

Syria Situation Report: January 5 - 19, 2017

1 January 12: Jabhat Fatah a-Sham Detonates SVEST in Southern Damascus: Jabhat Fatah a-Sham (JFS) detonated at least one SVEST in the Kafr Sousa District of Damascus, killing at least seven pro-regime fighters. JFS released a statement claiming that the attack involved two fighters wearing SVESTs that killed at least twelve 'military advisors' from Russia.

2 January 13: Alleged Israeli Airstrikes Target Mezzeah Airbase: Syrian Arab Army General Command released a statement accusing Israel of launching several surface-to-surface missiles from Northern Israel targeting the Mezzeah Military Airport outside of Damascus. Israel declined to comment on the incident. Israel has conducted numerous airstrikes targeting alleged weapons shipments to Lebanese Hezbollah since the start of the Syrian Civil War.

3 January 12: U.S. Sanctions Regime Entities for Use of Chemical Weapons:

The U.S. Treasury Department imposed sanctions on eighteen regime officials connected to the development and use of chemical weapons, including chlorine gas. The U.S. State Department also imposed sanctions on the Syrian Organization for Technological Industries (OTI) for its involvement in the development of chemical-capable surface-to-surface missiles.

4 January 6 - 13: Violence Continues in Wadi Barada Despite Alleged Reconciliation Deal:

Syrian Rif Dimashq Governor Alaa Ibrahim claimed that opposition forces in Wadi Barada north of Damascus accepted a reconciliation deal on January 13 calling for the repair of the main water pumping station in Wadi Barada as well as the evacuation of opposition fighters to Idlib Province. Opposition sources denied any reconciliation beyond a deal to repair the pumping station. Meanwhile, pro-regime forces including Lebanese Hezbollah seized at least two villages in Wadi Barada.

5 January 6 - 15: Russia Rotates Military Forces in Syria:

Russian Chief of the General Staff Gen. Valery Gerasimov stated that the Russian Aircraft Carrier 'Admiral Kuznetsov' will depart from the Eastern Mediterranean Sea as part of a military reduction ordered by Russian President Vladimir Putin on December 29. Russia also withdrew six Su-24 'Fencer' fighter-bombers from Latakia Province and replaced them with four Su-25 'Frogfoot' ground attack aircraft. Russia also reportedly plans to repair the second runway at its base at Bassel al-Assad International Airport in Latakia Province and expand the Russian Naval Facility in Tartus to fit cruisers.

6 January 7: Nine Opposition Groups Reportedly Sign Draft Agreement to Form Joint Command Council: Salafi-Jihadi group Ahrar a-Sham, Jaysh al-Islam, and seven other prominent opposition groups agreed to form a "Syria Liberation Command Council" according to an alleged draft of the agreement circulated online. The new council would exclude Jabhat Fatah a-Sham. An opposition official later clarified that it could take up to three months to finalize the details of the draft.

7 January 6: Alleged U.S. Strikes Target Jabhat Fatah a-Sham:

The U.S. continued a recent uptick in airstrikes targeting Jabhat Fatah a-Sham (JFS) in Idlib Province. An alleged airstrike on a house in Taftanaz near Idlib City on January 6 killed three individuals, including a member of the JFS Shura Council. Additional airstrikes in the nearby town of Saraqib on January 11 killed at least ten members of JFS and Ahrar a-Sham. A third alleged drone strike killed a senior JFS commander near the Bab Al-Hawa Border Crossing in Northern Idlib Province as well as members of Ahrar a-Sham.

8 January 7: SVBIED Detonates in Azaz:

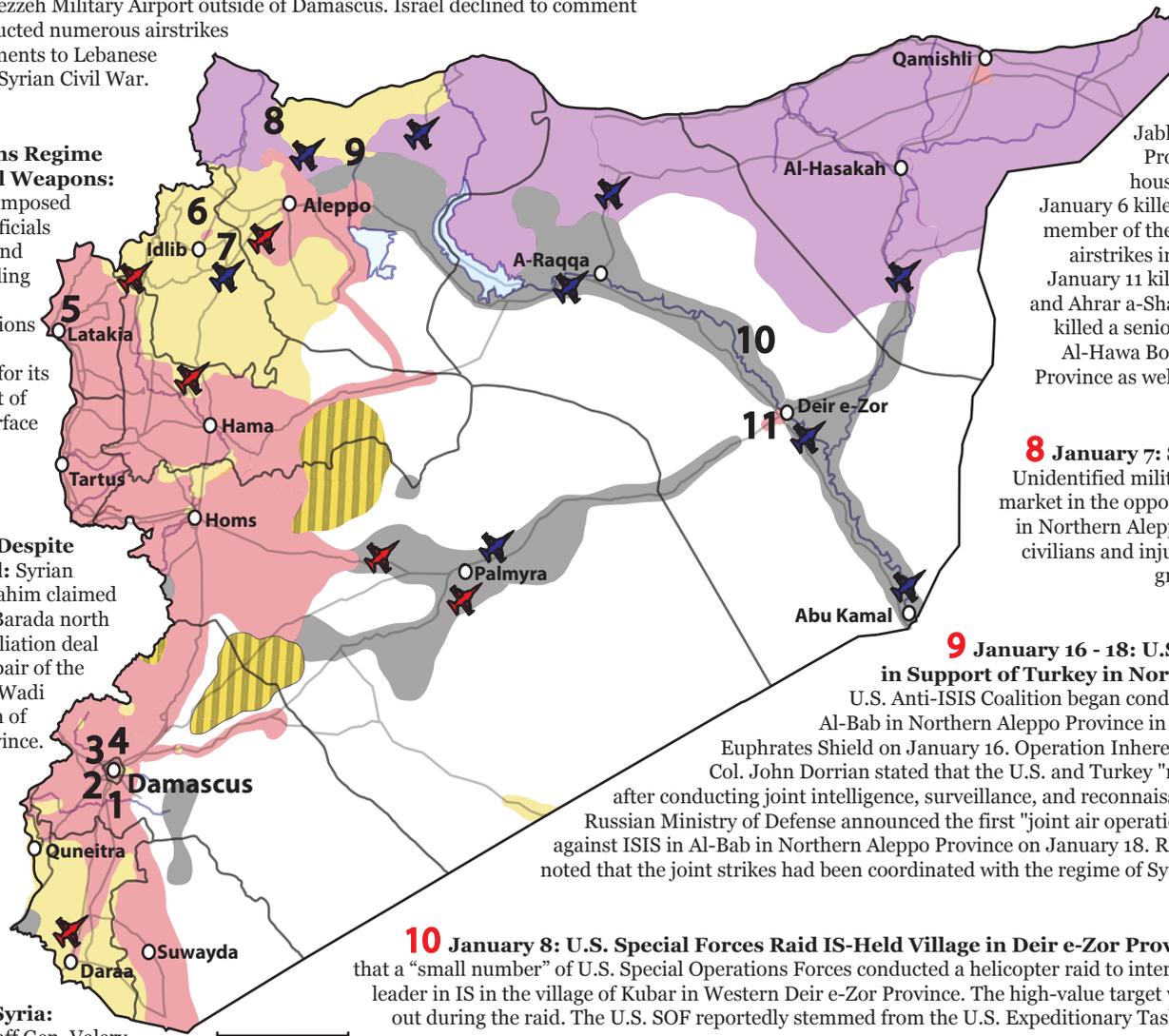
Unidentified militants detonated an SVBIED in a market in the opposition-held border town of Azaz in Northern Aleppo Province, killing at least fifty civilians and injuring over a hundred others. No group has yet to claim the attack.

9 January 16 - 18: U.S. and Russia Claim Strikes in Support of Turkey in Northern Aleppo Province:

The U.S. Anti-ISIS Coalition began conducting airstrikes against ISIS in Al-Bab in Northern Aleppo Province in support of Turkey in Operation Euphrates Shield on January 16. Operation Inherent Resolve (OIR) Spokesperson Col. John Dorrian stated that the U.S. and Turkey "mutually developed" the targets after conducting joint intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance missions. Meanwhile, the Russian Ministry of Defense announced the first "joint air operation" between Russia and Turkey against ISIS in Al-Bab in Northern Aleppo Province on January 18. Russian Lt. Gen. Sergey Rudskoy noted that the joint strikes had been coordinated with the regime of Syrian President Bashar al-Assad.

10 January 8: U.S. Special Forces Raid IS-Held Village in Deir e-Zor Province: The Pentagon confirmed that a "small number" of U.S. Special Operations Forces conducted a helicopter raid to intercept an unidentified high-value leader in IS in the village of Kubar in Western Deir e-Zor Province. The high-value target was killed after a firefight broke out during the raid. The U.S. SOF reportedly stemmed from the U.S. Expeditionary Task Force based in Northern Iraq.

11 January 14 - 18: IS Launches Major Offensive in Deir e-Zor City: IS launched a major offensive against pro-regime forces in Deir e-Zor City on January 14, successfully severing the ground line of communication between the Deir e-Zor Military Airport and Deir e-Zor City despite heavy pro-regime airstrikes. Pro-regime forces reportedly used helicopters to deploy at least two hundred fighters from Lebanese Hezbollah to reinforce Deir e-Zor City on January 18.



Areas of Control*

Airstrikes

- Pro-Regime Forces
- Opposition Forces
- The Islamic State
- Mixed Control
- Kurdish Forces
- Jabhat Fatah a-Sham
*Formerly Jabhat al-Nusra

- Pro-Regime
- U.S. / Coalition

*Control of Terrain Accurate as of 05 JAN 2017

