

Syria Update: October 10 - October 17, 2014

1 October 10-17: The U.S.-led coalition significantly stepped up airstrikes on ISIS positions in and around Ayn al-Arab over the past week after ISIS advanced to control 40% of the city and seemed poised to capture the city entirely. CENTCOM confirmed daily airstrikes against ISIS command posts and command and control facilities, buildings, training facilities, staging areas, ISIS units, vehicles, tanks, fighting and sniper positions, and heavy machine gun positions in and around Ayn al-Arab as the YPG advanced further across the city. On October 16, a YPG commander claimed that ISIS had retreated from Ayn al-Arab except for two “pockets of resistance” in the eastern quarter, and clashes in eastern and southwestern Ayn al-Arab are ongoing. A U.S. official confirmed that the YPG is providing the U.S. with coordinates of ISIS positions in Ayn al-Arab.



2 October 12: The regime reversed Ahrar al-Sham (HASI) gains southeast of Aleppo after HASI made initial gains following its October 8 announcement of the “Free Fighters’ Roar” operation to sever the regime’s primary supply line through the Safira Defense Factories to Aleppo city.



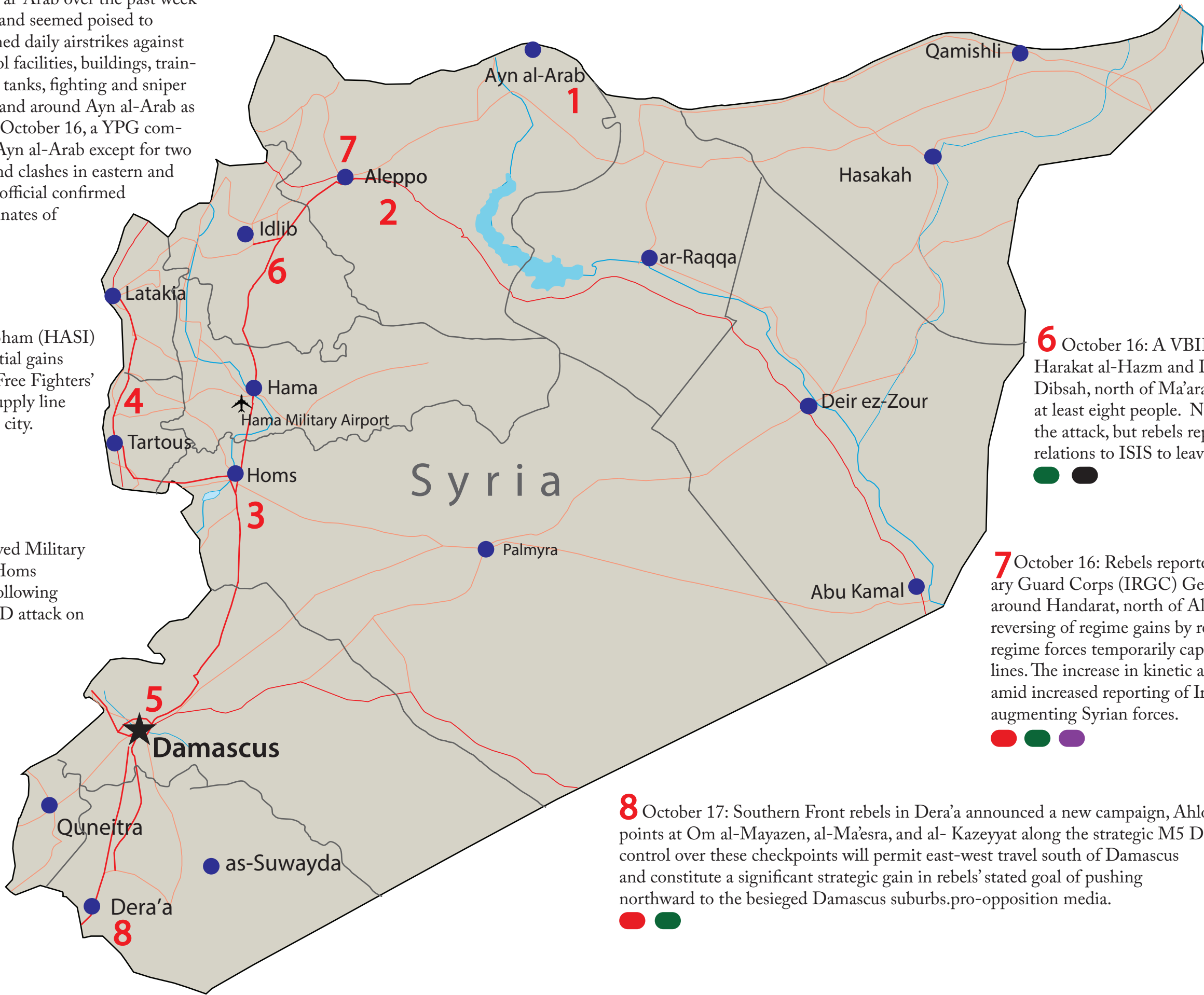
3 October 12 – October 15: The regime removed Military Intelligence chief Abdulkarim al-Saloum and Homs Security Committee Maj. Gen. Ahmed Jamil following sit-ins responding to the October 1 twin VBIED attack on a Homs school on that killed 40-50 children.



4 October 15: Alawite protesters demonstrated against the regime in its stronghold of Tartous, protesting the high number of Alawites killed fighting for the regime.



- Green circle: Opposition Forces
- Red circle: Pro-Regime Forces
- Black circle: ISIS
- Blue circle: U.S.-Led Coalition
- Yellow circle: YPG
- Purple circle: Jabhat al-Nusra (JN)



5 October 15 – 16: On October 15 the regime attacked the besieged, rebel-held Eastern Ghouta district of Jobar following rebel gains in the area, allegedly utilizing chlorine gas. Regime forces also reportedly launched four surface-to-surface missiles. On October 16 the regime launched another suspected chlorine gas attack on Jobar amid heavy clashes with rebels. These suspected CW attacks follow heavy fighting in Jobar and rebel gains, including by Jabhat al-Nusra (JN), in the district.



6 October 16: A VBIED detonated in front of a joint Harakat al-Hazm and Division 13 headquarters in Ma’arat Dibsah, north of Ma’arat al-Numan, east of Idlib city, killing at least eight people. No group has claimed responsibility for the attack, but rebels reportedly warned every person with relations to ISIS to leave Ma’arat Dibsah.



7 October 16: Rebels reportedly killed senior Iranian Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) General Jabbar Drisawi during clashes around Handarat, north of Aleppo city. This followed a successful reversing of regime gains by rebel forces on October 13 after regime forces temporarily captured Handarat, severing rebel supply lines. The increase in kinetic activity near Handarat has occurred amid increased reporting of Iranian and Shi’a Afghan fighters augmenting Syrian forces.



8 October 17: Southern Front rebels in Dera’a announced a new campaign, Ahlo al-Azem, to take regime checkpoints at Om al-Mayazen, al-Ma’sra, and al- Kazeyyat along the strategic M5 Damascus- Amman highway. Rebel control over these checkpoints will permit east-west travel south of Damascus and constitute a significant strategic gain in rebels’ stated goal of pushing northward to the besieged Damascus suburbs.pro-opposition media.



by Jennifer Cafarella and Theodore Bell

Regime forces appear to be suffering from a heightened manpower shortage. Reports of the regime engaging in forced conscription follow increased reporting of Iranian and Afghan Shi’a fighters augmenting regime forces in the fight for the strategically-located town of Handarat north of Aleppo city. In addition, popular demonstrations have erupted in the regime strongholds of Homs and Tartous, indicating a continued level of frustration from within the regime’s base of support. In the fight against ISIS in northern Syria, U.S. coordination with YPG units and increased airstrikes, in conjunction with fierce urban fighting, seems to have halted and reversed ISIS gains in the city.