

Syria Situation Report: July 16 - 22, 2016

1 July 17: Drone infiltrates Golan Heights from Syria. The Israeli Defense Forces (IDF) reportedly failed to down an Unmanned Aerial Vehicle (UAV) that flew four kilometers into the airspace of the Golan Heights before returning to Syria. The attempts to down the drone included two missiles from a 'Patriot' surface-to-air missile system as well as an air-to-air missile launched by a fighter jet. IDF sources stated that the drone was believed to be manufactured by Russia but operated by Lebanese Hezbollah.

2 July 17: Iran appoints new ambassador to Syria. The Iranian Ministry of Foreign Affairs reportedly appointed Hossein Sheikholeslam as the new Iranian Ambassador to Damascus, replacing Mohammad Reza Shibani. Sheikholeslam formerly served as Iranian Ambassador to Damascus from 1998 to 2003 and is the current foreign policy advisor to Iranian Parliament Speaker Ali Larijani.

3 July 21 - 22: Pro-regime forces seize town in Wadi Barada near Damascus: Pro-regime forces including Lebanese Hezbollah seized the village of Hurayrah in Wadi Barada near Damascus following heavy clashes with opposition groups. Syrian Al-Qaeda affiliate Jabhat a-Nusra executed fourteen captured pro-regime fighters on July 21 in response to initial attempts to storm the village.

4 July 22: Prominent Salafi-Jihadist groups clash in Southern Idlib Province: Fighters from Salafi-Jihadist groups Jund al-Aqsa and Ahrar a-Sham clashed in Urum Al-Joz southwest of Idlib City, killing one fighter and wounding up to two others. Jund al-Aqsa reportedly accused Ahrar a-Sham of spying on its headquarters. The two groups referred the dispute to a prominent local sharia court.

5 July 19: Opposition leaders allegedly meet to discuss potential split between Jabhat al-Nusra and Al-Qaeda.

Several leading members of Syrian Al-Qaeda affiliate Jabhat a-Nusra and other opposition groups allegedly held several meetings in "recent weeks" in Western Aleppo Province to discuss a proposal for a faction of fighters from Jabhat a-Nusra to renounce Al-Qaeda and merge with other factions to form a new group called the 'Syrian Islamic Movement'.

6 July 17: Pro-regime forces temporarily sever last opposition supply route into Aleppo City. Pro-regime forces temporarily seized parts of the Castello Road, severing the last remaining opposition-held supply line into Aleppo City. Opposition forces later recaptured the positions following a counteroffensive, although pro-regime forces retain fire control over the highway.

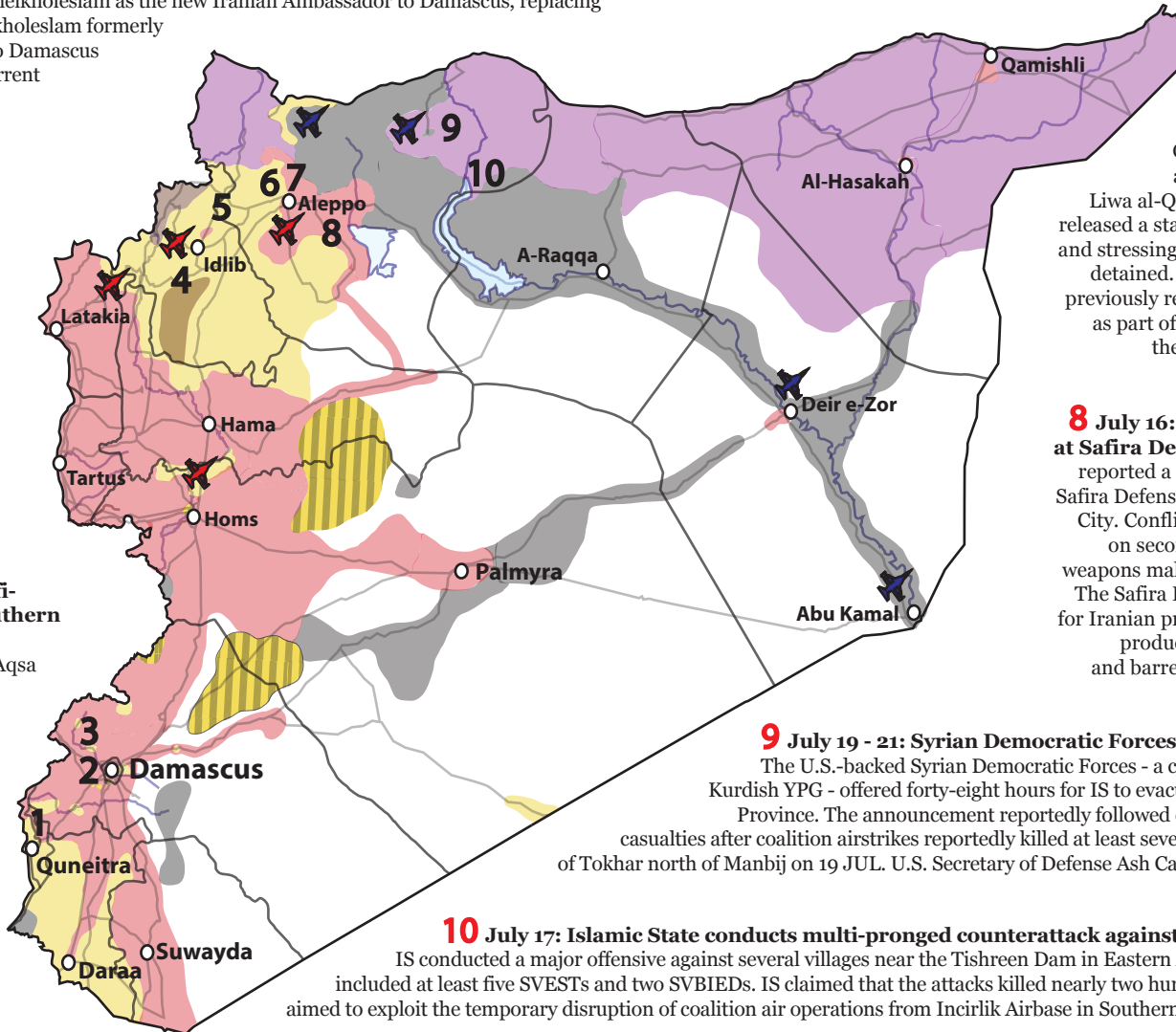
7 July 19: Opposition group beheads child outside Aleppo City.

Fighters from Islamist group Harakat Nour al-Deen al-Zinki beheaded a twelve-year-old Palestinian child in the Mashhad District of Aleppo City after accusing him of being a member of pro-regime militia Liwa al-Quds al-Filistini. The group later released a statement condemning the killing and stressing that the perpetrators had been detained. Harakat Nour al-Deen al-Zinki previously received TOW anti-tank missiles as part of a covert program that includes the U.S. and other regional states.

8 July 16: Large explosions reported at Safira Defense Factories. Local media reported a series of large explosions at the Safira Defense Factories southeast of Aleppo City. Conflicting reports blamed the blasts on secondary explosions triggered by a weapons malfunction or crashed helicopter. The Safira Defense Factories are a key hub for Iranian proxy forces as well as an alleged production site for chemical weapons and barrel bombs used over Aleppo City.

9 July 19 - 21: Syrian Democratic Forces offer ultimatum in Manbij. The U.S.-backed Syrian Democratic Forces - a coalition that includes the Syrian Kurdish YPG - offered forty-eight hours for IS to evacuate Manbij in Northern Aleppo Province. The announcement reportedly followed concerns over mounting civilian casualties after coalition airstrikes reportedly killed at least seventy-seven civilians in the village of Tokhar north of Manbij on 19 JUL. U.S. Secretary of Defense Ash Carter pledged a full investigation.

10 July 17: Islamic State conducts multi-pronged counterattack against Syrian Democratic Forces. IS conducted a major offensive against several villages near the Tishreen Dam in Eastern Aleppo Province that reportedly included at least five SVESTs and two SVBIEDs. IS claimed that the attacks killed nearly two hundred SDF fighters. IS may have aimed to exploit the temporary disruption of coalition air operations from Incirlik Airbase in Southern Turkey following a failed coup.



Areas of Control*

- Pro-Regime Forces
- The Islamic State
- Kurdish Forces
- Jabhat a-Nusra
- Opposition Forces
- Mixed Control

Airstrikes

- ✈ Pro-Regime
- ✈ U.S. / Coalition



*Control of Terrain accurate as of 1 JUL 2016