

Syria Situation Report: May 2 – May 29, 2018

1 May 24 - 25: Iranian-Backed Forces Reposition Ahead of Anticipated Offensive in East Daraa: Pro-regime militias moved from Daraa city north towards Izraa, Athman and Khirbet Ghazaleh along the regime-opposition line of contact in eastern Daraa. The opposition Daraa-based al-Banyan al-Marsous operations room ambushed an unspecified Iranian-backed convoy en route from Daraa to Athman. Pro-regime forces deployed from the Syrian capital to Daraa from May 19 to 21 following the conclusion of military operations in south Damascus.

2 May 24 - 25: Rebel Groups Arrest IS Fighters En Route to Yarmouk Basin: The formerly US-backed al-Omari Brigades arrested 19 Islamic State (IS) infiltrators at Jbeib in eastern Daraa province on May 25, stating that the IS fighters were attempting to cross from regime-held Suwayda province to the IS-held Yarmouk Basin in southwest Daraa via opposition-held terrain. Rebel faction Jaish al-Islam similarly arrested 20 IS militants in eastern Daraa on May 24.

3 May 9 - 10: Israel and Pro-Regime Forces Escalate Cross-Border Strikes in the South: Israel launched its largest attack against Iranian targets in Syria since the start of the war, striking as many as 70 Iranian locations. Israeli officials stated the strikes came after an Iranian Quds Force rocket barrage on the disputed Golan Heights on May 9. Israeli forces targeted Iranian, Hezbollah and other pro-regime positions in Damascus, Quneitra, Daraa and Suwayda provinces.

4 May 8: Suspected Israeli Airstrikes Target Airbase Near Damascus: Iranian troop movements prompted Israeli strikes on a base housing missile batteries near Kiswah, south of Damascus, reportedly killing eight Iranian fighters. The Israeli Defense Forces opened public bomb shelters, deployed several Iron Dome anti-missile batteries and increased troop presence in the Golan Heights in anticipation of subsequent Iranian strikes.

5 May 19 - 21: Pro-Regime Forces Announce Complete Control of Syrian Capital After Evacuation of Last IS Pocket Near Damascus: Local activists claimed that between 1,000 and 1,500 Islamic State (IS) fighters evacuated areas south of Damascus, including the Yarmouk camp and the al-Hajar al-Aswad district, for the eastern Syrian desert. A convoy of civilians reportedly evacuated to Idlib province in the northwest. The last convoy of IS fighters left south Damascus on May 21, marking the first time since 2012 that the Syrian regime has full control of Damascus and its countryside.

6 May 24: Regime Claims Israeli Airstrikes Target Hezbollah Near Homs: Suspected Israeli airstrikes targeted Hezbollah and Iranian-backed militias at the al-Qusayr air base southwest of Homs city, according to the Syrian government. Pro-regime media reported that Syrian air defense systems intercepted the missiles and prevented any damage to the base.

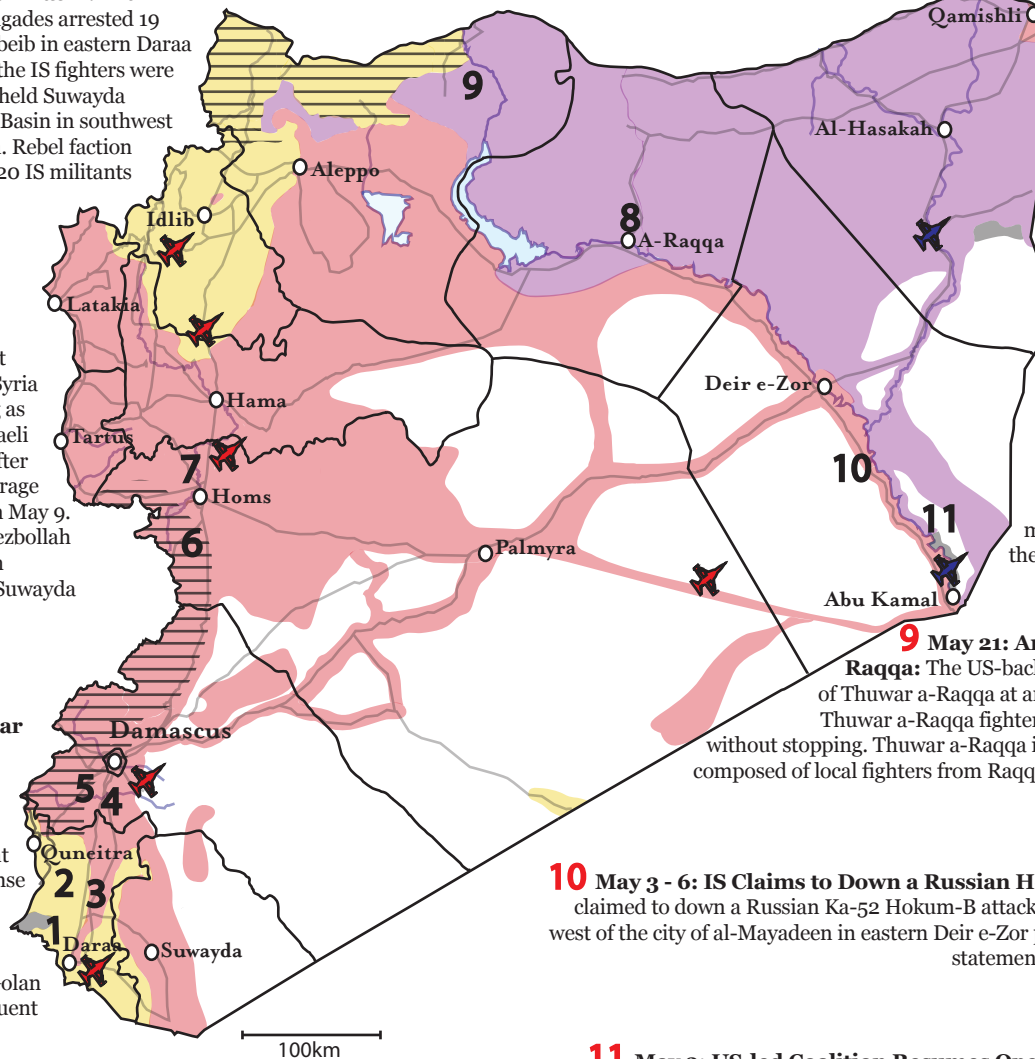
7 May 2: Opposition-Held Enclave Spanning North Homs and South Hama Provinces Surrenders to Russian Authorities: Initial evacuations were carried out on May 7 after Russian-brokered negotiations on May 2 at a-Dar al-Kabira in northern Homs. Nearly 20,000 civilians and fighters left in the ensuing evacuations, starting from the city of Rastan. Russian and Syrian forces launched a campaign of airstrikes on the region around Rastan in the period leading up to the agreement.

8 May 16 - 21: SDF Begins Conscription Campaign Targeting Arabs and Kurds in Northern Syria: The US-backed Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) launched a large-scale, forced conscription campaign through a series of arrests in Manbij in northern Aleppo province after the SDF-affiliated Raqqa Civil Council and SDF military intelligence came to an agreement to allow for the forced conscription of civilians in Manbij on May 19.

9 May 21: Arab and Kurdish SDF Components Clash Near Raqqa: The US-backed Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) killed a member of Thuwar a-Raqqa at an SDF checkpoint north of Raqqa city after a group of Thuwar a-Raqqa fighters allegedly attempted to pass through the checkpoint without stopping. Thuwar a-Raqqa is a member of the SDF's Syrian Arab Coalition and is composed of local fighters from Raqqa. Local sources claim this is the second SDF-Thuwar a-Raqqa related fatality within the past week.

10 May 3 - 6: IS Claims to Down a Russian Helicopter in Eastern Syria: The Islamic State (IS) claimed to down a Russian Ka-52 Hokum-B attack helicopter with a MANPADS (surface-to-air missile) west of the city of al-Mayadeen in eastern Deir e-Zor province. The Russian Ministry of Defense released a statement claiming the Ka-52 crashed due to technical failure.

11 May 3: US-led Coalition Resumes Operations Against IS in Eastern Syria: The US-led coalition launched Operation Roundup to "destroy IS" in eastern Syria. Coalition forces are providing fire support to the US-backed Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF), which will first secure the southern portion of the IS-held Syrian-Iraqi border in coordination with Iraqi security forces, according to the Deputy Commander of the US-led coalition Maj. General Felix Gedney. Gedney stated that a large portion of militants in the remaining IS pockets are foreign fighters.



Areas of Control*

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

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 25 MAY 2018