

Syria Situation Report: October 6 - October 13, 2016

1 October 8 - 10: Opposition Forces in Southern Syria Announce New Offensive: On October 8, several opposition groups in the Free Syrian Army (FSA)-affiliated Southern Front announced the start of the the 'Battle of Bind Them Firmly' in order to sever the regime ground line of communication (GLOC) between Daraa City and Damascus. On October 10, an unidentified opposition group unsuccessfully attempted to down a regime warplane near Dael in Daraa Province using a SA-7 'Grail' Man-Portable Air Defense System (MANPADS). A local FSA-affiliated commander claimed that the weapon had been captured from pro-regime forces, denying allegations that it had been provided as part of a shipment from foreign countries in recent weeks.

2 October 10: Russia Announces Plan to Create Permanent Naval Base on Syrian Coast:

Russian Deputy Defence Minister Nikolay Pankov stated that Russia plans to upgrade and expand its existing naval facility in Tartus City into a permanent naval base. Pankov expressed hope that the proposal would soon come for ratification before the Russian Parliament. Russian State Duma International Affairs Committee Chairman Leonid Slutsky stated that the proposed expansion includes docks capable of holding larger vessels as well as anti-submarine defenses and upgraded electronics systems. The current facility dates to 1971 under the Soviet Union.

3 October 8 - 10: Pro-Regime Forces Advance in Northern Hama Province:

Pro-regime forces recaptured at least ten villages in Northern Hama Province, exploiting ongoing infighting between Salafi-Jihadist groups Ahrar a-Sham and Jund al-Aqsa. Opposition forces supported by Jabhat Fatah a-Sham - the successor of Syrian Al-Qaeda affiliate Jabhat al-Nusra - later retook at least two of the villages. Jund al-Aqsa and other opposition groups launched a major offensive into Northern Hama Province in August 2016.

4 October 10: Jaysh al-Fatah Announces Offensive in Northern Latakia Province:

The Jaysh al-Fatah Operations Room - a coalition that includes Jabhat Fatah a-Sham and Ahrar a-Sham - announced the start of the 'Battle of Ashura' in Northern Latakia Province in order to reverse continued gains by pro-regime forces over recent weeks. Opposition groups achieved initial gains before being forced to retreat by heavy Russian and regime airstrikes.

5 October 6 - 13: Salafi-Jihadist Groups Clash in Round of Infighting in Northern Syria: Salafi-Jihadist groups Ahrar a-Sham and Jund al-Aqsa engaged in clashes throughout Idlib Province and Northern Hama Province after Jund al-Aqsa allegedly kidnapped two Ahrar a-Sham fighters in Saraqib near Idlib City. Ahrar a-Sham released a statement accusing Jund al-Aqsa of maintaining ties to the Islamic State, while sixteen other opposition groups released a statement announcing their "solidarity" with Ahrar a-Sham in military operations against Jund al-Aqsa. On October 9, Jund al-Aqsa pledged allegiance to Jabhat Fatah a-Sham - the successor of Syrian Al-Qaeda affiliate Jabhat al-Nusra - in an effort to end the clashes. Jabhat Fatah a-Sham and Ahrar a-Sham subsequently signed an agreement on October 10 calling for an "immediate" halt to the infighting, the release of prisoners on both sides, the formation of a judicial council to mediate the dispute, and a prohibition on the "reformation" of Jund al-Aqsa in the future. Activists reported continued clashes in Idlib Province despite the agreement, including an SVBIED attack at an Ahrar a-Sham checkpoint.

6 October 6: UN Special Envoy to Syria Floats Evacuation of Jabhat Fatah a-Sham from Aleppo City:

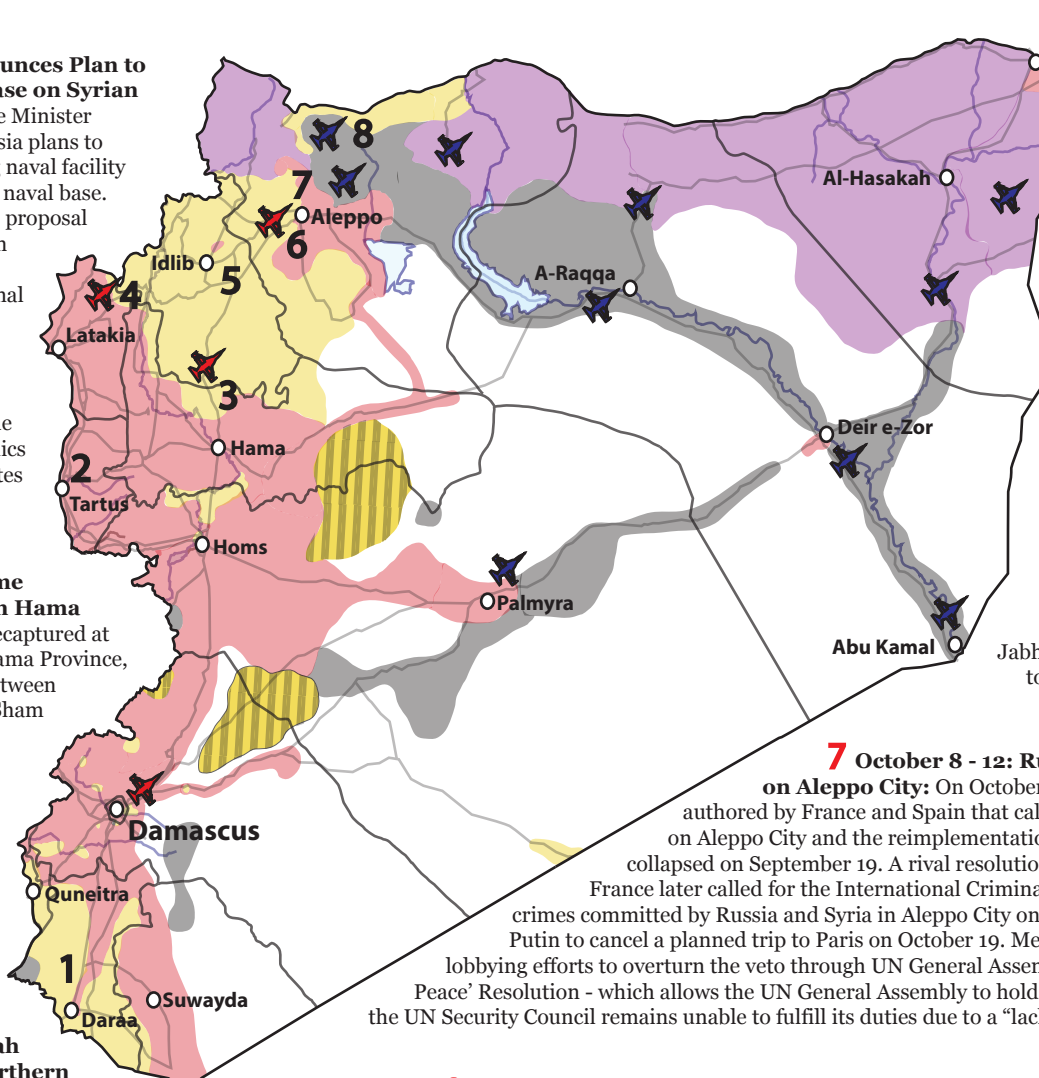
UN Special Envoy to Syria Staffan de Mistura called for the withdrawal of Jabhat Fatah al-Sham - the successor of Syrian Al-Qaeda affiliate Jabhat al-Nusra - from Aleppo City in exchange for a local ceasefire, pledging that he would personally escort any such evacuation. Russia expressed support for the proposal, while Jabhat Fatah a-Sham rejected the plan as a "surrender" to pro-regime forces currently besieging Aleppo City.

7 October 8 - 12: Russia Vetoes UN Security Council Resolution on Aleppo City:

On October 8, Russia vetoed a UN Security Council Resolution authored by France and Spain that called for an "immediate halt" to pro-regime airstrikes on Aleppo City and the reimplementation of a nationwide 'cessation of hostilities' deal that collapsed on September 19. A rival resolution submitted by Russia also failed to garner support. France later called for the International Criminal Court (ICC) to launch a "probe" into potential war crimes committed by Russia and Syria in Aleppo City on October 10, prompting Russian President Vladimir Putin to cancel a planned trip to Paris on October 19. Meanwhile, the Syrian Opposition Coalition has begun lobbying efforts to overturn the veto through UN General Assembly Resolution 377 - also known as the 'Uniting for Peace' Resolution - which allows the UN General Assembly to hold an "emergency special session" on security issues if the UN Security Council remains unable to fulfill its duties due to a "lack of unanimity" among its permanent member-states.

8 October 9 - 10: Turkish-Backed Opposition Groups Advance Towards IS-Held Dabiq in Northern Syria:

Free Syrian Army (FSA)-affiliated opposition groups participating in Operation Euphrates Shield seized at least fourteen villages from IS in Northern Aleppo Province with artillery support from Turkish Armed Forces, advancing within three miles of the key town of Dabiq. Dabiq represents a key religious symbol as the alleged final battleground in the apocalyptic ideology followed by IS. Dabiq also serves as the title of the groups's major English-language magazine.



Areas of Control*

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

Airstrikes

- Pro-Regime
- U.S. / Coalition

*Control of Terrain Accurate as of 19 SEP 2016

