

Syria Situation Report: March 30 - April 14, 2017

1 April 14: Evacuation Deal Begins for Besieged Towns in Idlib and Damascus: Regime forces evacuated more than 2,000 residents from the besieged opposition-held towns of Madaya and Zabadani near Damascus to Idlib Province in Northern Syria. Meanwhile, buses also evacuated at least 5,000 residents of the besieged regime-held towns of Fu'ah and Kefraya in Idlib Province to Aleppo City. The evacuations mark the first round of a two month process to evacuate at least 30,000 residents from the four towns under a deal brokered by Qatar and Iran in March 2017. The deal includes local ceasefires and humanitarian aid deliveries for the besieged towns as well as the opposition-held suburbs of Yalda, Babbila, and Beit Sahem in Southern Damascus. The deal also calls for the evacuation of Hay'at Tahrir a-Sham from the Yarmouk Camp in Southern Damascus.

2 April 8: IED Targets Bus South of Homs City: An unidentified group detonated an IED on a factory bus in Hassia Industrial City south of Homs City, killing one civilian and wounding at least twenty-five others. The attack marks the third IED targeting civilians in or near Homs City since March 14.

3 April 6: U.S. Launches Cruise Missile Strike Against Shayrat Airbase: The U.S. fired fifty-nine Tomahawk Cruise Missiles targeting the regime-held Shayrat Airbase in Homs Province from the USS Ross and USS Porter in the Mediterranean Sea. The Pentagon stated that the strikes destroyed at least twenty regime warplanes while the regime noted that the strikes also killed at least six regime fighters. The White House stressed that the limited strikes came in response to the sarin gas attack in Khan Sheikhoun in Idlib Province on April 4 but threatened to launch "additional strikes" if necessary to deter the use of chemical weapons. Russia condemned the strikes and later suspended its deconfliction deal with the U.S. in Syria on April 7.

4 March 30 - 31: Regime Forces Regain Terrain in Northern Hama Province: Pro-regime forces recaptured at least seventeen towns and checkpoints in Northern Hama Province after deploying to block an ongoing opposition offensive on Hama City that began on March 21. The advances come amidst heavy pro-regime airstrikes as well as the arrival of pro-regime reinforcements including the SAA Tiger Forces, IRGC, Lebanese Hezbollah, Iraqi Shi'a Militias, and Afghan Shi'a Fighters.

5 April 4: Regime Conducts Major Chemical Weapons Attack in Idlib Province: Regime Su-22 'Fitter' fighter jets launched attacks with chlorine and sarin nerve agent in the town of Khan Sheikhoun in Southern Idlib Province, killing at least ninety individuals and wounding at least three hundred others. The warplanes reportedly based out of Shayrat Airbase in Homs Province. Unidentified pro-regime warplanes later targeted a field hospital treating victims of the attack. The OPCW began "gathering and analyzing information" on the attack while the UN Security Council called

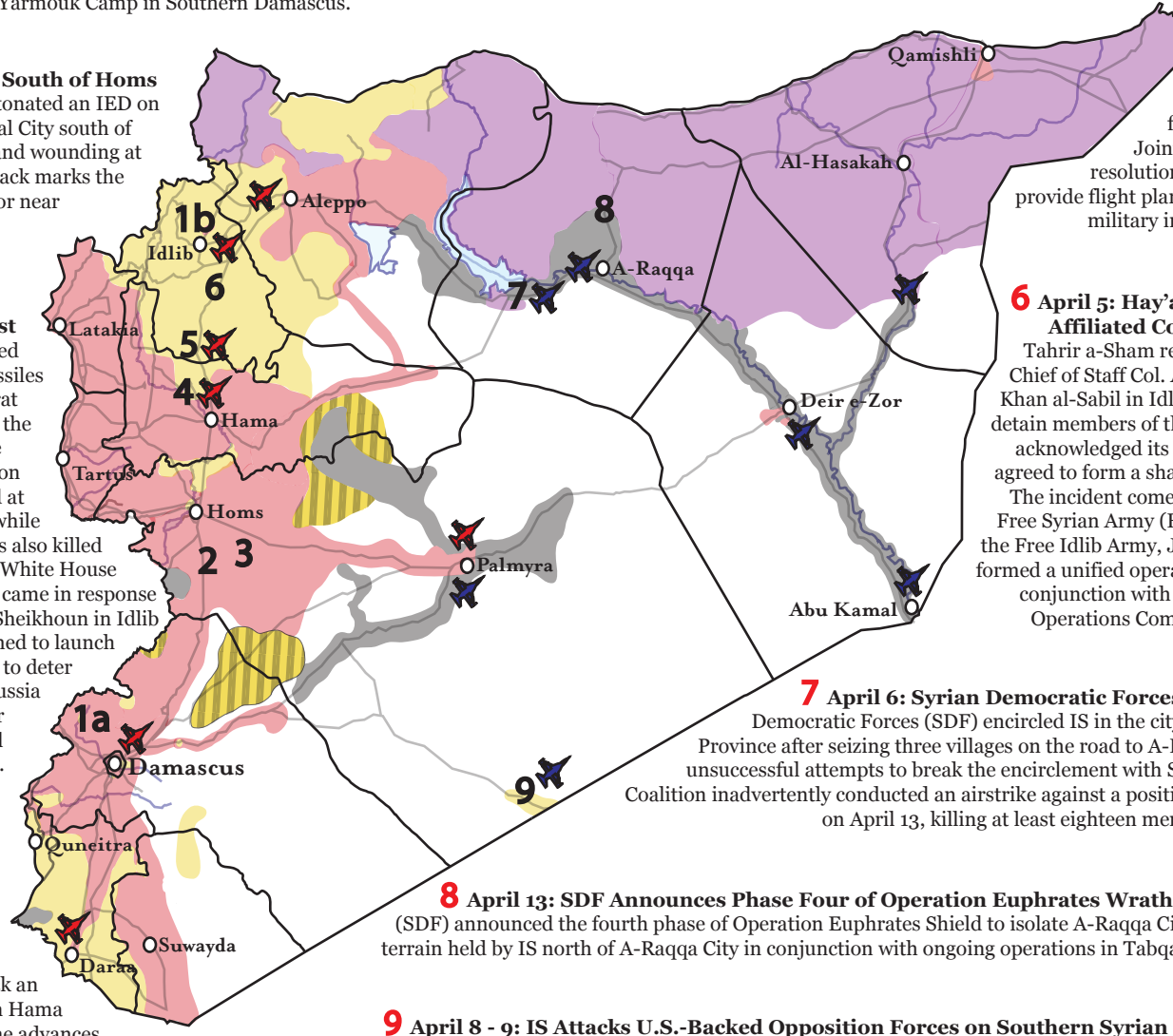
an emergency session to discuss the incident. Russia later vetoed a resolution by the U.S., Britain, and France on April 12 that called for an inquiry by the UN-OPCW Joint Investigative Mechanism. The resolution also called upon the regime to provide flight plans, access to airbases, and other military information to the investigation.

6 April 5: Hay'at Tahrir a-Sham Kills FSA-Affiliated Commander: Fighters in Hay'at Tahrir a-Sham reportedly killed Free Idlib Army Chief of Staff Col. Ali Asmahi at a checkpoint near Khan al-Sabil in Idlib Province while attempting to detain members of the group. Hay'at Tahrir a-Sham acknowledged its responsibility for the death and agreed to form a sharia court to resolve the dispute. The incident comes after reports that a number of Free Syrian Army (FSA)-affiliated groups including the Free Idlib Army, Jaysh al-Nasr, and Jaysh al-Izza formed a unified operations room in Idlib Province in conjunction with the covert U.S.-backed Military Operations Command (MOM) based in Turkey.

7 April 6: Syrian Democratic Forces Encircle Tabqa: The Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) encircled IS in the city of Tabqa in Western A-Raqqa Province after seizing three villages on the road to A-Raqqa City. IS launched several unsuccessful attempts to break the encirclement with SVBIEDs and SVESTs. The U.S. Coalition inadvertently conducted an airstrike against a position held by the SDF near Tabqa on April 13, killing at least eighteen members of Liwa Suqour a-Raqqa.

8 April 13: SDF Announces Phase Four of Operation Euphrates Wrath: The Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) announced the fourth phase of Operation Euphrates Shield to isolate A-Raqqa City. The new phase aims to clear terrain held by IS north of A-Raqqa City in conjunction with ongoing operations in Tabqa in Western A-Raqqa Province.

9 April 8 - 9: IS Attacks U.S.-Backed Opposition Forces on Southern Syrian Border: IS launched an attack against opposition groups backed by the U.S., Jordan, and Britain near the Tanf Border Crossing on the Syrian-Iraqi Border, detonating at least one SVBIED and an unspecified number of SVESTs. IS later ambushed a convoy of reinforcements from the U.S.-backed Jaysh Asoud a-Sharqiya with an SVBIED near the Rukban IDP Camp in Eastern Homs Province on the Syrian-Jordan Border. Opposition forces repelled both attacks following heavy clashes with coalition air support.



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

