

Syria Situation Report: May 21 - 27, 2016

1 May 26: Islamic State advances in Northern Aleppo Province. IS seized at least seven villages in a major attack against opposition groups in Northern Aleppo Province. The advance brought IS to the outskirts of the key border town of Azaz and isolated the nearby town of Mare'a. International aid groups reported that up to 100,000 civilians are now trapped between the Syrian-Turkish Border and the frontline.

2 May 24: Kurds reopen key fuel transit route in Northern Syria: The Syrian Kurdish YPG reached an agreement with rival opposition groups to reopen key transit routes for fuel deliveries from Northern Aleppo Province to Idlib Province via Afrin Canton. The price of gasoline and diesel in Idlib Province reportedly more than doubled after the YPG instituted a blockade on the traffic in April 2016.

3 May 24: Syrian Democratic Forces launch operation near A-Raqqa City. The Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) – a U.S.-backed coalition that includes the Syrian Kurdish YPG and allied opposition groups – announced the start of “ground operations to further isolate” the IS stronghold of A-Raqqa City. The SDF seized at least eight villages in Northern A-Raqqa Province but denied that the operation intends to seize A-Raqqa City. Meanwhile, Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov offered to coordinate with the U.S. and SDF to seize A-Raqqa City, stating that the operation could be conducted “more effectively and faster” in partnership.

4 May 21: US CENTCOM Commander visits Northern Syria. US CENTCOM Commander Gen. Joseph Votel conducted an unannounced visit to Northern Syria in order to meet U.S. Special Operations Forces (SOF) and leaders of the Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF). Gen. Votel reportedly held meetings near Manbij and Ayn al-Arab (Kobani) in Eastern Aleppo Province as well as Hasaka Province. IS conducted a dual SVBIED attack near Tel Tamer in Hasaka Province that allegedly occurred within two kilometers of one such meeting.

5 May 21: IS conducts suicide attack in Qamishli: Up to five IS militants opened fire with automatic rifles and grenades in the majority-Christian Wusta District of Qamishli in Hasaka Province before detonating two SVESTs, killing at least three civilians and wounding at least fifteen others.

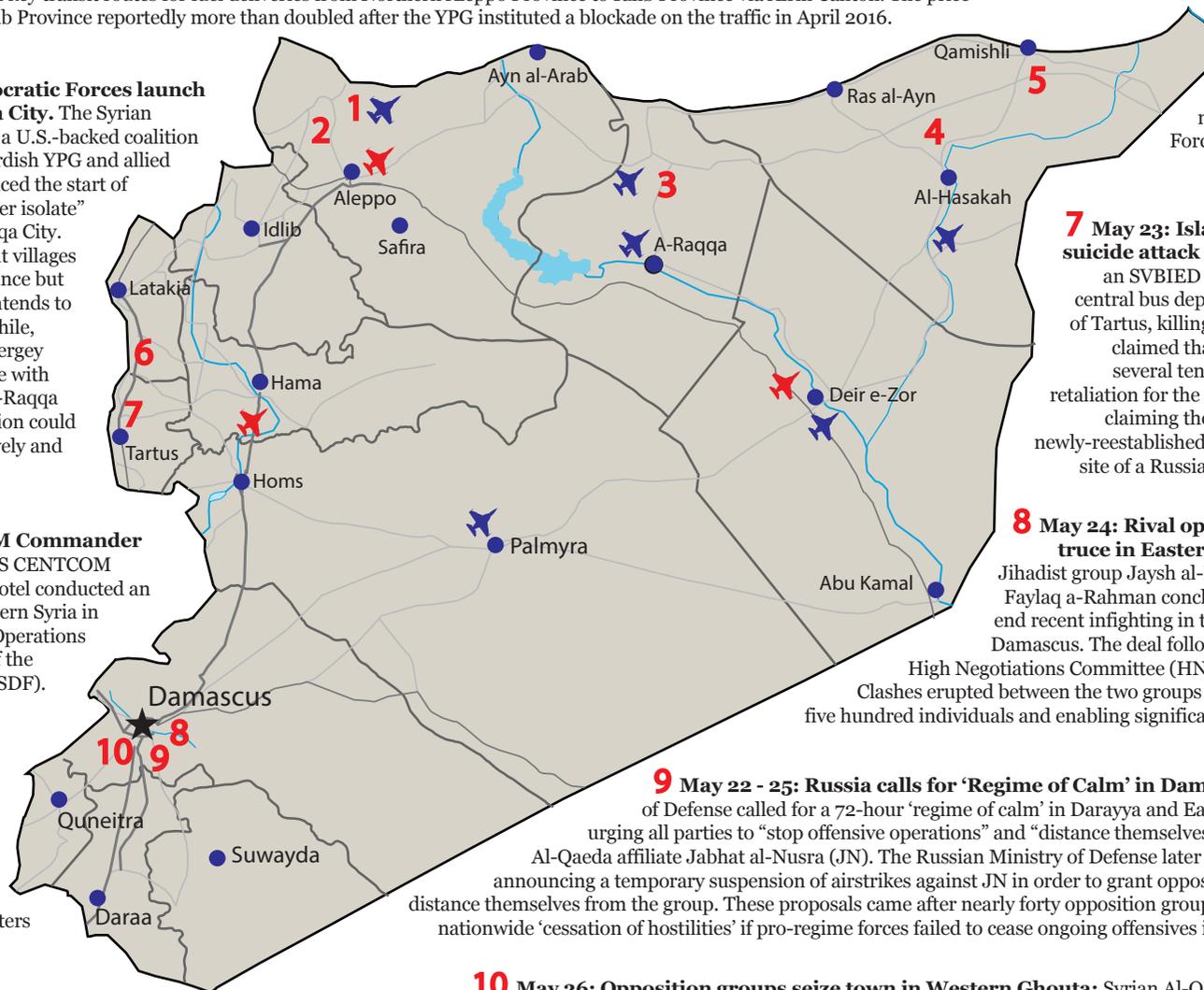
6 May 23: Islamic State conducts quadruple suicide attack in Jableh. IS detonated an SVBIED and three SVESTs targeting the central bus depot and national hospital in the majority-Alawite city of Jableh in Latakia Province, killing at least 73 civilians. IS issued a statement claiming the attack under the name of the newly-reestablished Wilayat a-Sahel. The attacks occurred less than three miles from the Russian Armed Forces base at the Bassel al-Assad International Airport.

7 May 23: Islamic State conducts triple suicide attack in Tartus City. IS detonated an SVBIED and two SVESTs targeting the central bus depot in the majority-Alawite city of Tartus, killing at least 48 civilians. Activists claimed that pro-regime civilians burned several tents in a nearby refugee camp in retaliation for the attacks. IS issued a statement claiming the attack under the name of the newly-reestablished Wilayat a-Sahel. Tartus is the site of a Russian Armed Forces naval facility.

8 May 24: Rival opposition groups negotiate truce in Eastern Ghouta. Prominent Salafi-Jihadist group Jaysh al-Islam and rival Islamist group Faylaq a-Rahman concluded a ceasefire agreement to end recent infighting in the Eastern Ghouta suburbs of Damascus. The deal followed negotiations mediated by High Negotiations Committee (HNC) head Riyadh Hijab in Qatar. Clashes erupted between the two groups on April 28, killing more than five hundred individuals and enabling significant gains by pro-regime forces.

9 May 22 - 25: Russia calls for ‘Regime of Calm’ in Damascus: The Russian Ministry of Defense called for a 72-hour ‘regime of calm’ in Darayya and Eastern Ghouta near Damascus, urging all parties to “stop offensive operations” and “distance themselves” from regions held by Syrian Al-Qaeda affiliate Jabhat al-Nusra (JN). The Russian Ministry of Defense later issued a statement on May 25 announcing a temporary suspension of airstrikes against JN in order to grant opposition forces an opportunity to distance themselves from the group. These proposals came after nearly forty opposition groups threatened the collapse of a nationwide ‘cessation of hostilities’ if pro-regime forces failed to cease ongoing offensives in Damascus within 48 hours.

10 May 26: Opposition groups seize town in Western Ghouta: Syrian Al-Qaeda affiliate Jabhat al-Nusra, prominent Salafi-Jihadist group Ahrar al-Sham, and other opposition groups seized the town of Dirkhabiya near Damascus following an operation entitled ‘Roar of the Freeman to Break the Siege’. The advance reopened key supply routes to besieged opposition-held enclaves throughout the Western Ghouta suburbs of Damascus.



● Pro-Regime Forces
● The Islamic State
● Kurdish Forces

● Jabhat a-Nusra
● Opposition Forces

✈ Pro-Regime Airstrike
✈ Anti-IS Coalition

