

# Syria Situation Report: May 10 - 18, 2017

**1 May 10 - 15: Al-Qaeda Reportedly Dispatches Officials to Southern Syria:** Hay'at Tahrir a-Sham (HTS) - the successor of Syrian Al-Qaeda affiliate Jabhat Fatah a-Sham - reportedly dispatched at least thirty senior officials from Idlib Province to Quneitra and Dera'a Provinces in Southern Syria. Activists claimed that the officials began recruiting fighters and buying heavy weapons in preparation for a joint offensive with opposition groups against pro-regime forces in Dera'a City.

**2 May 12 - 14: Regime Continues Forced Evacuations From Opposition-Held Districts of Damascus:** Buses evacuated more than 2,000 fighters and civilians from the besieged opposition-held Qaboun District of Damascus to Idlib Province on May 14. Pro-regime forces later entered the district to reestablish government offices. Meanwhile, buses also evacuated more than 1,200 fighters and civilians from the adjacent opposition-held Barzeh and Tishreen Districts of Damascus to Idlib Province on May 12 in a second wave of evacuations that began on May 8. The withdrawals come as part of a wider reconciliation deal between pro-regime forces and a local civilian committee brokered by Russia that ultimately calls for the evacuation of up to 8,000 individuals from Barzeh and Tishreen Districts.

**3 May 16: U.S. Places New Sanctions on Syrian Regime:** The U.S. Treasury Department set new sanctions on ten individuals and entities affiliated with the regime in response to "continued acts of violence" against civilians. The sanctioned targets included three close relatives of wealthy oligarch Rami Makhlouf - a core regime insider and cousin of Syrian President Bashar al-Assad - as well as his Al-Bustan Charity for its support to a "vast private network" of pro-regime militias. The new sanctions come after the U.S. State Department publicized additional evidence of mass executions by the regime at Sednaya Prison on May 15.

**4 May 18: IS Launches Major Attack on Pro-Regime Villages in Eastern Hama Province:** IS launched a major attack against the two majority-Ismaili towns of Mabujjah and Aqarib al-Safiyah in Eastern Hama Province, temporarily seizing parts of both towns while killing at least fifty civilians and local fighters. Pro-regime forces later recaptured both towns with air support from Russia.

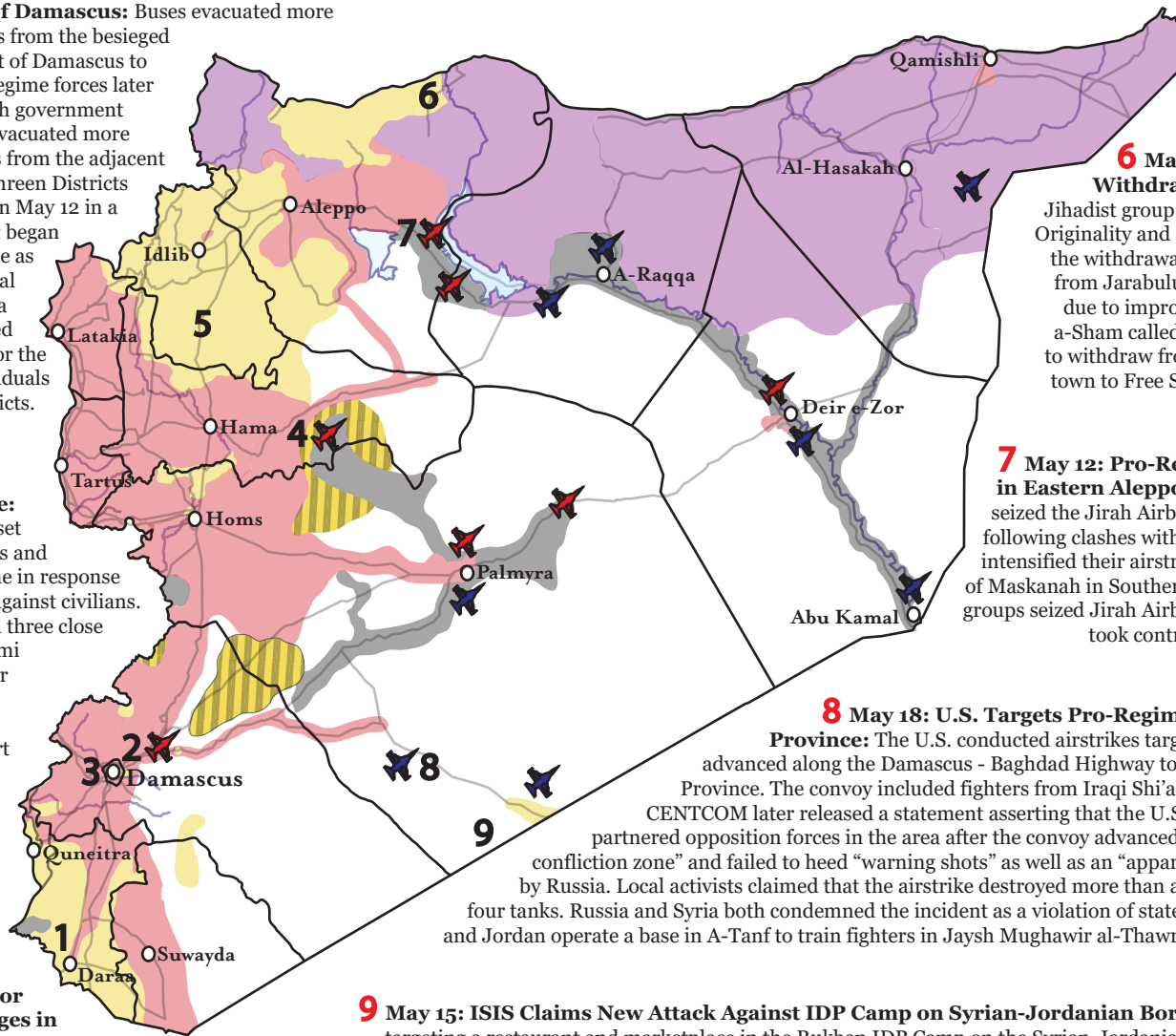
**5 May 10 - 18: Al-Qaeda Spars with Rival Groups in Idlib Province:** Hay'at Tahrir a-Sham (HTS) reportedly detained several fighters belonging to Free Syrian Army (FSA)-affiliated opposition groups near Ma'arat a-Numan in Southern Idlib Province on May 11 - 13. HTS also clashed with Salafi-Jihadist group Ahrar a-Sham over the village of Sinjar in Eastern Idlib Province. The tensions come after the HTS Sharia Council released a statement on May 9 that condemned the 'de-escalation zones' brokered by Russia, Iran, and Turkey at the Astana Talks as "treason" and called on "every Muslim" to breach the deal and fight the "remnants of the corrupt factions" in Idlib Province. HTS later distributed sermons condemning both Turkey and the FSA.

**6 May 18: Ahrar a-Sham Orders Withdrawal from Jarabulus:** Salafi-Jihadist group Ahrar a-Sham and the Islamic Originality and Development Front announced the withdrawal of their military headquarters from Jarabulus in Northern Aleppo Province due to improved security in the town. Ahrar a-Sham called on all other opposition groups to withdraw from Jarabulus and turn over the town to Free Syrian Police trained by Turkey.

**7 May 12: Pro-Regime Forces Seize Airbase in Eastern Aleppo Province:** Pro-regime forces seized the Jirah Airbase in Eastern Aleppo Province following clashes with IS. Pro-regime warplanes also intensified their airstrikes targeting the IS-held town of Maskanah in Southern Aleppo Province. Opposition groups seized Jirah Airbase in February 2013 before IS took control of the base in January 2014.

**8 May 18: U.S. Targets Pro-Regime Convoy in Eastern Homs Province:** The U.S. conducted airstrikes targeting a pro-regime convoy that advanced along the Damascus - Baghdad Highway towards A-Tanf in Eastern Homs Province. The convoy included fighters from Iraqi Shi'a Militia 'Kata'ib Imam Ali'. U.S. CENTCOM later released a statement asserting that the U.S. launched airstrikes to protect partnered opposition forces in the area after the convoy advanced "well inside an established de-confliction zone" and failed to heed "warning shots" as well as an "apparent attempt" to halt the convoy by Russia. Local activists claimed that the airstrike destroyed more than a dozen vehicles including up to four tanks. Russia and Syria both condemned the incident as a violation of state sovereignty. The U.S., Britain, and Jordan operate a base in A-Tanf to train fighters in Jaysh Mughawir al-Thawra against ISIS in Eastern Syria.

**9 May 15: ISIS Claims New Attack Against IDP Camp on Syrian-Jordanian Border:** IS detonated two VBIEDs targeting a restaurant and marketplace in the Rukban IDP Camp on the Syrian-Jordanian Border, killing at least fifteen individuals including five opposition fighters from the U.S.- and Jordanian-backed Jaysh Ahrar al-Asha'er. IS has conducted a number of attacks targeting opposition forces and civilians near the Rukban IDP Camp over the past six months.



## Areas of Control\*

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

## Airstrikes

- ✈ Pro-Regime
- ✈ U.S. / Coalition



\*THIS MAP DOES NOT DEPICT AL QAEDA CONTROL IN WESTERN SYRIA. ISW IS DEVELOPING A NEW CONTROL OF TERRAIN MAP THAT WILL ASSESS THE FULL EXTENT OF AL QAEDA PRESENCE IN SYRIA.

\*Control of Terrain Accurate as of 10 MAY 2017