1. Mar. 27-Apr. 12: The Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) escalate operations to secure prisons and camps in northeastern Syria and preempt an ISIS break-out attempt during Ramadan, April 12-May 12. The SDF conducted the "Humanitarian and Security Operation" in the al Havel displaced persons camp, detaining at least 150 ISIS affiliates and raiding several ISIS cells responsible for the string of assassinations in the camp in the early SDF also transferred tens of detainees out of the overcrowded Guwaynaya detention center in Hasakah City to smaller detention centers in Shaddadi and at the al Omar gas field, Deir ez-Zor Province, throughout March and early April. ISIS reportedly broke 11 detainees out of the SDF-affiliated prison in Deir ez-Zor Province, on March 22. The SDF also tried and failed to break detainees out of the Kabiba detention center in Deir ez-Zor Province on April 6 and April 12. SDF security operations will likely preempt successful ISIS break-outs during the Ramadan attack campaign. However, the SDF lacks a long-term plan to deradicalize and re integrate remnants of the camps and detention centers, which will likely continue to strain the SDF's thinly stretched security apparatus.

2. Mar. 28-Apr. 19: Hay'at Tahrir Al-Sham (HTS) initiates arrest campaign targeting high-ranking members of ISIS, Hurras al-Dirn, and smaller al-Qaeda linked groups to legitimize itself as the sole capable governing actor in Idlib. The arrests targeted high-ranking personnel, including the leader of the Libyan ISIS affiliate Kafr Al-Bittar Al-Libi, who was arrested in Kafr Daryan, Idlib Province. Raided precision operations, possibly in coordination with strikes conducted by the US-led coalition, targeted cells 50 km west of Hasakah City, likely in the Abdul Aziz or Bayda mountains, eastern Syria. The US-led coalition infrequently uses airstrikes to target ISIS cells in SDF-held northeast Syria. The Syrian Air Force sustained an air campaign targeting ISIS hideouts in Jabal Bishri and near Rahjan, Hama Province, throughout early April, likely to suppress ISIS's ability to surge such attacks. In the most dangerous scenario, ISIS may aim to seize one or more oil fields during its ongoing Ramadan campaign. ISIS could use these fields to increase its revenue stream in the Central Syrian Desert or, in a more likely scenario, simply reduce the revenue the regime can derive from these natural resources by destroying oil infrastructure at the targeted fields.

4. Apr. 4: The British Royal Air Force (RAF) conducts at least four strikes on ISIS cells in Syria. The US-led coalition infrequently uses airstrikes to target ISIS cells in SDF-held northeast Syria. The operation was likely intended to target high-value ISIS leadership, in eastern Syria, with close智合 and matters discussed remain unknown. Lavrentiev last visited Syria on January 29, 2021, to discuss the progress of Syria's UN-backed Constitutional Committee process. Lavrentiev may have used his April meeting to further plans for Syria's scheduled elections, which will likely cement Assad's hold on power.

5. Apr. 8: Russian Envoy to Syria Alexander Lavrentiev has unscheduled meeting with Bashar Al-Assad and several members of Assad's inner circle in Damascus. Syrian Head of the National Security Bureau Ali Mamlouk, Assistant Minister of Foreign Affairs Ayman Soualem, and special advisers to Assad Buthaina Shaaban and Lama Al-Shih put reportedly attended the meeting. The meeting was discussed in the news media, but details remain unknown. Lavrentiev last visited Syria on January 29, 2021, to discuss the progress of Syria's UN-backed Constitutional Committee process. Lavrentiev may have used his April meeting to further plans for Syria's scheduled elections, which will likely cement Assad's hold on power.

Key Takeaway: ISIS faces pressure along multiple fronts as it begins its annual Ramadan surge of attacks in Syria. Al-Qaeda affiliate Hay'at Tahrir al Sham (HTS) mounted counter-ISIS operations targeting leadership cells in Idlib, likely in order both depress ISIS's attack capability and performatively distance HTS from other "hardline" Salafi-Jihadi organizations. The British Royal Air Force and the Russian military similarly conducted precision operations, possibly in coordination with strikes conducted by the US-led coalition, targeted cells 50 km west of Hasakah City, likely in the Abdul Aziz or Bayda mountains, eastern Syria. The US-led coalition infrequently uses airstrikes to target ISIS cells in SDF-held northeast Syria.