

Syria Situation Report: August 8 - 15, 2017

1 August 9 - 10: Pro-Regime Forces Advance Along Syrian-Jordanian Border: Pro-regime forces reportedly seized a thirty-to-forty-kilometer stretch of the Syrian-Jordanian Border in Eastern Suwayda Province on August 9. The gains reportedly came after the Free Syrian Army (FSA)-affiliated Jaysh Ahrar al-Asha'ir - an opposition group backed by the U.S. and Jordan - withdrew into Jordan. Jaysh Ahrar al-Asha'ir later met to discuss the withdrawal with representatives from local tribes and the U.S. Anti-ISIS Coalition in Amman, Jordan. Russia also conducted airstrikes against the nearby Ruwayshid IDP Camp on the Syrian-Jordanian Border on August 9.

2 August 11: IS-Linked Group Detonates SVEST in Eastern Daraa Province: IS affiliate Jaysh Khalid ibn al-Walid detonated an SVEST targeting a training camp belonging to Salafi-Jihadi group Jaysh al-Islam in the town of Naseeb in Eastern Daraa Province on the Syrian-Jordanian Border, killing at least 35 Jaysh al-Islam fighters.

3 August 10 - 15: Opposition Continues Consolidation in Southern Syria: The Free Syrian Army (FSA)-affiliated Southern Front issued a new charter on August 10 rejecting reconciliation with the regime and reiterating that any future political transition must exclude Syrian President Bashar al-Assad. The charter noted the "temporary" 'de-escalation zone' brokered by the U.S., Russia, and Jordan in Southern Syria. Meanwhile, the FSA-affiliated Jaysh Alababil and First Infantry Division formed a new organization called the 'Southern Alliance' on August 15. The merger comes as part of a wider reorganization of the Southern Front allegedly linked to terms from the covert U.S. Military Operations Command (MOC) in Jordan.

4 August 9 - 13: Opposition Groups Agree to Ceasefire Amidst Regime Offensive in Eastern Ghouta: Salafi-Jihadi group Ahrar a-Sham and rival Islamist group Faylaq a-Rahman agreed to a ceasefire in the Eastern Ghouta Suburbs of Damascus on August 9. The deal - which calls for prisoner releases, the return of seized weapons, and freedom of movement for all sides - temporarily ended a round of clashes that began on July 22. Meanwhile, Faylaq a-Rahman detonated a tunnel bomb amidst an ongoing offensive by pro-regime forces against the Ayn Tarma and Jobar Districts of Eastern Ghouta that began on August 7.

5 August 14 - 15: Opposition Group Evacuates from Syrian-Lebanese Border: Free Syrian Army (FSA)-affiliated Saraya Ahl a-Sham evacuated Aarsal in Eastern Lebanon on the Syrian-Lebanese Border for the opposition-held town of Ruhaybah in the Eastern Qalamoun Mountains near Damascus under a deal with Lebanese Hezbollah. The evacuation reportedly included up to 350 Saraya Ahl a-Sham fighters as well as several hundred civilian refugees. Opposition fighters who refused to evacuate were allowed to move to Aarsal after surrendering their weapons to the Lebanese Armed Forces. Activists stated that hundreds of civilians originally scheduled to depart ultimately elected to remain in Aarsal or relocate to the regime-held town of Assal al-Ward in the Western Qalamoun Mountains.

6 August 13: Russia and Opposition Agree to Draft New De-Escalation Agreement in Northern Homs Province: Delegations from the opposition and the Russian Armed Forces agreed to draft a new 'de-escalation zone' deal for Northern Homs Province after a meeting in Dar al-Kabirah near Homs City. The new deal will reportedly include a full ceasefire, the entry of humanitarian aid, and the release of all local detainees. The talks come amidst continued regime ceasefire violations including airstrikes and artillery shelling in Northern Homs Province.

7 August 15: SDF-Affiliated Groups Form New Faction to Fight Turkey in Aleppo Province: Opposition groups affiliated with the Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) announced the formation of 'Quwwat al-Thuwar' in Afrin Canton in Western Aleppo Province. Their founding statement noted that the primary goal of the new faction is to "fight terrorism" and "expel" the Turkish "occupation" of Northern Aleppo Province.

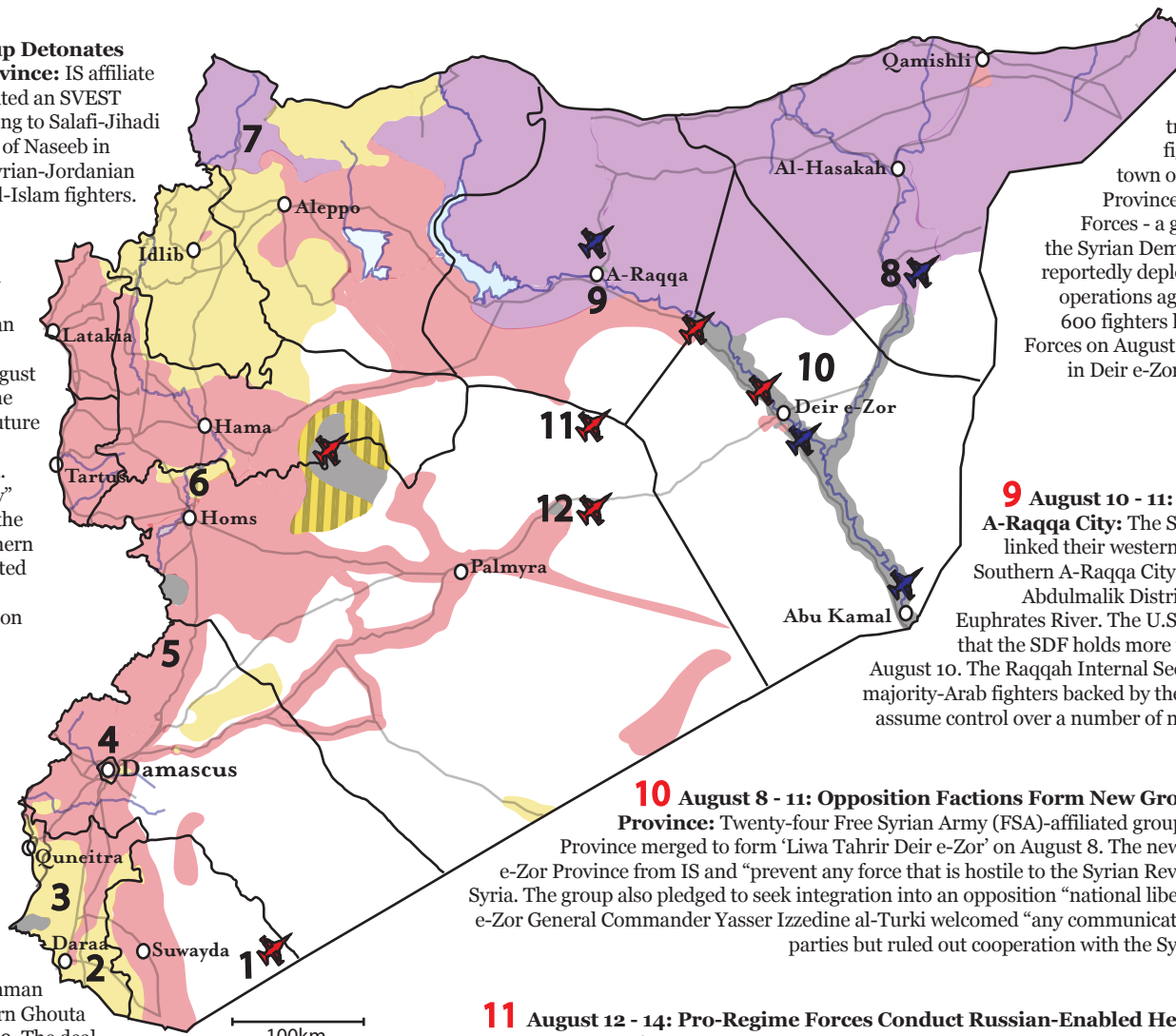
8 August 10 - 16: U.S.-Backed Opposition Fighters Prepare for Deir e-Zor Operation: A military convoy of 200 U.S. troops and 100 allied opposition fighters reportedly arrived in the town of Shaddadi in Southern Hasaka Province on August 10. The Syrian Elite Forces - a group of tribal fighters linked to the Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) - will also reportedly deploy to Shaddadi in the future for operations against IS in Deir e-Zor Province. 600 fighters later "deserted" the Syrian Elite Forces on August 16 in order to begin operations in Deir e-Zor Province alongside local tribal fighters.

9 August 10 - 11: SDF Continues Advance in A-Raqqa City: The Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) linked their western and eastern axes of advance in Southern A-Raqqa City after seizing the Shahadah and Abdulmalik Districts on the northern bank of the Euphrates River. The U.S. Department of Defense stated that the SDF holds more than 50% of A-Raqqa City as of August 10. The Raqqaq Internal Security Force (RISF) - a group of majority-Arab fighters backed by the U.S. - has reportedly begun to assume control over a number of neighborhoods in A-Raqqa City.

10 August 8 - 11: Opposition Factions Form New Group to 'Liberate' Deir e-Zor Province: Twenty-four Free Syrian Army (FSA)-affiliated groups formerly active in Deir e-Zor Province merged to form 'Liwa Tahrir Deir e-Zor' on August 8. The new faction aims to "liberate" Deir e-Zor Province from IS and "prevent any force that is hostile to the Syrian Revolution" from entering Eastern Syria. The group also pledged to seek integration into an opposition "national liberation army." Liwa Tahrir Deir e-Zor General Commander Yasser Izzedine al-Turki welcomed "any communication" with local or international parties but ruled out cooperation with the Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF).

11 August 12 - 14: Pro-Regime Forces Conduct Russian-Enabled Helicopter Assault in Eastern Homs Province: The Syrian Arab Army 'Tiger Forces' - an elite pro-regime unit - conducted a nighttime helicopter-borne air assault against IS in the village of Kadir in Eastern Homs Province on August 12. The Russian Defense Ministry noted that its military advisors played a "direct role" in planning and leading the operation. Russia also provided air support with attack helicopters based in Eastern Aleppo Province. Pro-regime forces later claimed to seize the nearby Kawm Oasis on August 14. The gains threaten to sever the ground lines of communication between IS in Eastern Hama Province and IS in Deir e-Zor Province in Eastern Syria.

12 August 13: Pro-Regime Forces Claim to Regain Sukhna in Eastern Homs Province: Pro-regime forces backed by Russia and Iran claimed to regain the town of Sukhna in Eastern Homs Province on the Palmyra - Deir e-Zor Highway following clashes with IS. Pro-regime forces previously seized large parts of Sukhna on August 7 before IS launched a major counterattack that forced pro-regime fighters to conduct a "limited withdrawal" on August 8 - 9. The Russian Defense Minister stressed that the capture of Sukhna will enable further progress by pro-regime forces towards Deir e-Zor City in Eastern Syria.



Areas of Control*

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

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