

Syria Situation Report: August 23 - 30, 2017

1 August 24 - 28: IS Withdraws from Syrian-Lebanese Border: IS evacuated the Western Qalamoun Mountains on the Syrian-Lebanese Border for the town of Abu Kamal in Deir e-Zor on the Syrian-Iraqi Border as part of a deal with Lebanese Hezbollah on August 28. The evacuation involved at least 300 IS fighters and their family members. IS later revealed the burial location of nine Lebanese Armed Forces (LAF) soldiers kidnapped by IS in Aarsal in Eastern Lebanon in 2014. The evacuation follows the start of simultaneous yet allegedly uncoordinated offensives by Hezbollah, the Syrian Arab Army (SAA), and the LAF against IS on the Syrian-Lebanese Border on August 18.

2 August 25: Russia Reportedly Builds New Base in Western Hama Province: Russia has allegedly deployed key strategic weapons systems to a former regime air defense base near Masyaf in Western Hama Province. The base reportedly contains S-400 Surface-to-Air Missiles Systems (SAMS), 'Iskander' Short-Range Ballistic Missiles, and 'Yakhont' Anti-Ship Cruise Missiles. Russia reportedly opened the facility in late 2016.

3 August 24 - 30: Pro-Regime Forces Tighten Encirclement of IS in Eastern Hama: Pro-regime forces backed by intense airstrikes seized a number of villages and hills as part of operations to tighten the encirclement of IS in the village of Uqayribat in Eastern Hama Province. Local activists reported ongoing tribal negotiations to open a safe corridor for the evacuation of an estimated 15,000 civilians from Eastern Hama Province to Idlib Province.

4 August 28 - 29: HTS Seizes Idlib City Council: Hay'at Tahrir a-Sham - the successor of Syrian Al-Qaeda affiliate Jabhat Fatah a-Sham - seized control of the offices of the Idlib City Council and its affiliated civil institutions on August 28. HTS has previously demanded the integration of all local councils and public service agencies funded by the Syrian Interim Government (SIG) in Idlib Province under its own Civil Services Administration. The Idlib City Council vowed to resist the takeover by HTS.

5 August 27: Opposition Group Conducts Double IED Attack in Aleppo City: The 'Special Forces Company' of the Abu Amara Brigades - an opposition group affiliated with prominent Salafi-Jihadist group Ahrar a-Sham and HTS - detonated two IEDs targeting pro-regime patrols in the Furqan and Hamdaniyah Districts of Western Aleppo City. The group also claimed to detonate an IED targeting a regime ammunition depot in Suqaylabiyah in Western Hama Province on August 24.

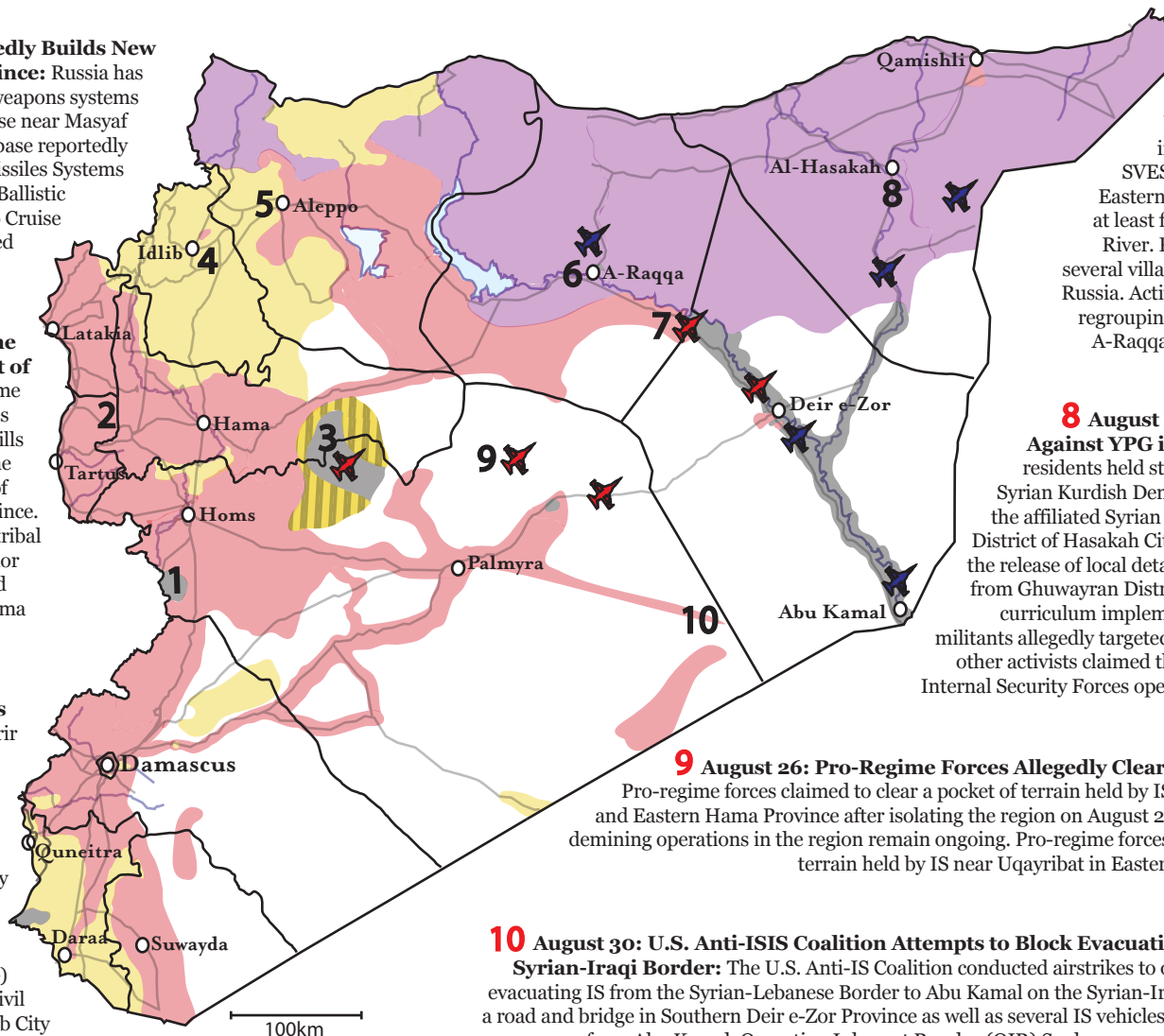
6 August 24: UN Calls for 'Humanitarian Pause' in A-Raqqa City: Amnesty International released a report accusing the U.S. Anti-IS Coalition of conducting "indiscriminate" and "disproportionate" airstrikes against IS in A-Raqqa City. The UN called for a 'humanitarian pause' to facilitate the evacuation of the estimated 18,000 to 25,000 civilians remaining in A-Raqqa City. The U.S. State Department rejected any such pause, stressing that a ceasefire would help IS and thereby put additional civilians at risk.

7 August 25 - 30: IS Reverses Recent Pro-Regime Gains in Eastern A-Raqqa: IS launched a major counterattack involving multiple SVBIEDs and SVESTs against pro-regime forces in Eastern A-Raqqa Province, recapturing at least five villages along the Euphrates River. Pro-regime forces later regained several villages with heavy air support from Russia. Activists reported that IS has begun regrouping in the town of Ma'adan on the A-Raqqa - Deir e-Zor Provincial Border.

8 August 25: Local Residents Protest Against YPG in Hasakah City: Hundreds of residents held street demonstrations against the Syrian Kurdish Democratic Union Party (PYD) and the affiliated Syrian Kurdish YPG in the Ghwayran District of Hasakah City. The demonstrators called for the release of local detainees, the departure of the YPG from Ghwayran District, and the halt of a new school curriculum implemented by the PYD. Unidentified militants allegedly targeted the protests with an IED while other activists claimed that the Syrian Kurdish 'Asayish' Internal Security Forces opened fire on the demonstrations.

9 August 26: Pro-Regime Forces Allegedly Clear IS Pocket in Central Syria: Pro-regime forces claimed to clear a pocket of terrain held by ISIS in Northern Homs Province and Eastern Hama Province after isolating the region on August 24. Pro-regime media noted that demining operations in the region remain ongoing. Pro-regime forces previously isolated a pocket of terrain held by IS near Uqayribat in Eastern Hama Province on August 18.

10 August 30: U.S. Anti-ISIS Coalition Attempts to Block Evacuation of ISIS from Lebanon to Syrian-Iraqi Border: The U.S. Anti-ISIS Coalition conducted airstrikes to obstruct the passage of a convoy evacuating IS from the Syrian-Lebanese Border to Abu Kamal on the Syrian-Iraqi Border. The strikes targeted a road and bridge in Southern Deir e-Zor Province as well as several IS vehicles that attempted to approach the convoy from Abu Kamal. Operation Inherent Resolve (OIR) Spokesperson Col. Ryan Dillon stated that the U.S. is "not a party" to the evacuation deal brokered by IS and Lebanese Hezbollah on August 28. U.S. Special Envoy to the Anti-ISIS Coalition Brett McGurk stressed that ISIS should be "killed on the battlefield" rather than relocated to the Syrian-Iraqi Border without the "consent" of Iraq. Iraqi Prime Minister Haidar al-Abadi also condemned the deal as an "insult" to Iraq. Hezbollah General-Secretary Hassan Nasrallah later released a statement defending the deal as a necessary measure that will not alter the fate of IS in Deir e-Zor Province.



Areas of Control*

- Pro-Regime Forces
- Opposition Forces
- The Islamic State
- Mixed Control
- 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 08 AUG 2017