

Syria Situation Report: December 23, 2016 - January 4, 2017

1 December 29: Russia and Turkey Broker Nationwide Ceasefire: Russia and Turkey brokered a nationwide 'cessation of hostilities' agreement in preparation for negotiations between the regime and opposition scheduled to be held in Astana, Kazakhstan on January 23. The deal will exclude all groups designated as "terror organizations" by the UN Security Council including IS and Jabhat Fatah a-Sham (JFS). Anonymous sources claimed that the deal also calls for splitting the country into "informal zones of regional power" between Turkey and Russia. Opposition groups including Jaysh al-Islam later released a statement warning that the agreement will become "null and void" without an immediate halt to continued ceasefire violations by pro-regime forces.

2 December 24 - January 4: Pro-Regime Forces Tighten Siege on Wadi Barada:

Pro-regime forces including Lebanese Hezbollah launched operations to tighten the siege of the opposition-held Wadi Barada Valley north of Damascus. Pro-regime forces previously bombed the main water pumping station in Wadi Barada on December 23, disrupting the water supply for Damascus. Russia and Syria claimed that the ongoing truce excludes Wadi Barada due to the presence of Jabhat Fatah a-Sham. Opposition groups denied that JFS operates any fighters in the valley.

3 January 1: IS Conducts SVEST Attack in Tartus City:

IS conducted a dual SVEST attack in Tartus City, killing two security officers and wounding several civilians. The militants reportedly detonated their explosives after being stopped at a checkpoint near ongoing celebrations for New Year's Eve. Russian President Vladimir Putin signed a new decree authorizing the expansion and modernization of the Russian Naval Facility in Tartus City on December 24.

4 January 5: Unclaimed VBIED Detonates in Jableh:

Unidentified militants detonated a remote-controlled VBIED on a commercial street in Jableh in Latakia Province, killing at least fifteen civilians and wounding at least thirty others. The blast has not yet been claimed by any group.

5 December 25: Russian Plane Traveling to Latakia Province Crashes in Black Sea:

A Russian Tu-154 carrying the Red Army Choir to Bassel al-Assad International Airport in Latakia Province crashed in the Black Sea, killing ninety-two passengers and crew. Russian Transport Minister Maxim Sokolov ruled out an explosion or terrorist act as the cause of the crash.

6 January 1 - 3: U.S. Airstrikes Target Al-Qaeda Affiliate in Idlib Province:

The U.S. confirmed two sets of airstrikes targeting Jabhat Fatah a-Sham near the border town of Sarmada in Idlib Province in Northern Syria. One set of airstrikes on January 1 targeted two vehicles near the town, killing two local officials in JFS as well as a commander in the affiliated Turkistan Islamic Party. A second set of airstrikes on January 3 targeted a joint headquarters and prison for JFS in Sarmada, killing at least thirty individuals including several senior commanders.

7 December 23: Pro-Regime Forces Move to Secure Eastern Aleppo City:

Russian Defense Minister Sergey Shoigu announced the deployment of a battalion of Russian Military Police to "maintain order" in Aleppo City. Shoigu noted that the deployment will largely focus on clearing improvised explosive devices from the city. Meanwhile, Lebanese Hezbollah Secretary-General Hassan Nasrallah stated that pro-regime forces will prioritize their efforts to "reinforce" and "secure" Aleppo City. The complete evacuation of opposition fighters from Aleppo City ended on December 22.

8 December 30: Turkey Claims Russian Air Support Against IS in Al-Bab:

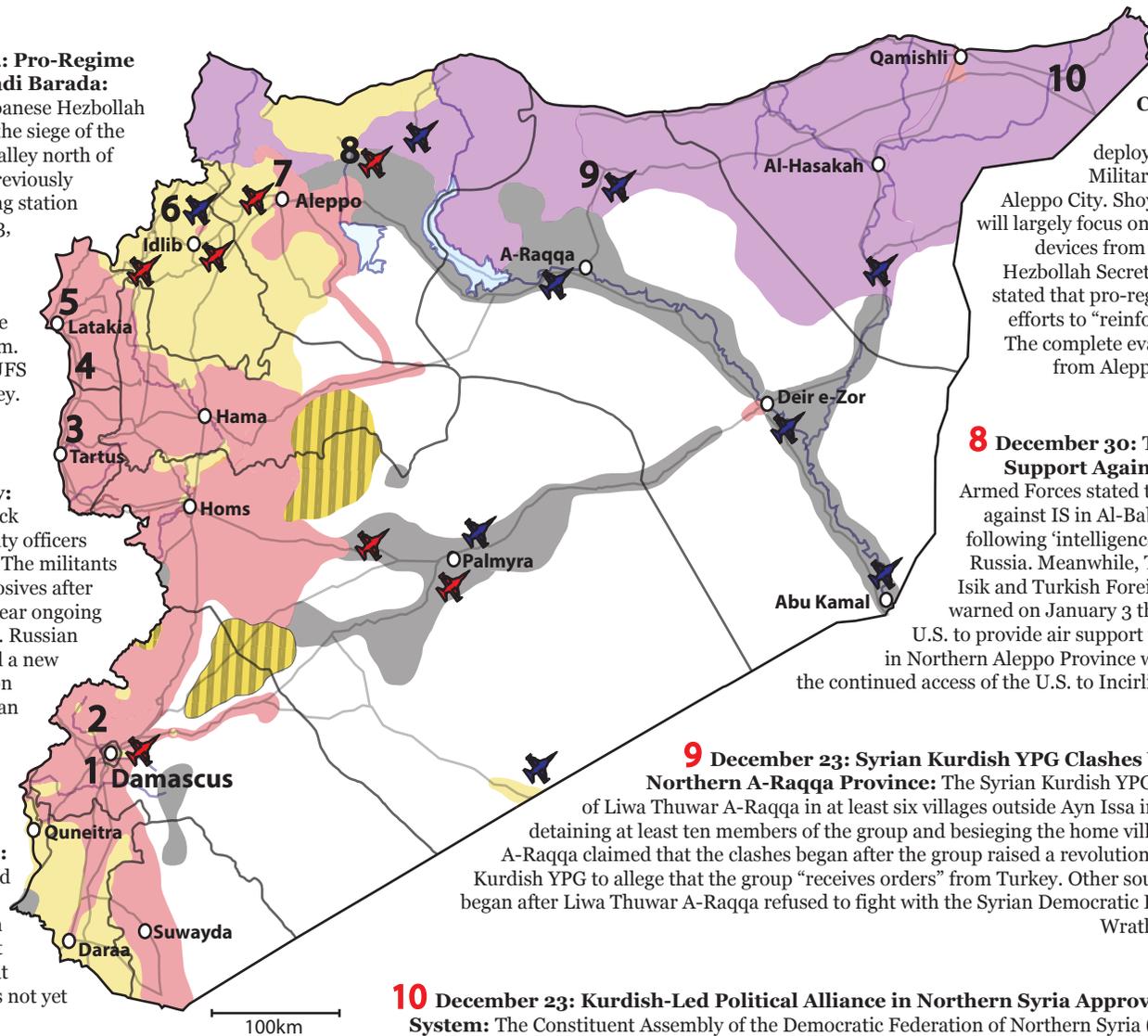
The Turkish Armed Forces stated that Russia launched airstrikes against IS in Al-Bab in Northern Aleppo Province following 'intelligence sharing' between Turkey and Russia. Meanwhile, Turkish Defense Minister Fikri Isik and Turkish Foreign Minister Mevlut Cavusoglu warned on January 3 that the continued failure of the U.S. to provide air support to Operation Euphrates Shield in Northern Aleppo Province will "raise questions" regarding the continued access of the U.S. to Incirlik Airbase in Southern Turkey.

9 December 23: Syrian Kurdish YPG Clashes With Opposition Group in Northern A-Raqqa Province:

The Syrian Kurdish YPG seized the local headquarters of Liwa Thuwar A-Raqqa in at least six villages outside Ayn Issa in Northern A-Raqqa Province, detaining at least ten members of the group and besieging the home village of its leader. Liwa Thuwar A-Raqqa claimed that the clashes began after the group raised a revolutionary flag, prompting the Syrian Kurdish YPG to allege that the group "receives orders" from Turkey. Other sources claimed that the violence began after Liwa Thuwar A-Raqqa refused to fight with the Syrian Democratic Forces in Operation Euphrates Wrath targeting IS in A-Raqqa City.

10 December 23: Kurdish-Led Political Alliance in Northern Syria Approves Framework for Federal System:

The Constituent Assembly of the Democratic Federation of Northern Syria (DFNS) approved a new 'social contract' for the autonomous administration in Northern Syria and announced preparations for federal elections after three days of meetings in the town of Rumaylan in Northern Hasakah Province. The assembly also removed the title of Kurdish 'Rojava' from its formal name in order to emphasize the multi-ethnic composition of the new federal system. The assembly further announced its vision for the basic principles of a constitution for a democratic and federal government that could be instituted as part of a political solution to the Syrian Civil War. The Constituent Assembly consists of political parties affiliated with the Syrian Democratic Forces dominated by the Syrian Kurdish YPG.



Areas of Control*

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

Airstrikes

- ✈ Pro-Regime
- ✈ U.S. / Coalition



*Control of Terrain Accurate as of 05 JAN 2017