

Syria Situation Report: August 31 - September 14, 2017

1 September 7: U.S. Pressures Opposition Groups to Withdraw From Syrian-Jordanian Border: Jaysh Usud a-Sharqiyah and the Martyr Ahmed Abdu Brigades - two opposition groups backed by the U.S. and Jordan - reportedly accepted demands from the U.S. Military Operations Command (MOC) in Amman to withdraw from the Syrian-Jordanian Border in Eastern Rif Dimashq Province. The two groups also evacuated at least 5,000 refugees from the Hadalat IDP Camp on the Syrian-Jordanian Border to the Rukban IDP Camp near A-Tanf on the Syrian-Iraqi Border. The U.S. and Russia are allegedly negotiating a deal to form a new 'de-escalation zone' along the Syrian-Jordanian Border that includes a forty-kilometer exclusion zone for Iran and Lebanese Hezbollah.

2 September 12: Syria Finalizes Major Electricity Deals with Iran: Syrian Electricity Minister Zuhair Kharboutli signed a number of memorandums of understanding on electricity production following meetings with the Iranian Energy Minister in Tehran. Syria will contract with Iran for the construction of five new power stations in Latakia Province as well as the restoration of several other damaged power stations in Homs and Deir e-Zor Provinces. Kharboutli also signed a final \$155M contract with Iranian 'Mapna' to construct five new natural-gas power stations in Aleppo Province. Kharboutli noted that the deals occurred under a wider agreement pledging electrical infrastructure contracts to Iran in Syria.

3 September 7: Israel Conducts Airstrikes Against Joint Iranian-Syrian Missile Facility: The Israeli Defense Forces (IDF) conducted airstrikes from Northern Lebanon targeting alleged regime ballistic missile production and storage facilities near Masyaf in Western Hama Province. The facilities are allegedly operated jointly by Iran and Syria. The Syrian Arab Army (SAA) General Command warned against the "dangerous repercussions" of continued "hostile acts" by Israel in Syria. Israeli Defense Minister Avigdor Lieberman refused to confirm the strike but stressed that Israel remains determined to "prevent the existence" of a "Shi'a Corridor" from Iran to Syria.

4 September 2: Pro-Regime Forces Seize Key IS Center in Eastern Hama Province: Pro-regime forces backed by Russia and Iran seized the key town of Uqayribat in Eastern Hama Province and at least sixteen other villages following clashes with IS. IS-affiliated news claimed that IS withdrew from Uqayribat after heavy fighting that killed at least seven soldiers from the Russian Armed Forces. Activists reported that hundreds of civilians fled Uqayribat to opposition-held Idlib Province.

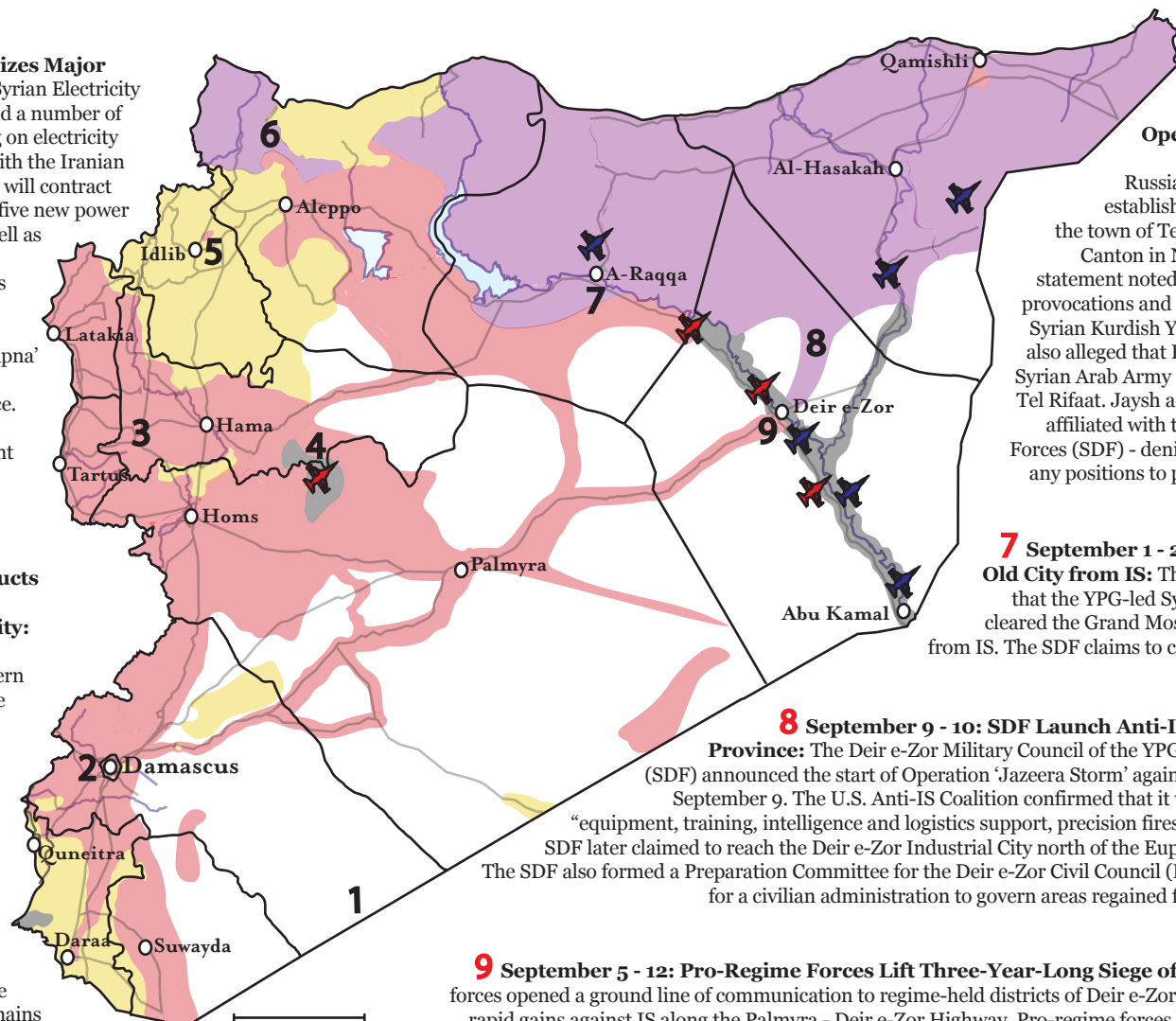
5 August 31 - September 5: Opposition Groups Pledge Support for 'National Army' Alternative to Al Qaeda's Unification Initiative: Salafi-Jihadist groups Ahrar a-Sham and Jaysh al-Islam joined at least thirty-seven other opposition groups in pledging support for the formation of a 'Revolutionary Ministry of Defense' and 'National Army' under the Syrian Interim Government (SIG). The SIG later appointed SIG Prime Minister Awad Abu Hatab as the new 'Revolutionary Defense Minister' with a mandate to organize the election of a 'National Army' Chief of Staff. Hay'at Tahrir a-Sham (HTS) - the successor of Syrian Al-Qaeda affiliate Jabhat Fatah a-Sham - denounced the initiative.

6 September 6: Russia Claims Deconfliction Zone to Preempt Operations by Turkey Against Kurdish Afrin Canton: The Russian Defense Ministry claimed to establish a "deconfliction zone" around the town of Tel Rifaat near the Kurdish Afrin Canton in Northern Aleppo Province. The statement noted that the zone aims to "prevent provocations and possible conflicts" between the Syrian Kurdish YPG and Turkey. The statement also alleged that Russian Military Police and the Syrian Arab Army (SAA) had replaced the YPG in Tel Rifaat. Jaysh a-Thuwar - an opposition group affiliated with the YPG-led Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) - denied that its fighters turned over any positions to pro-regime forces in Tel Rifaat.

7 September 1 - 2: SDF Retake the A-Raqqa Old City from IS: The U.S. Anti-IS Coalition stated that the YPG-led Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) cleared the Grand Mosque and the A-Raqqa Old City from IS. The SDF claims to control of 65% of A-Raqqa City.

8 September 9 - 10: SDF Launch Anti-IS Operations in Deir e-Zor Province: The Deir e-Zor Military Council of the YPG-led Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) announced the start of Operation 'Jazeera Storm' against IS in Deir e-Zor Province on September 9. The U.S. Anti-IS Coalition confirmed that it will support the operation with "equipment, training, intelligence and logistics support, precision fires, and battlefield advance." The SDF later claimed to reach the Deir e-Zor Industrial City north of the Euphrates River on September 10. The SDF also formed a Preparation Committee for the Deir e-Zor Civil Council (DEZCC) to lay the groundwork for a civilian administration to govern areas regained from IS in Deir e-Zor Province.

9 September 5 - 12: Pro-Regime Forces Lift Three-Year-Long Siege of Deir e-Zor City: Pro-regime forces opened a ground line of communication to regime-held districts of Deir e-Zor City on September 6 following rapid gains against IS along the Palmyra - Deir e-Zor Highway. Pro-regime forces later lifted the siege of the Deir e-Zor Military Airport on September 9. Russia supported the advances with heavy airstrikes as well as a salvo of 'Kalibr' Cruise Missiles launched from the Mediterranean Sea by the 'Admiral Grigorovich'-Class Frigate 'Admiral Essen' on September 5. Deir e-Zor Provincial Governor Mohammad Ibrahim Sabra stated that pro-regime forces intend to "clear" IS from Deir e-Zor City as a "launching pad" for further military operations along the Euphrates River Valley. Activists later reported the arrival of large numbers of pro-regime military reinforcements including boats and pontoons bridges to Deir e-Zor City for alleged amphibious operations across the Euphrates River.



Areas of Control*

- Pro-Regime Forces
- Opposition Forces
- The Islamic State
- Kurdish Forces
- Hay'at Tahrir a-Sham
*Formerly Jabhat a-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 14 SEP 2017

Text Credit: Sana Sekkarie

©2017 by the Institute for the Study of War