

Syria Situation Report: March 2 - 9, 2017

1 March 6 - 9: Pro-Regime Forces Target Eastern Ghouta Despite Alleged Ceasefire: Pro-regime forces conducted airstrikes and artillery shelling against opposition-held towns in the Eastern Ghouta Suburbs of Damascus despite the announcement of a two-week "regime of silence" by the Russian Ministry of Defense on March 6. Salafi-Jihadist group Jaysh al-Islam targeted pro-regime forces with at least two Iranian 'Zelzel-2' ballistic missiles in the Eastern Qalamoun Mountains near Damascus in order to "exact revenge" for the "massacres" in Eastern Ghouta.

2 March 2 - 7: Hay'at Tahrir a-Sham and Ahrar a-Sham Clash in Northern Syria:

Clash in Northern Syria: Hay'at Tahrir a-Sham (HTS) - the successor of Syrian Al-Qaeda affiliate Jabhat Fatah a-Sham - attacked a number of key checkpoints and infrastructure facilities held by Salafi-Jihadist group Ahrar a-Sham in Northern Idlib Province and Southern Aleppo Province. Several of the incidents involved fighters that formerly belonged to alleged ISIS-linked group Jund al-Aqsa. Ahrar a-Sham stated that the group will confront any "bullying" by Tahrir a-Sham while Tahrir a-Sham condemned Ahrar a-Sham as an "obstacle" to a grand merger of armed opposition groups in Northern Syria. The two factions reportedly agreed on March 7 to a reconciliation deal including the removal of checkpoints, prisoner releases, and the return of areas captured from Ahrar a-Sham.

3 March 4: Regime Warplane Crashes in Southern Turkey:

A Syrian Arab Air Force (SyAAF) MiG-21 'Fishbed' or MiG-23 'Flogger' fighter jet crashed in the Samandagi District of Hatay Province in Southern Turkey after conducting airstrikes against opposition forces near the Syrian-Turkish Border in Northern Idlib Province. Prominent Salafi-Jihadist group Ahrar al-Sham claimed to down the warplane with anti-aircraft fire while local activists claimed that the aircraft suffered technical problems and ran out of fuel. Turkish Gendarmerie recovered the injured pilot and transported him to a local hospital pending his extradition to Syria.

4 March 5: SVEST Detonates at Opposition Headquarters in Azaz:

An unidentified militant detonated an SVEST at the headquarters of the Turkish-backed Levant Front in Azaz in Northern Aleppo Province, killing at least eight individuals. No group has yet claimed the attack but IS has conducted several similar bombings in the area.

5 March 7: Pro-Regime Forces Reportedly Take Control of Villages Near Manbij: Manbij Military Council (MMC) Spokesperson Shervan Derwish stated that pro-regime forces took control of at least six villages west of Arima near Manbij in Eastern Aleppo Province as part of a deal brokered between Russia and the Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF). Activists nonetheless reported ongoing clashes between opposition groups backed by Turkey and the SDF near Arima. The deal reportedly intends to prevent Turkey from launching an offensive against the SDF in Manbij.

6 March 3 - 5: U.S. Deploys Army Rangers Around Manbij:

The U.S. deployed a detachment of troops from the 3rd Battalion, 75th Ranger Regiment equipped with Stryker Armored Personnel Carriers to Manbij in Eastern Aleppo Province. Operation Inherent Resolve Spokesperson Col. John Dorrian stated that the deployment aimed to "deter" an attack against the Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) in Manbij by Turkey in order to "focus" coalition partners on the fight against IS in A-Raqqa City.

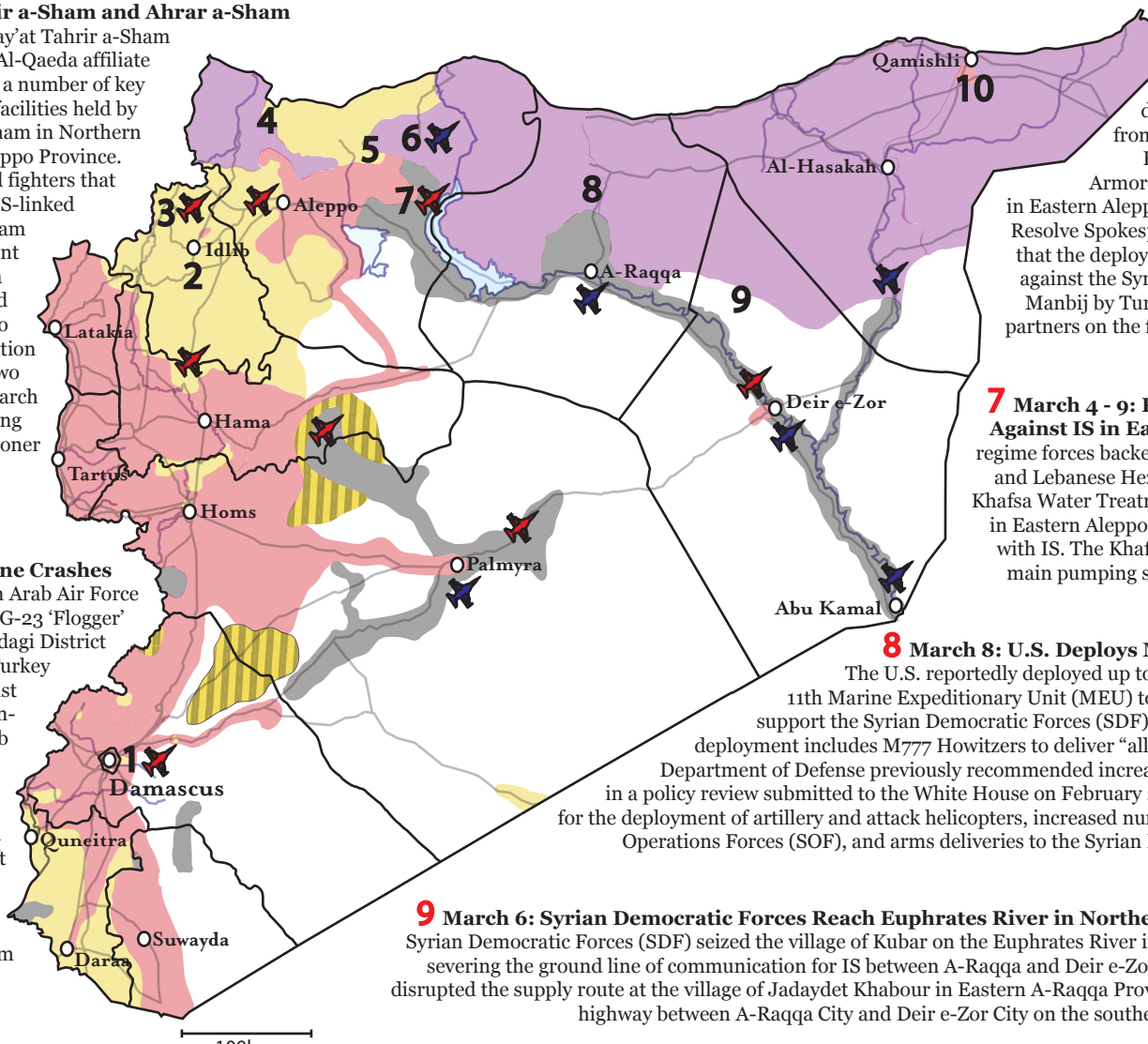
7 March 4 - 9: Pro-Regime Forces Advance Against IS in Eastern Aleppo Province: Pro-regime forces backed by Russia, Iraqi Shi'a Militias, and Lebanese Hezbollah seized the Jirah Airbase, Khafsa Water Treatment Plant, and dozens of towns in Eastern Aleppo Province following light clashes with IS. The Khafsa Water Treatment Plant is the main pumping station that services Aleppo City.

8 March 8: U.S. Deploys Marines Near A-Raqqa City:

The U.S. reportedly deployed up to four hundred soldiers from the 11th Marine Expeditionary Unit (MEU) to Northern A-Raqqa Province to support the Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) against IS in A-Raqqa City. The deployment includes M777 Howitzers to deliver "all-weather" fire support. The U.S. Department of Defense previously recommended increased military support to the SDF in a policy review submitted to the White House on February 28. The review reportedly called for the deployment of artillery and attack helicopters, increased numbers of embedded U.S. Special Operations Forces (SOF), and arms deliveries to the Syrian Kurdish YPG as part of the SDF.

9 March 6: Syrian Democratic Forces Reach Euphrates River in Northern Deir e-Zor Province: The Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) seized the village of Kubar on the Euphrates River in Northern Deir e-Zor Province, severing the ground line of communication for IS between A-Raqqa and Deir e-Zor Provinces. The SDF previously disrupted the supply route at the village of Jadaydet Khabour in Eastern A-Raqqa Province. IS retains control over the highway between A-Raqqa City and Deir e-Zor City on the southern bank of the Euphrates River.

10 March 3 - 4: Syrian Kurdish Democratic Union Party Cracks Down on Political Rivals in Response to Clashes in Northern Iraq: The Syrian Kurdish Democratic Union Party (PYD) detained at least thirty-one members of the rival Yekiti Party and Kurdistan Democratic Party in Syria (KDP-S) across Northern Syria. Protesters also attacked their offices in Qamishli and Darbasiyah in Hasaka Province. The KDP-S and Yekiti Party are both affiliated with the Syrian Kurdish National Council (KNC) and Iraqi Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP). The crackdown comes after clashes between the KNC 'Rojava Peshmerga' and an affiliate of the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) in Sinjar in Northern Iraq on 03 MAR.



Areas of Control*

- Pro-Regime Forces
- Opposition Forces
- The Islamic State
- Mixed Control
- Kurdish Forces
- Hay'at Tahrir a-Sham
*Formerly Jabhat al-Nusra

Airstrikes

- ✈ Pro-Regime
- ✈ U.S. / Coalition

