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Al-Qaeda Surging Across Iraq

Posted By Jason Ditz

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It may seem odd considering their name, but al-Qaeda in Iraq's (AQI) power base is increasing in Syria, not Iraq. As AQI shores up control over many of its Syrian possessions, they're looking to change that.



Joining into the Syrian Civil War has given AQI a huge recruitment boost, and for the first time it has de facto control over whole towns, where it is aiming to set up its own government. Their vision is to eventually conquer both Syria and Iraq outright.

And while that seems a ridiculously ambitious goal, the group has played a big part in the ever-escalating violence in Iraq, and now has active operations in multiple Iraqi provinces, aiming to carve out a sphere of control there as well.

AQI attacks in Iraq are nothing new, of course, and the group has been active since early in the US occupation. Analysts say that recent fights have shown more sustained gunbattles, however, suggesting that instead of its old hit-and-run tactics, AQI is testing its ability to hold off the Iraqi military in direct fighting, with an eye on permanent occupations of Iraqi towns.