**Car Bombs Hit Baghdad Hours Before Defense Secretary Carter Arrives**

At least two car bombs killed 19 people in Baghdad just hours before Secretary of Defense Ash Carter arrived in Iraq on Thursday.

One bomb in a market in a Shiite Muslim neighborhood in southern Baghdad on Wednesday night killed 18 and injured 31, according to Gen. Saad Maan, a Ministry of Interior spokesman.

A second bomber drove into a security checkpoint in the north of the city, killing one civilian and injuring six more, he said. Security forces killed a another attacker as he tried to detonate his explosive near the same checkpoint, Maan added.

This is Carter's first trip to Iraq since becoming defense secretary in February. Iraqi leaders are struggling to gain the upper hand against ISIS militants that have taken over swathes of the country.