

Syria Situation Report: September 2 - 15, 2020

1 Sept. 3 - 14: Israeli Airstrikes Continue to Disrupt Iranian-backed Forces in Syria.

Several Israeli airstrikes killed at least 16 Iranian-backed militia members near al-Mayadin and Abu Kamal, Deir e-Zor Province, on September 3. Israeli airstrikes severely damaged the al-Safirah military complex, known for its production and storage of ballistic missiles and chemical weapons, in Aleppo Province on September 11. The Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps reportedly supplies Lebanese Hezbollah with missiles manufactured at these laboratories. Six Israeli airstrikes killed 10 Iranian-backed militia members and destroyed ammunition depots and vehicles near Abu Kamal, Deir e-Zor Province, on September 14.

2 Sept. 7: Assad Seeks Russian Help to Support Failing Economy and Begin Reconstruction.

Syrian President Bashar al-Assad met with Russian Deputy Prime Minister Yuri Borisov and Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov in Damascus. The group agreed to strengthen bilateral ties, continue the fight against terrorism, and address the negative consequences of the war through reconstruction in Syria.

3 Sept. 7: ISIS Demonstrates Growing Strength in the Central Syrian Desert.

ISIS militants clashed with the Syrian Arab Army (SAA) and Russian forces, briefly taking control of Doubayat gas field, 14 km south of al-Sukhnah, Homs Province. SAA and Russian forces regained control of Doubayat gas field later that day.

4 Sept. 8: Local Arab Tribe Members Expel SDF through Violent Action.

Local members of the Arab Aqidat tribe captured and expelled Kurdish-dominated Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) fighters following clashes in Jadid Aqidat, Deir e-Zor Province. Clashes occurred after the SDF sent reinforcements to the town possibly to arrest a number of local residents.

5 Sept. 10: Baghouz Coordination Committee Presents the SDF With a List of Demands and Threats.

The Baghouz Coordination Committee demanded that the Kurdish-led Syrian Democratic Forces and Autonomous Administration of Northern and Eastern Syria give an official apology for the current political and security situation in the area, improve living conditions, stop random arrests and military rule, release Baghouz natives being held in displacement camps, and allow for aid organizations to enter the town. The Committee threatened to launch general civil disobedience and close all government departments if their demands are not met within 10 days.

6 Sept. 10: IRGC Encourages Arab Tribal Defections and Threatens SDF Presence in Deir e-Zor Province.

The Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) established a new military post on the Deir e-Zor-Hasakah road east of the Euphrates River in Hatlah, Deir e-Zor Province. The IRGC is likely attempting to encourage Arab defections from the SDF by establishing a presence on the eastern side of the Euphrates River. Additional IRGC bases along the Deir e-Zor-Hasakah road could threaten the transit of SDF members.

7 Sept. 10 - 15: ISIS Continues Campaign of Assassinations against Regime Operatives to Increase Freedom of Movement and Foment Unrest in Daraa Province.

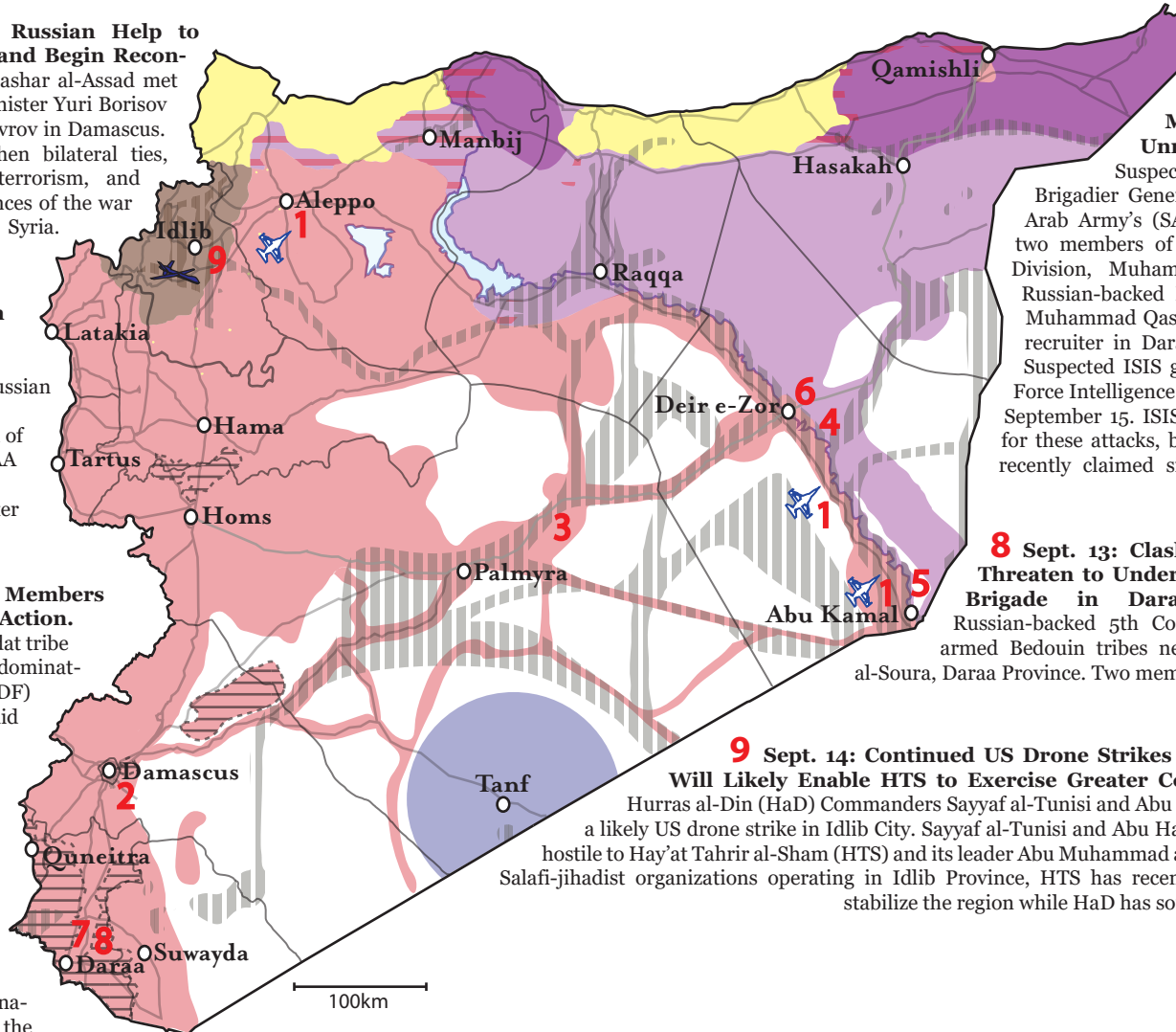
Suspected ISIS gunmen assassinated Brigadier General Talal Qassem of the Syrian Arab Army's (SAA) Russian-backed 5th Corps, two members of the SAA's Iranian-backed 4th Division, Muhammad Jamal al-Jalam of the Russian-backed Daraa Central Committee, and Muhammad Qasim al-Yunis - an Iranian militia recruiter in Daraa Province, on September 10. Suspected ISIS gunmen assassinated Syrian Air Force Intelligence Commander Firas al-Naasan on September 15. ISIS has not claimed responsibility for these attacks, but is likely responsible given it recently claimed similar assassinations in Daraa Province.

8 Sept. 13: Clashes with Local Population Threaten to Undermine the Image of the 8th Brigade in Daraa Province.

The SAA's Russian-backed 5th Corps 8th Brigade clashed with armed Bedouin tribes near al-Ghariya al-Sharqiya and al-Soura, Daraa Province. Two members of the 8th Brigade and one Bedouin were killed.

9 Sept. 14: Continued US Drone Strikes Targeting HaD Leadership Will Likely Enable HTS to Exercise Greater Control over Idlib Province.

Hurras al-Din (HaD) Commanders Sayyaf al-Tunisi and Abu Hamza al-Yamani were killed in a likely US drone strike in Idlib City. Sayyaf al-Tunisi and Abu Hamza al-Yamani were reportedly hostile to Hay'at Tahrir al-Sham (HTS) and its leader Abu Muhammad al-Jolani. HTS and HaD are rival Salafi-jihadist organizations operating in Idlib Province, HTS has recently cooperated with Turkey to stabilize the region while HaD has sought to undermine these efforts.



100km

- Pro-Regime
- Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF)
- Turkey-Opposition
- US and Partner Forces
- ISIS Support Zones
- SDF-Dominated, Regime Presence
- Former Opposition Terrain (Reconciled)
- Al Qaeda-Dominated*
- US Drone Strike
- Israeli Airstrikes

*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 September 15, 2020

Key Takeaway: ISIS is continuing to reconstitute in Syria amidst increased unrest and popular opposition to local security forces. Suspected ISIS gunmen demonstrated the group's increased capabilities by carrying out a campaign of assassinations targeting pro-regime operatives in Daraa Province. ISIS will likely continue to rapidly reconstitute in southern Syria if fighting between pro-regime forces and armed local populations persists. Separately, ISIS is expanding its influence in eastern Syria following increased pressure on the Syrian Democratic Forces from local Arab tribes and pro-regime actors. ISIS will seek to foment additional unrest in order to further increase its freedom of action in southern and central Syria.



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