



Since the publication of ISW's last ISIS sanctuary map on April 22, 2016, ISIS lost terrain in Iraq but claimed an attack from a new governorate, Wilayat Sahel, on the northwestern coast of Syria deep in regime territory. ISIS militants launched complex suicide attacks in core regime territory in Tartus City and Jableh on May 23, 2016. ISIS will likely escalate attacks against Alawite communities on the Syrian Coast in order to exacerbate sectarian tensions during Ramadan. ISIS militants also regained control of Sha'er Gas Field in Syria on May 5, 2016 and attacked Maher and Jazal gas fields on May 8 and 17, 2016. Syrian Democratic Forces launched an offensive against ISIS in ar-Raqqa Province on May 24, 2016 as part of Operation Inherent Resolve's protracted effort to isolate ISIS-stronghold ar-Raqqa City. Meanwhile, Peshmerga and Popular Mobilization Units (PMU) retook Bashir on April 30, 2016, Iraqi Security Forces (ISF) recaptured Rutba on 19 May, 2016 and PMU and ISF forces retook Garma on May 23, 2016, effectively securing the Euphrates River Valley from Haditha to Ramadi. Despite these gains, ISIS was able to launch several deadly attacks in Baghdad and the Baghdad Belts throughout May 2016. ISIS's spokesman, Abu Mohammad al-Adnani delivered a speech on May 21, 2016 declaring ISIS will prevail despite territorial losses, even if they lose major cities like Raqqa, Mosul, or Sirte, essentially hedging against potential future losses and reframing ISIS's notion of victory as equal to evading defeat.