5, 2020).

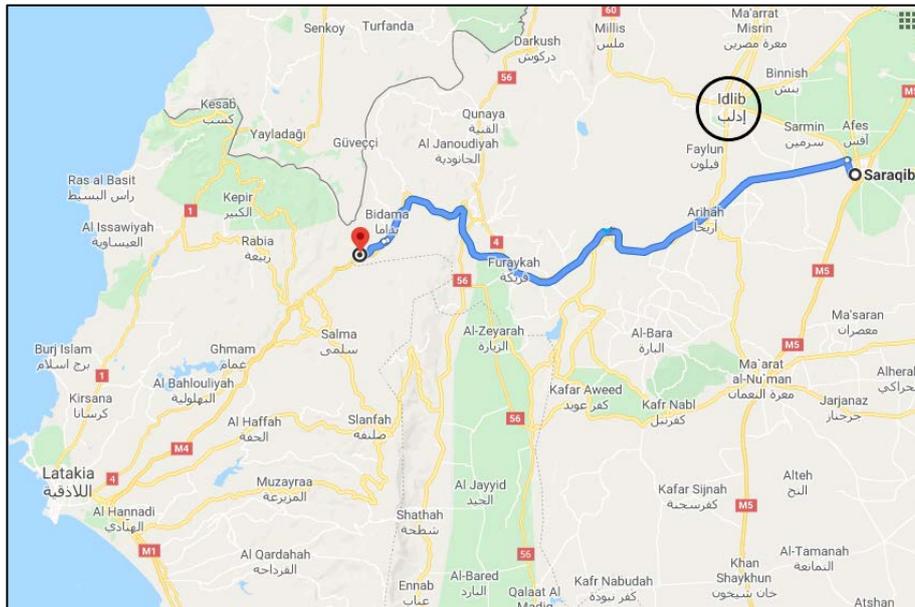
¹ The official name of the agreement is Additional Protocol to the Memorandum on Stabilization of the Situation in the Idlib De-Escalation Area.

The situation on the ground

► A short while before the Russian-Turkish agreement, there were local clashes between the Syrian army and the rebel organizations in the rural area of Idlib. The rebel organizations were supported by artillery fire and Turkish army drone attacks. Dozens of Syrian soldiers were reportedly killed in the fighting, as well as dozens of rebel operatives, mostly from jihadi organizations (Syrian Observatory for Human Rights, March 5, 2020). Four Turkish soldiers were also killed. In response, Turkish army drones attacked Syrian targets in Saraqeb, killing nine Syrian soldiers (Syrian Observatory for Human Rights, March 4, 2020).



Control areas in the Idlib region following the agreement between Russia and Turkey (March 7, 2020). Red: Area controlled by the Syrian army. Green: Area controlled by the Headquarters for the Liberation of Al-Sham and the other rebel organizations. A red line marks the M-4 highway section between Saraqeb and Ein al-Hour. Purple: The Security Corridor on both sides of the M-4 highway in accordance with the Russian-Turkish agreement. Turkish flag: Turkish observation post. A yellow line marks the border between Syria and Turkey (Syrian NORS Institute for Strategic Studies, March 7, 2020)



M-4 highway in the section between Saraqeb and Ein al-Hour, where joint Russian and Turkish patrols are supposed to take place (Google Maps)

- ▶ **Following the ceasefire agreement, there was a relative lull in the fighting, occasionally disrupted by sporadic incidents.** According to the Turkish defense minister, **the agreement is being upheld** and, starting on March 15, 2020, it will be possible to start the joint patrols along the M-4 highway (TRTWorldNow, March 7, 2020). Official **Syrian sources** claimed that the rebel organizations had fired artillery at several villages in the rural area south of Idlib and violated the ceasefire (SANA, March 7, 2020). On the other hand, **the Turks announced** that the Syrian army had broken the agreement 15 times, also firing at a Turkish convoy carrying provisions (Anatolia, March 9, 2020). **The Headquarters for the Liberation of Al-Sham** reported that on March 9 and 10, 2020, the Syrian army Tiger Forces had fired artillery on the Idlib region (Ibaa, March 10, 2020).
- ▶ In the meantime, the Syrian army continued to establish its presence in the territories which it had taken over: **on February 8, 2020**, official Syrian sources announced the **reopening of the Aleppo-Damascus highway (M-5)** and the resumption of bus travel on this road (Al-Watan, March 8, 2020). In addition, the Syrian army combed areas taken over, uncovering underground command posts and tunnels of the Headquarters for the Liberation of Al-Sham (SANA, March 9, 2020).



Right: Entrance to one of the underground command posts of the Headquarters for the Liberation of Al-Sham in the Anjara area west of Aleppo. Left: A damaged vehicle in one of the underground tunnels (SANA, March 9, 2020)

Comments on the agreement

► **Turkish President Erdoğan** said that the ceasefire agreement would stabilize the Idlib region, ensure the security of the Turkish soldiers and assist in protecting Turkey’s borders against terrorist attacks. According to Erdoğan, **the Turkish army is poised to respond on any violation of the ceasefire by the Syrian regime** (Hürriyet, March 7, 2020). According to a Turkish “security source,” **Turkey is ready to use force against anyone who violates the ceasefire in Idlib** (Anatolia, March 9, 2020). **According to Russian President Putin**, the agreement underlines Russia’s adherence to Syria’s unity and sovereignty, **and the continued fight against terrorism** (SANA, March 5, 2020). **Iran**, which has affiliated forces taking part in fighting in the Idlib region, told Syria that it did not accept the agreement (Al-Mayadeen, March 6, 2020).

► **The Headquarters for the Liberation of Al-Sham**, the dominant jihadi organization in the Idlib region, **released a statement condemning the Russian-Turkish agreement**, entitled The Moscow Agreement... a New Mirage. **The organization thanks Turkey for its support.** However, it adds that the agreement reached was no different from its predecessors. It will not take long until the Russians allow the Syrian regime (“the criminal regime”) to retake the areas, bring about the removal of the inhabitants, and destroy the infrastructure. Furthermore, the statement notes that **the wording of the agreement is vague and that it includes vague expressions allowing the “Russian conqueror” to resume its aggression.** In addition, the agreement includes **inapplicable clauses.** According to the statement, the agreement desecrates the blood of the fallen for the past ten years and allows the “Russian conqueror” to take over the liberated areas (i.e., the Idlib region) by peaceful means rather

than in battle. **At the end of the statement, it is pointed out that fighting will continue** (Ibaa, March 7, 2020).

► **Abu Hamam al-Shami, the leader of the Al-Qaeda-affiliated Guardians of Religion Organization**, released an audiotape on March 7, 2020. In the audiotape, the agreement was referred to as an “international infidel plot against jihad in Syria.” It called on the jihadi operatives to stand firm **and wage guerrilla wars against the enemy**. The audiotape ends with a call on Allah to destroy Assad, his Jewish, Christian and Shiite supporters as well as other enemies in the region (blog of Ayman al-Tamimi, a researcher of jihadi movements, March 9, 2020).

Arrival of reinforcements

The hiatus in the fighting was used by the various sides **to send reinforcements in preparation for the continuation of the fighting**. **On March 9, 2020**, it was reported that seven Turkish army convoys had entered the Idlib region, escorted by the Turkish-affiliated operatives of the National Liberation Front (Khotwa, March 9, 2020). **On March 10, 2020, Shiite militias handled by Iran reached Aleppo** (reports mentioned operatives of Shiite militias in Iraq; the Shiite Al-Baqer Brigade, the Afghan Fatemiyoun Brigade; and the Pakistani Zaynabiyoun Brigade). After preparations in the Aleppo area, the operatives of the Shiite militias are expected to be sent to the fighting zones and contact lines (Khotwa, March 10, 2020).



Turkish army convoy en route to the Idlib region after the signing of the Russian-Turkish agreement (Khotwa, March 9, 2020)

The Euphrates Valley

Highlights of ISIS's activity

During the week, ISIS carried out a series of attacks against the SDF forces in the Euphrates Valley. Most of the attacks focused on the area of Al-Mayadeen and Albukamal and consisted of the activation of IEDs. Following are highlights of ISIS's activity (according to ISIS's claims of responsibility).

The area of Al-Mayadeen and Albukamal

- ▶ **On March 10, 2020**, an IED was activated against an SDF vehicle about 10 km north of Deir ez-Zor. An SDF commander and a fighter were killed (Telegram, March 10, 2020).
- ▶ **On March 9, 2020**, SDF forces were targeted by machine gun fire and an RPG rocket about 14 km north of Al-Mayadeen. Two SDF fighters were killed and 13 others, including intelligence operatives, were wounded (Telegram, March 10, 2020).
- ▶ **On March 8, 2020**, an IED was activated against an SDF vehicle about 20 km southeast of Al-Mayadeen. All the passengers were killed (Telegram, March 8, 2020).
- ▶ **On March 7, 2020**, ISIS operatives deceptively led SDF fighters towards an IED planted near a bridge in the village of Al-Basira, about 14 km north of Al-Mayadeen. The IED was activated while they were close to it. An SDF sapper and a fighter were killed. That same day, an IED was also activated against a convoy of the International Coalition and SDF commanders about 5 km northeast of Al-Mayadeen. Five fighters were killed (Telegram, March 7, 2020).
- ▶ **On March 6, 2020**, an SDF commander was targeted by machine gun fire about 20 km southeast of Al-Mayadeen. He was killed (Telegram, March 6, 2020).
- ▶ **On March 5, 2020**, a commune leader was targeted by machine gun fire about 10 km north of Al-Mayadeen. He was killed (Telegram, March 5, 2020).
- ▶ **On March 4, 2020**, a vehicle carrying an SDF intelligence operative was targeted by machine gun fire about 14 km north of Al-Mayadeen. The intelligence operative and an SDF fighter were killed (Telegram, March 5, 2020).

Al-Raqqah area

- ▶ **On March 9, 2020**, an IED planted in the house of an SDF intelligence operative in west Al-Raqqah was activated. The intelligence operative was wounded (Telegram, March 10, 2020).

► **On March 6, 2020**, the Syrian army and the Homeland Defense Forces carried out searches for ISIS squads in the rural area southeast of Al-Raqqah. The squads had attacks shepherds and other civilians and carried out several attacks against the Syrian army and the forces supporting it. The searching forces exchanged fire with the ISIS operatives. During the searches, dozens of soldiers were reportedly killed, including at least six fighters of the Homeland Defense Forces from Deir ez-Zor (Khotwa, March 7, 2020).

The Iraqi arena

ISIS's activity during the week

This week, ISIS's activity in Iraq continued, consisting of planting of IEDs, sniper fire, and targeted killings. Following are ISIS's main activities according to its claims of responsibility.

Diyala Province

► **On March 9, 2020**, Iraqi army and Popular Mobilization forces were targeted by sniper fire west of Khanaqin. Two Popular Mobilization officers, **including a battalion commander**, were killed, and other fighters were wounded (Telegram, March 10, 2020). On March 10, 2020, the Popular Mobilization reported that battalion commander Mohammad Ali Majid al-Anbaki was killed in an ISIS attack (al-hashed.net, March 10, 2020).

► **On March 4, 2020**, a Popular Mobilization camp was targeted by sniper fire about 30 km northeast of Baqubah. Two fighters were killed and two others were wounded (Telegram, March 5, 2020).

► **On March 4, 2020**, an Iraqi army camp was targeted by sniper fire about 80 km northeast of Baqubah. One soldier was killed and two others were wounded (Telegram, March 5, 2020).

► **On March 3, 2020**, an IED was activated against a Shiite civilian in the Al-Abara area, the Baqubah district. He was killed (Telegram, March 4, 2020).

Nineveh Province

► **On March 6, 2020**, an IED was activated against a vehicle of a Popular Mobilization fighter in the Al-Qayyarah area, about 60 km south of Mosul. The fighter was killed and another one was wounded (Telegram, March 8, 2020).

► **On March 6, 2020**, an IED was activated against policemen of the oil facility security police near the Najma oil field, north of the Al-Qayyarah area. Three policemen were wounded (Telegram, March 8, 2020).

► **On March 2, 2020**, an IED was activated against a Popular Mobilization vehicle about 90 km southwest of Mosul. One fighter was killed and another was wounded (Telegram, March 4, 2020).

Erbil Province

► **On March 3, 2020**, ISIS operatives broke into the houses of two Tribal Mobilization fighters about 50 km southwest of Erbil. The two were shot to death (Telegram, March 4, 2020).

► **On March 3, 2020**, an IED was activated against an Iraqi army vehicle about 50 km southwest of Erbil. Three soldiers were killed and two others were wounded (Telegram, March 4, 2020).

Counterterrorism activities by the Iraqi security forces

The Iraqi security forces continued their counterterrorism activities against ISIS operatives and networks throughout Iraq. During the activity of the Iraqi security forces in the Makhmur area, southwest of Erbil, **two American soldiers** serving in consulting missions were killed. Following are the main activities.

Al-Anbar Province

► The Iraqi security forces operating in the Haditha area, in western Iraq, apprehended an ISIS operative who had been in charge of planting IEDs in the Fallujah area (Al-Sumaria, March 5, 2020).

Diyala Province

► A Popular Mobilization force operating about 10 km northeast of Baqubah destroyed ISIS “guesthouses.” The fighters found in the houses IEDs, explosives, weapons (including rockets) and logistical equipment. Traffic police uniforms used by ISIS operatives while they carry out attacks were also found (al-hashed.net, March 8, 2020).



Popular Mobilization force during activity destroying ISIS “guesthouses” northeast of Baqubah (al-hashed.net, March 8, 2020)

Erbil Province

► The Iraqi security forces **operated against ISIS operatives in the Makhmur region** (about 50 km southwest of Erbil). They exchanged fire with ISIS operatives for 24 hours. A large number of airstrikes were also carried out. A total of 25 ISIS operatives were reportedly killed. In addition, nine tunnels and a training camp were destroyed (SecMedCell Facebook page, which belongs to the Iraqi Prime Minister’s Office, March 9, 2020).

► On March 8, 2020, the US Department of Defense announced that **two US soldiers serving in the Special Forces of the Marine Corps had been killed in the fighting against terrorist groups** (i.e., ISIS) **in the Makhmur region**. The soldiers served as advisers to the Iraqi government’s counterterrorism service (Kurdistan 24, March 9, 2020); The New York Times, March 9, 2020).

Salah al-Din Province

► The Special Operations Force of the Iraqi counterterrorism service landed troops by helicopter in the Makhoul Mountains, about 14 km north of Baiji. The forces operated against ISIS operatives hiding in a tunnel. Three ISIS operatives were killed (Al-Sumaria, March 9, 2020).



**Special Operations Force of the Iraqi counterterrorism service
(Al-Sumaria, March 9, 2020)**

► **On March 7, 2020**, an IED was activated against Iraqi army forces and “agents” of the Iraqi security service about 20 km north of Baghdad. Four members of the Iraqi security force were wounded (Telegram, March 8, 2020).

Kirkuk Province

► Iraqi Federal Police squads located IEDs planted by ISIS operatives in the Hawija area (about 60 km west of Kirkuk). The IEDs were detonated in a controlled manner (SecMedCell Facebook page, which belongs to the Iraqi Prime Minister’s Office, March 9, 2020).

The Sinai Peninsula

► During the week, the Egyptian security forces' activity against ISIS targets continued at high intensity. The attacks consisted mainly of activating IEDs, sniper fire and executions of collaborators. Following are the highlights of the activity (based on the Sinai Province's claims of responsibility):

- ◆ **On March 5, 2020**, an Egyptian soldier was targeted by sniper fire at a checkpoint in the village of Al-Ajra, southwest of Sheikh Zuweid. The soldier was killed (Telegram, March 6, 2020).
- ◆ **On March 4, 2020**, an IED was activated against an Egyptian army tank west of Rafah. The tank was put out of commission (Telegram, March 4, 2020). Another IED was activated against an APC south of a checkpoint southwest of Sheikh Zuweid. The APC was destroyed (Telegram, March 4, 2020).
- ◆ **On March 4, 2020**, two Egyptian soldiers were targeted by sniper fire at checkpoints west of Rafah. Both soldiers were killed (Telegram, March 4, 2020).



Egyptian soldier in the crosshairs at one of the checkpoints before being shot dead (Telegram, March 6, 2020)

- ◆ **On March 2, 2020**, ISIS's Sinai Province released a video documenting the execution of two "agents" who worked for the Egyptian army, south of Bir al-Abd (about 50 km west of Al-Arish). One ISIS operative in the video calls on all "agents" in the region to repent, otherwise their fate will be the same as that of the "agents" who were executed (Telegram, March 4, 2020).

The activity of ISIS's provinces in Africa and Asia

Summary of six months of activity of ISIS's provinces around the world

► ISIS's Al-Naba' weekly (Issue No. 224) published an infographic summing up **around six months of activity of the ISIS's various provinces** (from August 31, 2019 to February 24, 2020). According to the infographic, **during this period ISIS's provinces carried out 1,557 attacks, in which 5,130 people were killed or wounded**. Following are the main characteristics of the attacks:

- ◆ **Modus operandi:** activating IEDs (580 attacks); raids (338); targeted killings (214); sniper fire (187); ambushes (71); suicide bombing attacks (9); "other attacks" (158).
- ◆ **Distribution of the attacks by province and country:** Most of the attacks were carried out in Iraq (537 attacks) and **Syria** (504); followed by **the West Africa Province** (149); **the Sinai Peninsula** (116); **Khorasan** (Afghanistan) (104); **Yemen** (55); **Central Africa** (34); **East Asia** (23); **Somalia** (17); **Pakistan** (10); **Bangladesh** (3); **Algeria** (2); **India** (1); **Tajikistan** (1); and **Britain** (1) (Telegram, March 5, 2020).



Africa

This week, operatives of ISIS's West Africa Province carried out intensive activity in Nigeria. ISIS operatives also carried out attacks in Mozambique and Congo. Following are the highlights of ISIS's activity, according to its claims of responsibility.

Nigeria

► **On March 10, 2020**, ISIS operatives repelled a Nigerian army attack in Baga, about 25 km southwest of the Nigeria-Chad border. One soldier was killed and two others were taken prisoner by ISIS (Telegram, March 10, 2020).

► **On March 9, 2020**, ISIS operatives repelled a Nigerian army attack about 120 km north of Maiduguri, the capital of Borno State. During the attacks, exchanges of fire took place between the Nigerian army and ISIS operatives. At least 10 soldiers were killed or wounded. ISIS operatives also set fire to six armored vehicles and several other vehicles and seized weapons and ammunition (Telegram, March 10, 2020).



Nigerian army APC set on fire by ISIS operatives during the fighting (Telegram, March 10, 2020)

► **On March 9, 2020**, ISIS's West Africa Province released photos documenting the execution of six Christians who had been abducted by its operatives in Borno State (Telegram, March 9, 2020).



Documentation of the execution of six Christians abducted in Borno State (Telegram, March 9, 2020)

► **On March 6, 2020**, ISIS operatives repelled a Nigerian army attack in Baga, about 25 km southwest of the Nigeria-Chad border (in Borno State, northeastern Nigeria). During the attack, exchanges of fire took place between the Nigerian army and ISIS operatives. One soldier was killed and two others were taken prisoner (Telegram, March 7, 2020).

► **On March 5, 2020**, ISIS operatives attacked a Nigerian army camp in Damboa, in Borno State, northeastern Nigeria. There was an exchange of fire between ISIS operatives and the Nigerian army. According to ISIS, several Nigerian soldiers were killed or wounded (Telegram, March 5, 2020).

► **On March 5, 2020**, ISIS operatives fired 12 mortar shells at a Nigerian army camp located in Borno State. According to ISIS, target hits were observed (Telegram, March 7, 2020).

► **On March 4, 2020**, ISIS operatives attacked a Nigerian army camp in Damboa, about 80 km southwest of Maiduguri, in Borno State. In the exchange of fire between ISIS operatives and Nigerian soldiers, 23 soldiers were killed and others were wounded. In addition, weapons and ammunition were seized (Telegram, March 5, 2020).



Right: ISIS operatives exchanging fire with the Nigerian army in Damboa. Left: Weapons and ammunition seized by ISIS operatives (Telegram, March 8, 2020)

► **On March 4, 2020**, ISIS operatives attacked a Nigerian army camp about 100 km northwest of Damaturu, the capital of Yobe State, in northeastern Nigeria. According to the report, seven Nigerian soldiers were killed and others were wounded. In addition, weapons, ammunition and two vehicles were seized (Telegram, March 5, 2020).

► **On March 3, 2020**, ISIS operatives repelled a Nigerian army attack in Borno State, about 25 km southwest of the Nigeria-Chad border. According to ISIS, several Nigerian soldiers were killed or wounded. ISIS also reported that it had activated IEDs against two Nigerian army vehicles, killing the passengers (Telegram, March 4, 2020).

Mozambique

► On March 3, 2020, operatives of ISIS's Central Africa Province ambushed Mozambican soldiers in the Cabo Delgado region of northeastern Mozambique. There was an exchange of fire between the ISIS operatives and the Mozambican army. According to ISIS, 12 soldiers were killed and the rest fled. In addition, weapons and ammunition were seized (Telegram, March 5, 2020).



**Mozambican army weapons and ammunition seized by ISIS
(Telegram, March 5, 2020)**

The Democratic Republic of the Congo

► On March 6, 2020, ISIS operatives halted an attack by the Congolese army in the Beni region, in the northeastern part of the country (about 50 km from the border with Uganda). The forces exchanged fire for several hours. According to ISIS, 20 soldiers were killed and several were wounded. In addition, weapons and ammunition were seized (Telegram, March 7, 2020).

Niger

► **On March 7, 2020**, ISIS operatives attacked a Niger army camp in Diffa, in southeastern Niger (about 3 km north of the Niger-Nigeria border). Several soldiers were killed or wounded. In addition, four APCs were destroyed and weapons, ammunition and 10 vehicles were seized (Telegram, March 7, 2020).

Somalia

► **On March 7, 2020**, a Somali policeman was shot at about 15 km northwest of Mogadishu. The policeman was killed and his gun was seized (Telegram, March 7, 2020).

Asia

This week, the activity of ISIS's Khorasan Province is worthy of note. The province, which recently resumed its operations, carried out a mass-casualty attack this week in the capital Kabul, against a gathering of the Shiite minority (Hazara).

Afghanistan

Rocket fire near the Presidential Palace

► **On March 9, 2020**, ISIS's Khorasan Province **launched 10 Grad rockets at the site of Ashraf Ghani's presidential inauguration ceremony, near the Presidential Palace in Kabul**. According to ISIS, confirmed hits were identified (Telegram, March 9, 2020). Ashraf

Ghani Ahmadzai, who was elected president in 2014, was reelected on March 9, 2020 (Reuters, March 9, 2020). A spokesman for the Afghan Interior Ministry confirmed the report, but noted that only four rockets had been launched at the area of the Presidential Palace area from a launcher mounted on a vehicle. He added that there were no casualties apart from one policeman who was slightly wounded (Khaama, March 9, 2020).



Photo released by ISIS's Khorasan Province showing the rockets that were launched (Telegram, March 9, 2020)

Mass-casualty attack against Shiites

► On March 6, 2020, an attack was carried out in the capital Kabul against Shiites attending a memorial service for Abdul Ali Mazari, leader of the Hazara, a predominantly Shiite ethnic minority. **According to the Afghan Interior Ministry, 32 civilians were killed in the attack and 81 were wounded, including two journalists.** The Taliban spokesman denied its involvement in the attack (Khaama Press, March 6, 2020).

► ISIS's Khorasan Province claimed responsibility for the attack. The claim of responsibility states that **the attack was carried out by two operatives, probably a Tajik and an Iranian. According to the claim of responsibility, the two men attacked a gathering of Shiites in the capital Kabul**, marking the 25th anniversary of the death of Abdul Ali Mazari, founder of the Al-Wahda (Unity) Party². The claim of responsibility states that the attackers **fired machine guns, threw hand grenades, launched RPG rockets and detonated IEDs.** During the attack, there were exchanges of fire lasting over five hours between ISIS operatives and Afghan security forces, who arrived at the scene of the attack. **According to ISIS, about 150 people were killed or wounded in the attack** (Telegram, March 6, 2020).

² **The Islamic Unity Party** (Hezb-e Wahdat-e Islami) was founded in 1989. Its members are Shiites who belong to the Hazara community (Wikipedia).



**Two ISIS operatives who carried out the attack in Kabul
(Telegram, March 6, 2020)**

Yemen

► On March 6, 2020, an IED was activated against a vehicle of the Houthi rebels in Qifah, in the northwestern Al-Bayda Province (about 100 km southeast of Sana'a). The passengers were killed or wounded (Telegram, March 7, 2020).

The Philippines

► On March 6, 2020, there was an exchange of fire between the ISIS operatives and the Philippine army on the Island of Mindanao in the southern Philippines. Three soldiers were killed. ISIS operatives seized weapons and ammunition (Telegram, March 6, 2020).



**Philippine army weapons and ammunition seized by ISIS
(Telegram, March 6, 2020)**