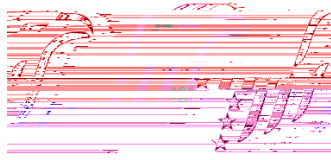


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Weekly Conflict Summary
September 14-20, 2017

During the reporting period, pro-government forces and Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF, a Kurdish-led coalition backed by the US) both advanced around the ISIS-held city of Deir Ezzor, leading to a sharp increase in tension between the two as they maneuver close to one another. ISIS-held territory in Raqqa city continued to fall to SDF advances the reporting week and pro-government forces advanced against the group in eastern Homs/eastern Hama as -Sham (HTS, formerly Al-Qaeda-linked Jabhat al-Nusra) started another offensive for the northern countryside of Hama, to no real effect. A string of assassinations within Idleb targeted members of HTS. HTS formed an interim governing body to compete with the Syrian Interim Government and a coalition of opposition forces expressed their discontent with the Astana process. Units in southern Syria have continued to develop their local police work and are aiding attempts to strengthen the Syrian Interim Government that HTS opposes.

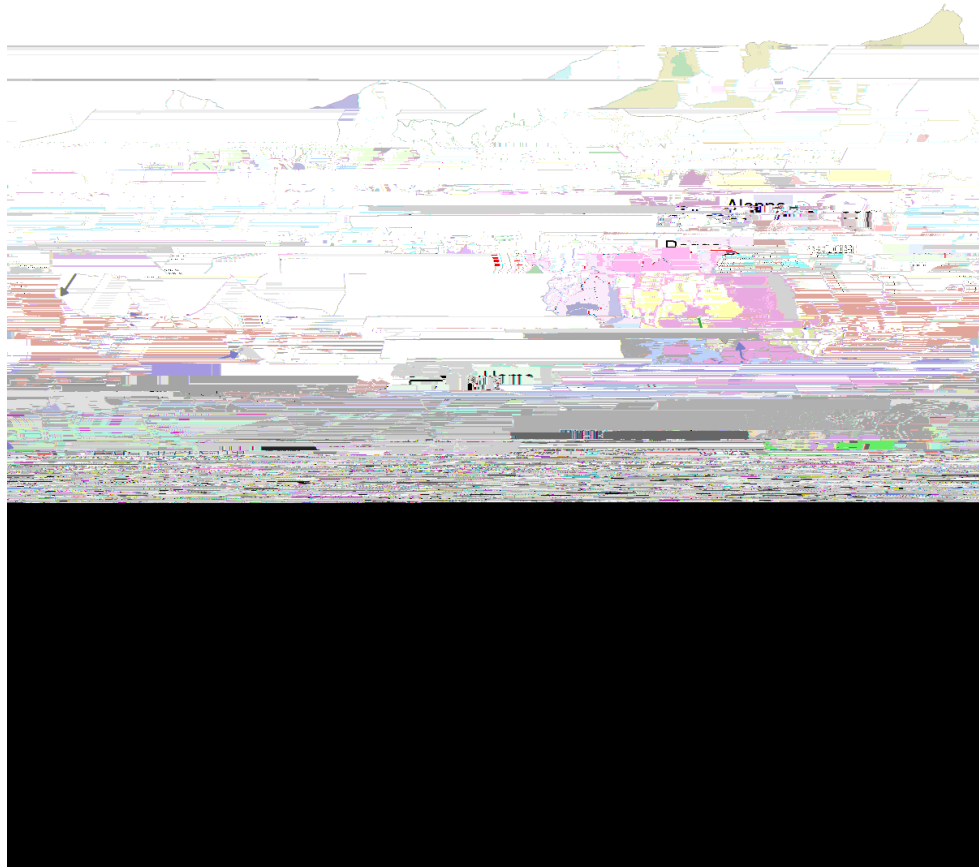


Figure 1 - Areas of control in Syria by September 20, with arrows indicating advances since the start of the reporting period

The SDF has advanced south from the Shaddadi area further this week, taking territory eastwards from the Deir Ezzor Industrial Zone north of the city. No further advance down the Khabour River has been reported.

In the context of a new SDF offensive, Operation Cezire Storm, Syrian Government officials have made several new anti-SDF statements. Dr. Buthaina Shaaban, a long-time political and media advisor to the Syrian President, is a notable example of this new trend, calling the SDF an illegitimate foreign force in the country. This anti-SDF sentiment was echoed from the Russian Ministry of Defense as well, which claimed

drones and intelligence have not ¹ Tensions between the military forces around Deir Ezzor remain extremely high, and political figures as well as soldiers have expressed their contempt at one another this week. It appears that,

On September 15, Faylaq al-Rahman announced the formation of the Revolutionary Leadership in Damascus and Rural Damascus. The initiative is led by Faylaq al-Rahman, is comprised of 10 military and civilian leaders, and is intended to integrate military and political activities in Faylaq al-Rahman-controlled areas.

Pro-government forces are restricting the shipment of vegetables to Rahiba in the Eastern Qalamoun to one truck a day, compared to seven shipments per day in the past. Construction equipment is now banned as well and prices for basic goods have skyrocketed.

On September 19, the Israeli Defense Forces (IDF) used a Patriot Missile anti-air system to shoot down an Iranian-made UAV flying over the Israeli-occupied Golan Heights. Continuing Hezbollah operations near Israeli forces have made the IDF and Israeli politicians nervous, prompting Israeli strikes into Syria in previous weeks.

One of the provisions of the July 8 tripartite (Russia, US, Jordan) ceasefire agreement between pro-government and anti-government forces in the south is that opposition groups focus their attention on targeting ISIS-affiliate Jaysh Khaled Ibn al-Waleed. A second provision is that opposition group work on developing local police forces. The opposition's Al-Bunyan al-Marsous operations room has focused on combatting drug traffickers in the city of Daraa, and on September 14, they captured their first drug shipment. Jaysh Ahrar al- is a policing program in the Rukban IDP camp. On September 14,

