

Syria Situation Report: January 19 - 26, 2017

1 January 19 - 24: Pro-Regime Forces Press Assault on Wadi Barada Despite Alleged Reconciliation Deal: Pro-regime forces including Lebanese Hezbollah continued an offensive against the besieged opposition-held towns of Wadi Barada near Damascus despite an alleged reconciliation agreement reached on January 19. The alleged deal called for a local ceasefire, permission for regime maintenance workers to repair the main water pumping station in Ain al-Fijeh, and the choice of either a six-month amnesty or safe passage to Idlib Province for opposition fighters.

2 January 20: Russia and Syria Agree to Expand Russian Naval Base on Syrian Coast:

Russia and Syria concluded a bilateral agreement authorizing the refit and expansion of the Russian Naval Facility in Tartus City in Western Syria. The agreement extends the current lease on the base for the next forty-nine years with automatic extensions and permits the simultaneous deployment of up to eleven warships to the port.

3 19 - 23 JAN: Syrian Al-Qaeda Affiliate Expels Component Group Following Clashes With Ahrar a-Sham:

Jabhat Fatah a-Sham and Jund al-Aqsa engaged in clashes with Ahrar a-Sham in at least eight villages in Idlib Province along the Syrian-Turkish Border. The factions later agreed to a ceasefire and prisoner exchange on January 22. Jabhat Fatah a-Sham expelled Jund al-Aqsa from its organization on January 23 after the group rejected sharia arbitration.

4 23 - 26 JAN: Jabhat Fatah a-Sham Launches Operation Against U.S.-Backed Group in Idlib Province:

Jabhat Fatah a-Sham launched an attack against U.S.-backed Jaysh al-Mujahideen in West Aleppo Province, expelling the group from a number of headquarters and weapons depots. Suqour a-Sham, Jaysh al-Islam, and other groups later mobilized in order to defend Jaysh al-Mujahideen, sparking heavy clashes across Idlib and Aleppo Provinces. Five major opposition groups later merged with Ahrar a-Sham on January 25 including Jaysh al-Mujahideen, Jaysh al-Islam - Northern Sector, Fastaqim Kama Umirt, Thuwar a-Sham, and Jabhat a-Shamiyah - Western Sector.

5 January 19: U.S. Conducts Major Airstrike Against Al-Qaeda in Western Aleppo Province: The U.S. Department of Defense confirmed that the U.S. conducted an airstrike targeting the Sheikh Suleiman Training Camp in Western Aleppo Province, killing at least one hundred militants of Jabhat Fatah a-Sham. The strike also reportedly killed at least three members of former U.S.-backed TOW missile recipient Harakat Nour a-Din a-Zenki. Alleged U.S. airstrikes also targeted Jabhat Fatah a-Sham in Idlib Province on January 22, killing two commanders and destroying a munitions factory.

6 January 23: Russia Claims Joint Airstrikes in Al-Bab With U.S. Intel:

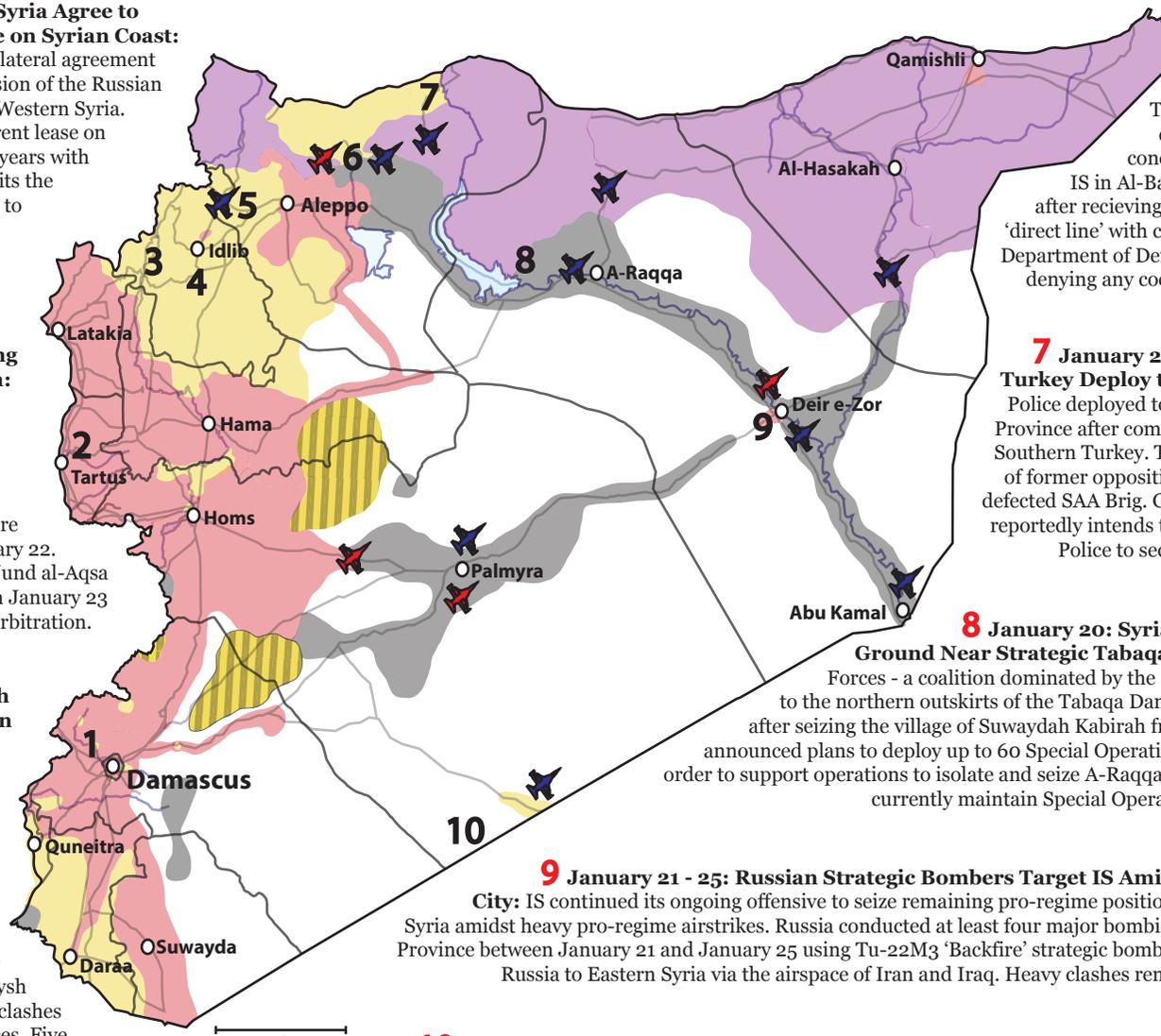
The Russian Ministry of Defense claimed that Russia and Turkey conducted joint airstrikes targeting IS in Al-Bab in Northern Aleppo Province after receiving intelligence from the U.S. via a 'direct line' with coalition headquarters. The U.S. Department of Defense later released a statement denying any coordination with Russia in Syria.

7 January 24: Syrian Police Trained by Turkey Deploy to Jarabulus: 450 Syrian Free Police deployed to Jarabulus in Northern Aleppo Province after completing five weeks of training in Southern Turkey. The force is composed primarily of former opposition fighters and commanded by defected SAA Brig. Gen. Abdul Razaq Aslan. Turkey reportedly intends to train up to 5,000 Syrian Free Police to secure Northern Aleppo Province.

8 January 20: Syrian Democratic Forces Gain Ground Near Strategic Tabaqa Dam: The Syrian Democratic Forces - a coalition dominated by the Syrian Kurdish YPG - advanced to the northern outskirts of the Tabaqa Dam in Western A-Raqqa Province after seizing the village of Suwaydah Kabirah from ISIS. Meanwhile, Denmark announced plans to deploy up to 60 Special Operations Forces to Northern Syria in order to support operations to isolate and seize A-Raqqa City. The U.S. and France both currently maintain Special Operations Forces in Northern Syria.

9 January 21 - 25: Russian Strategic Bombers Target IS Amidst Offensive on Deir e-Zor City: IS continued its ongoing offensive to seize remaining pro-regime positions in Deir e-Zor City in Eastern Syria amidst heavy pro-regime airstrikes. Russia conducted at least four major bombing runs against IS in Deir e-Zor Province between January 21 and January 25 using Tu-22M3 'Backfire' strategic bombers that deployed from bases in Russia to Eastern Syria via the airspace of Iran and Iraq. Heavy clashes remain ongoing in Deir e-Zor City.

10 January 21: Suspected IS Militants Detonate SVBIED on Syrian-Jordanian Border: Suspected IS militants detonated an SVBIED targeting the Rukban IDP Camp on the Syrian-Jordanian Border, killing eleven individuals and wounding at least fourteen others. IS has conducted at least three major attacks against the camp since June 2016.



Areas of Control*

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

Airstrikes

- Pro-Regime
- U.S. / Coalition

