

# Syria Situation Report: December 2 - 8, 2016

**1 December 4: Four FSA-Affiliated Opposition Groups Merge in Southern Syria:** Four Free Syrian Army (FSA)-affiliated groups - Jaysh al-Yarmouk, Jaysh Moataz Billah, Liwa Muhajireen wal-Ansar, and Liwa Hassan bin Ali - merged to form Jaysh a-Thawra in Dera'a Province.

**2 December 7: Israel Reportedly Targets Regime Airbase in Damascus:** The Israeli Defense Forces (IDF) reportedly launched several surface-to-surface missiles targeting an arms depot within the Mezze Military Airbase near Damascus, causing a major fire but no casualties. The missiles originated in the Golan Heights. Israeli Defense Minister Avigdor Lieberman later stated that Israel will continue to take action to prevent the delivery of advanced weapons to Lebanese Hezbollah from Syria. The incident follows a reported airstrike by Israel targeting an alleged weapons convoy near Damascus on November 30.

**3 December 2: Opposition Evacuates Town North of Damascus:**

The regime reasserted its authority over the town of Al-Tal near Damascus after evacuating nearly 2,000 opposition fighters and civilians to Idlib Province in Northern Syria. The town will be secured by a 200-person security committee drawn from local residents and led by the regime. The deal marks the seventh such opposition-held town to surrender to pro-regime forces near Damascus since August 2016.

**4 December 5: Russian Naval Warplane Crashes in Mediterranean Sea:**

The Russian Ministry of Defense stated that a Su-33 'Flanker-D' fighter jet crashed while attempting to land on the Russian aircraft carrier 'Admiral Kuznetsov' off the Syrian Coast. The incident marks the second warplane lost since the carrier arrived one month ago in the Eastern Mediterranean Sea.

**5 December 5 - 7: Russia Claims Opposition Shelling Kills Three Citizens in Aleppo:**

On December 5, the Russian Ministry of Defense stated that alleged opposition shelling struck a field hospital in the Furqan District of Western Aleppo City, killing two nurses from Russia. On December 7, the Russian Ministry of Defense also confirmed the death of Col. Ruslan Galitsky due to shelling in Western Aleppo City. Galitsky reportedly commanded an armored brigade before being assigned as a military advisor to regime forces.

**6 December 7: U.S. and Russia Discuss Evacuation of Aleppo City:** U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry met with Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov in Germany to discuss a potential deal to evacuate opposition-held districts of Eastern Aleppo City. Anonymous sources stated that the proposal calls for the safe evacuation of all civilians and opposition fighters from Eastern Aleppo City except for members of Jabhat Fatah a-Sham - the successor of Syrian Al-Qaeda affiliate Jabhat a-Nusra.

The meeting ended without any major breakthrough. Russia and China previously vetoed a UN Security Council Resolution calling for a seven-day ceasefire in Eastern Aleppo City on December 5.

**7 December 3 - 7: Pro-Regime Forces Secure Major Gains in Aleppo City:**

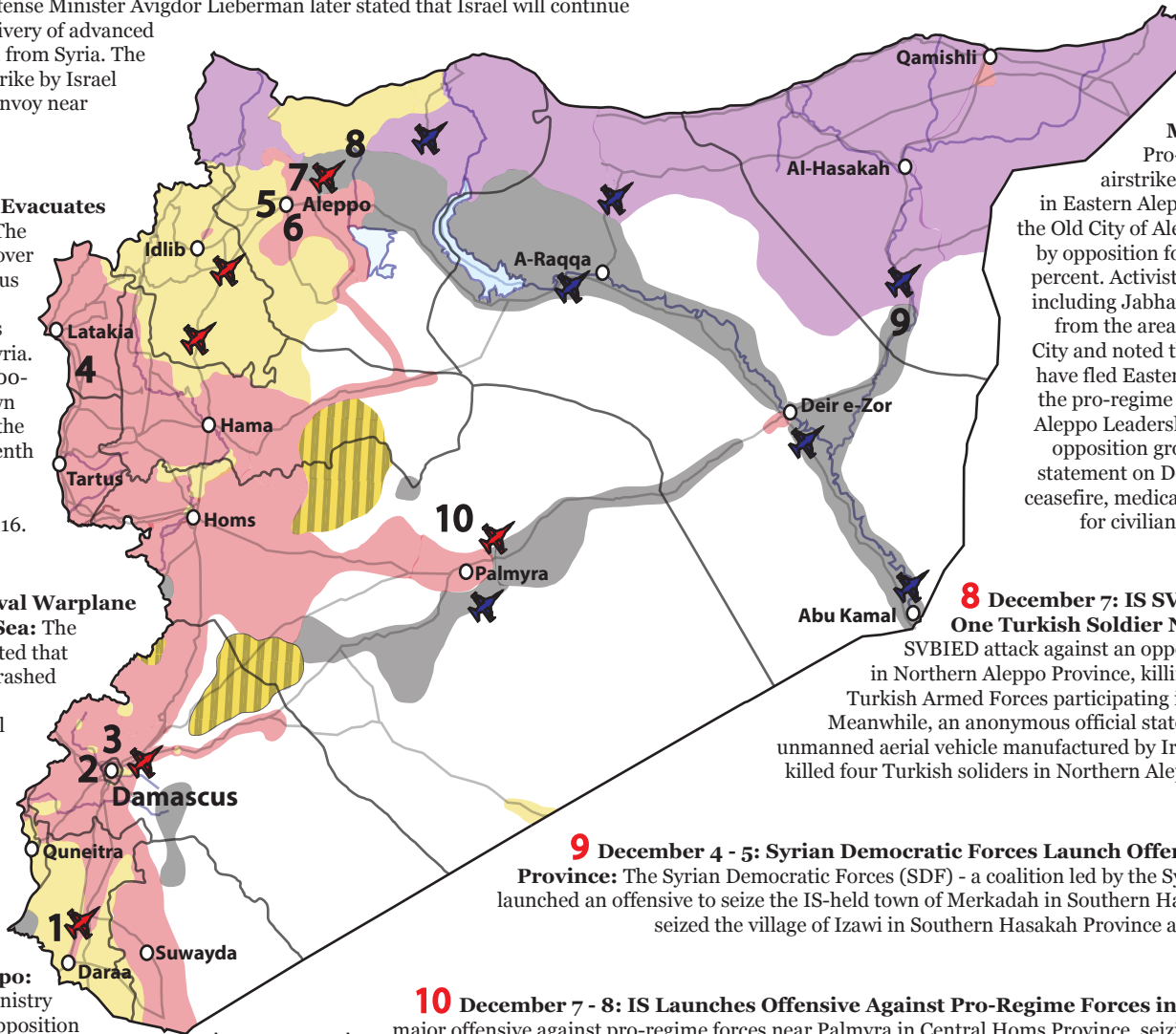
Pro-regime forces backed by heavy airstrikes seized at least fifteen districts in Eastern Aleppo City including large parts of the Old City of Aleppo, shrinking the pocket held by opposition forces by more than seventy-five percent. Activists stated that opposition groups including Jabhat Fatah a-Sham had withdrawn from the area to regroup in Southern Aleppo City and noted that more than 80,000 civilians have fled Eastern Aleppo City since the start of the pro-regime offensive on November 15. The Aleppo Leadership Council - a committee of all opposition groups in Aleppo City - released a statement on December 7 calling for a five-day ceasefire, medical evacuations, and free passage for civilians to Northern Aleppo Province.

**8 December 7: IS SVBIED Attack Kills At Least One Turkish Soldier Near Al-Bab:**

IS conducted an SVBIED attack against an opposition position outside Al-Bab in Northern Aleppo Province, killing at least one soldier from the Turkish Armed Forces participating in Operation Euphrates Shield. Meanwhile, an anonymous official stated that Turkey assesses that an unmanned aerial vehicle manufactured by Iran conducted the airstrike that killed four Turkish soldiers in Northern Aleppo Province on November 24.

**9 December 4 - 5: Syrian Democratic Forces Launch Offensive in Southern Hasakah Province:** The Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) - a coalition led by the Syrian Kurdish YPG - reportedly launched an offensive to seize the IS-held town of Merkadah in Southern Hasakah Province. The SDF later seized the village of Izawi in Southern Hasakah Province as part of the ongoing offensive.

**10 December 7 - 8: IS Launches Offensive Against Pro-Regime Forces in Central Syria:** IS launched a major offensive against pro-regime forces near Palmyra in Central Homs Province, seizing Huwaysis, Jazal Gas Fields, and at least eight checkpoints near the Sha'er Gas Fields north of Palmyra as well as several mountains south of Palmyra. IS also conducted attacks against pro-regime positions on the outskirts of the T4 (Tiyas) Airbase west of Palmyra. Activists reported the flight of civilians from Palmyra amidst heavy pro-regime airstrikes on the outskirts of the city.



Areas of Control\*

Airstrikes

- Pro-Regime Forces
- Opposition Forces
- The Islamic State
- Kurdish Forces
- Jabhat Fatah a-Sham  
\*Formerly Jabhat a-Nusra
- Mixed Control
- Pro-Regime
- U.S. / Coalition

\*Control of Terrain Accurate as of 06 DEC 2016

