

Syria Situation Report: May 1 - 10, 2017

1 May 2: Assad Meets New Iranian Ambassador to Damascus: Syrian President Bashar al-Assad accepted the credentials of new Iranian Ambassador to Syria Javad Torkabadi, ending a six-month gap left after the departure of former Iranian Ambassador Mohammad Reza Sheibani in October 2016. Torkabadi previously served as the Iranian Ambassador to Sudan, Bahrain, and Nigeria.

2 May 8: Evacuations Begin in Opposition-Held Barzeh District of Damascus: Buses evacuated roughly 1,500 fighters and civilians from the besieged opposition-held Barzeh District of Damascus to Idlib Province in Northern Syria. The evacuations came as part of a deal between pro-regime forces and a local civilian reconciliation committee brokered by Russia that ultimately calls for the evacuation of up to 8,000 individuals from Barzeh District. The evacuation comes as part of an accelerating series of reconciliation deals over the past nine months aimed at removing the remaining opposition presence in Damascus.

3 May 2 - 8: Infighting Continues in Eastern Ghouta Despite Alleged Deal: Salafi-Jihadist group Jaysh al-Islam announced an end to clashes with Hay'at Tahrir a-Sham (HTS) and rival Islamist group Faylaq a-Rahman in the Eastern Ghouta Suburbs of Damascus on May 5. Jaysh al-Islam claimed the full elimination of HTS in areas under its control and agreed to mediation of its dispute with Faylaq a-Rahman by Qatar if Faylaq a-Rahman agreed to absorb the remaining elements of HTS in Eastern Ghouta. Jaysh al-Islam later resumed operations against HTS in Eastern Ghouta on May 8. The UN and Syrian Arab Red Crescent delivered food and other humanitarian aid to Douma in Eastern Ghouta on May 3 in the first such delivery since October 2016.

4 May 8 - 10: Pro-Regime Forces Attack U.S.-Backed Opposition in Central Syria: Pro-regime forces seized several checkpoints and villages near the Zaza Junction in Central Syria on the Damascus-Baghdad Highway following clashes with opposition groups backed by the U.S. and Jordan. Pro-regime warplanes also conducted airstrikes against opposition positions along the Syrian-Jordanian Border. Syrian Foreign Minister Walid al-Muallem stated that pro-regime forces intend to prioritize operations in the desert regions near the Syrian-Jordanian and Syrian-Iraqi Borders.

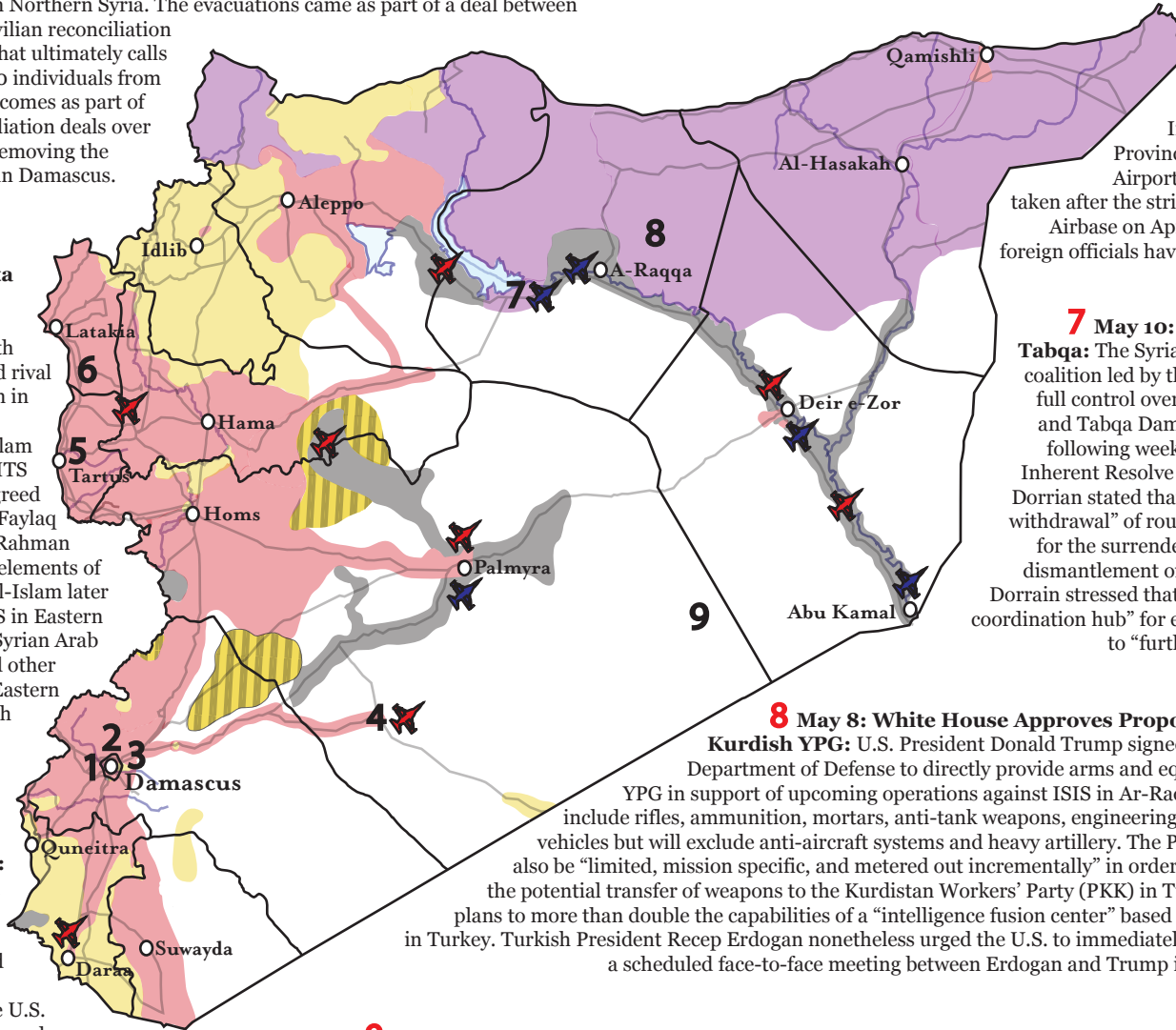
5 May 9: Russia Delivers New Artillery to Syria: Russia delivered at least 21 M-30 howitzers to Tartus on the Syrian Coast, according to anonymous U.S. officials. The officials noted that Russia also allegedly intends to deploy several additional S-400 Surface-to-Air Missile Systems to Syria in the coming weeks.

6 May 4: Regime Warplanes Allegedly Redeploy to Main Airbases in Syria: Syrian Air Force Command allegedly issued an order for all regime warplanes to return to their original airbases from Bassel al-Assad International Airport in Latakia Province and Damascus International Airport - reversing a security measure taken after the strikes by the U.S. against Shayrat Airbase on April 6. Neither local activists nor foreign officials have confirmed the redeployment.

7 May 10: SDF Seizes Full Control of Tabqa: The Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) - a coalition led by the Syrian Kurdish YPG - seized full control over the town of Tabqa and nearby and Tabqa Dam in Western A-Raqqa Province following weeks of clashes with IS. Operation Inherent Resolve (OIR) Spokesperson Col. John Dorrian stated that the SDF agreed to the "forced withdrawal" of roughly 70 IS fighters in exchange for the surrender of all heavy weapons and the dismantlement of all IEDs near the Tabqa Dam. Dorrian stressed that the fall of Tabqa denies a "key coordination hub" for external attack plots and serves to "further isolate" IS in A-Raqqa City.

8 May 8: White House Approves Proposal to Directly Arm Syrian Kurdish YPG: U.S. President Donald Trump signed an order authorizing the U.S. Department of Defense to directly provide arms and equipment to the Syrian Kurdish YPG in support of upcoming operations against ISIS in Ar-Raqqa City. The potential support include rifles, ammunition, mortars, anti-tank weapons, engineering equipment, and light armored vehicles but will exclude anti-aircraft systems and heavy artillery. The Pentagon noted that the aid will also be "limited, mission specific, and metered out incrementally" in order to address concerns regarding the potential transfer of weapons to the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) in Turkey. The U.S. also reportedly plans to more than double the capabilities of a "intelligence fusion center" based in Ankara that targets the PKK in Turkey. Turkish President Recep Erdogan nonetheless urged the U.S. to immediately reverse the decision ahead of a scheduled face-to-face meeting between Erdogan and Trump in Washington D.C. on May 16.

9 May 1: U.S.-Backed Opposition Advances Towards Albu Kamal: Jaysh Mughawir a-Thawra - the successor of the New Syrian Army backed by the U.S. and Jordan in Southern Syria - reportedly seized several villages and positions in Eastern Syria near Albu Kamal on the Syrian-Iraqi Border following light skirmishes with IS. Jaysh Mughawir a-Thawra claimed that the operation aims to clear IS from the desert regions of Homs and Deir e-Zor Province as well as establish "control" over Deir e-Zor City. The New Syrian Army launched a failed offensive against IS in Albu Kamal in June 2016.



Areas of Control*

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

Airstrikes

- ✈ Pro-Regime
- ✈ U.S. / Coalition



*Control of Terrain Accurate as of 10 MAY 2017