

Syria Situation Report: February 5 - 18, 2020

1 Feb 6-13: Israel Targets Iranian-Backed Forces in Damascus and Southern Syria with Two Waves of Airstrikes: Israeli warplanes conducted airstrikes on regime and Iranian proxy positions in February, reportedly striking the Mezzeh Airport in Damascus and several regime bases in Daraa Province. Israeli warplanes likely conducted airstrikes targeting an Iranian arms shipment at Damascus International Airport and a pro-regime base in al-Kiswah, Damascus Province on February 13. The airstrikes reportedly killed three Syrian Arab Army (SAA) soldiers and four Iranian Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) soldiers.

2 Feb 6-18: Insurgents Conduct Three Explosive Attacks in Capital within Two Weeks: Insurgent activity by unidentified militants has increased significantly within the last two weeks in Damascus city. Militants detonated a car bomb in an attempt to assassinate an individual with connections to regime security forces in the Fahamah neighborhood of Damascus on February 6. On February 10, militants detonated an explosive device in a pickup truck in the Mezzeh neighborhood of Damascus and on February 18, one person was killed in a small-scale VBIED-militant attack in Bab Moussalla neighborhood of

3 Feb 5-7: Pro-Regime Forces Seize Key City of Saraqib: Pro-regime forces, including the Russian-backed SAA 5th Corps, seized the city of Saraqib in eastern Idlib Province after surrounding the town on February 6. The Turkish Armed Forces (TSK) reportedly shelled pro-regime positions from Turkey's four observation posts around Saraqib as pro-regime forces advanced. Saraqib was one of the largest cities remaining under rebel control in Greater Idlib Province and is located at a key junction of two major highways.

4 Feb 11: Pro-Regime Forces Seize Control of Key M5 Highway for First Time Since 2012: Pro-regime forces, including Russian and Iranian-backed forces, captured Saraqib, several villages in west Aleppo Province, and the key M5 International Highway on February 11. The regime has not controlled the entirety of the M5 Highway since opposition forces seized it in 2012.

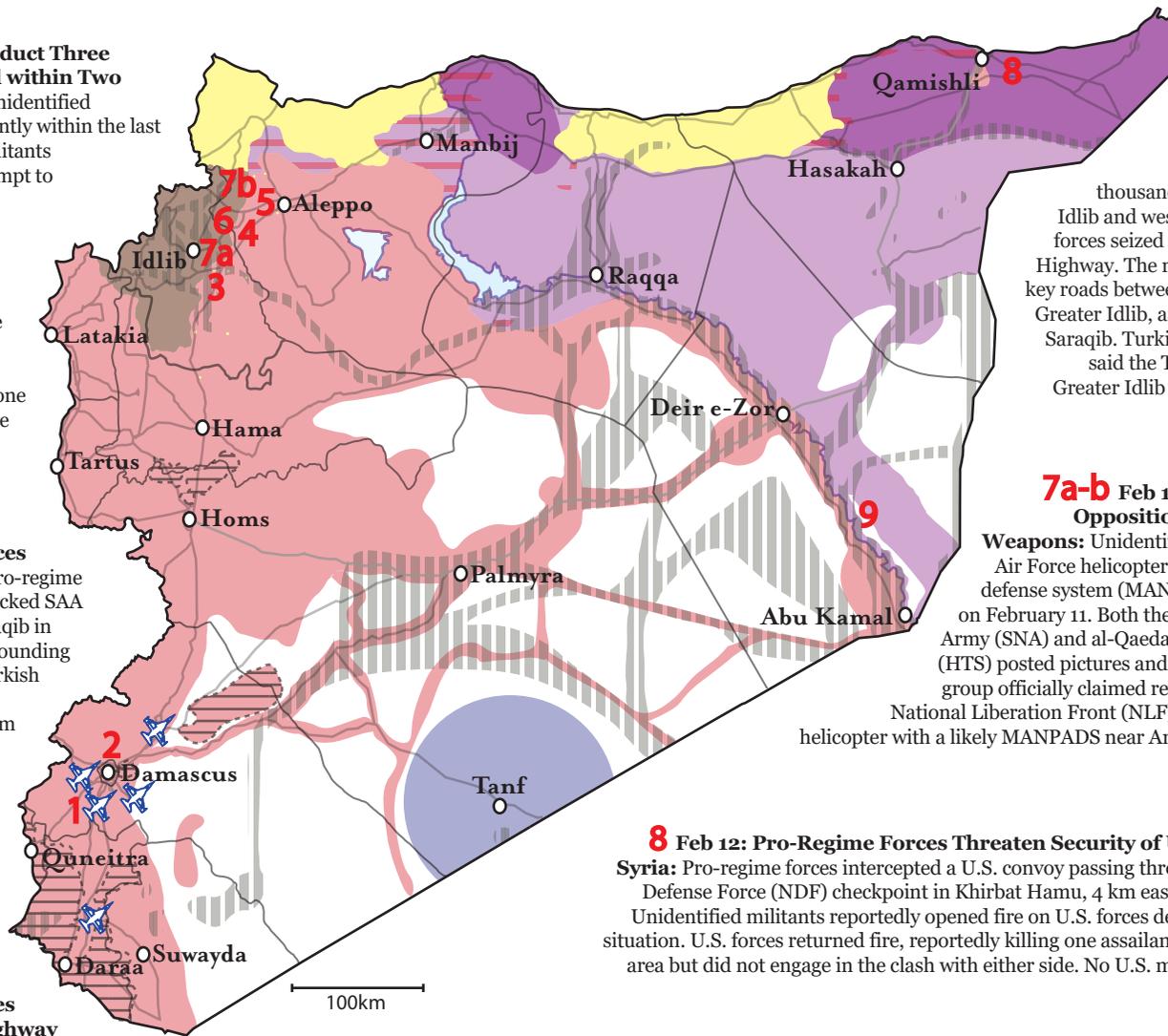
5 February 16-17: Pro-Regime Forces Make Large Territorial Gains in Western Aleppo Province: Pro-regime forces took control of a cluster of towns and villages west of Aleppo city and reportedly advanced toward the Turkish observation post at the Regiment 111 Base in western Aleppo Province on February 16 and 17. Syrian Minister of Transportation Ali Hammoud separately stated that the Aleppo International Airport will reopen February 20. This expansion marks the first time the regime has controlled all of Aleppo city since 2012.

6 Feb 7-18: Turkey Massively Expands Presence in Greater Idlib Province in Reaction to Pro-Regime Gains: The TSK established dozens of new observation points and deployed thousands of new fighters and vehicles in Idlib and west Aleppo Province as pro-regime forces seized Saraqib and advanced up the M5 Highway. The new deployments are centered on key roads between northern Aleppo Province and Greater Idlib, as well as the M4 Highway west of Saraqib. Turkish Defense Minister Hulusi Akar said the TSK will reinforce its positions in Greater Idlib Province to "enable a permanent ceasefire" in the area.

7a-b Feb 11-14: Turkey Likely Supplies Opposition Groups with Anti-Aircraft Weapons: Unidentified militants shot down a Syrian Air Force helicopter with a possible man-portable air defense system (MANPADS) in Nayrab, Idlib Province on February 11. Both the Turkish-backed Syrian National Army (SNA) and al-Qaeda-affiliated Hay'at Tahrir al-Sham (HTS) posted pictures and videos of the attack, although no group officially claimed responsibility. The Turkish-backed National Liberation Front (NLF) later downed a Syrian Air Force helicopter with a likely MANPADS near Anjarah in the western countryside of Aleppo on February 14.

8 Feb 12: Pro-Regime Forces Threaten Security of U.S. Patrols in Northeastern Syria: Pro-regime forces intercepted a U.S. convoy passing through an Iranian-backed National Defense Force (NDF) checkpoint in Khirbat Hamu, 4 km east of Qamishli, Hasakah Province. Unidentified militants reportedly opened fire on U.S. forces despite attempts to de-escalate the situation. U.S. forces returned fire, reportedly killing one assailant. Russian forces were also in the area but did not engage in the clash with either side. No U.S. military personnel were injured or killed in the attack.

9 Feb 10: ISIS Escalates Bid to Increase Social Control in Village near Mayadin with Beheading: An Islamic State (ISIS) cell kidnapped a man from his house in al-Hawajj, a village across the river from al-Mayadin in central Deir e-Zor Province, took him to the desert, beheaded him, and returned his body to the village center. The kidnappers fired gunshots into the air before leaving. The victim was employed by the Deir e-Zor Civil Council and worked with the SDF.



- Pro-Regime
- Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF)
- ISIS Support Zones
- Joint SDF-Regime Control
- Al Qaeda-Dominated*
- Core SDF-Held Kurdish Terrain
- Turkish-Dominated
- Former Opposition Terrain (Reconciled)
- U.S. and Partner Forces
- ✈ Israeli Airstrikes

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*AL QAEDA-LINKED GROUPS CONTROL NEARLY ALL GOVERNANCE AND MILITARY STRUCTURES IN GREATER IDLIB PROVINCE. VARIOUS LOCAL ACTORS ASSERT LIMITED CONTROL OVER ISOLATED AREAS OF GREATER IDLIB. Control of Terrain Accurate as of 18 FEB 2020