Aug. 13: SDF Attempts to Rebuild Ties with Major Tribes through Meetings with Notables. Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF)-backed Deir e-Zor Military Council Head and Bakir Tribe powerbroker Abu Khawla hosted a meeting attended by 3,000 Akidat notables and a delegation from US-led CJTF-OIR, in al-Suwar, Deir e-Zor Province. The Bakir Tribe issued a statement in support of the military council and called for an investigation into the assassinations of sheikhs in the region.

Aug. 13: US Continues Targeting of al Qaeda Members in Idlib in Effort to Reduce Group’s Capabilities. A likely US drone strike killed al Qaeda-affiliated military trainer and foreign fighter Abu Yahya al-Uzbeki near Sarmada, Idlib Province. Abu Yahya al-Uzbeki pledged allegiance to al Qaeda and served in a leadership capacity in Huras al-Din’s military training.

Aug. 17: Second Targeting of Russo-Turkish Joint Patrols Risks Breakdown of Ceasefire Agreement in Idlib. An al Qaeda-aligned group Khattab al-Shishani Brigades attacked a Russo – Turkish joint patrol along the M4 highway near Ariha, Idlib Province, with RPG fire, the group’s second attack targeting the patrols. Russia had announced its intent to suspend patrols in the face of security concerns on August 14. This latest attack on the joint patrols increases the likelihood of the ceasefire breaking down in Greater Idlib.

Aug. 17: Regime Forces Remain Willing to Contest US Freedom of Movement in Northeast. US and SDF forces fired upon pro-regime forces at a checkpoint during a routine anti-ISIS patrol near Tal al-Zahab, Hasakah Province. Regime attacks on US patrols challenge the United States’ ability to utilize their standard patrol routes in northeast Syria. The patrol fired at the checkpoint after being shot at by individuals in the vicinity of the checkpoint. According to Syrian state media, two regime soldiers were killed. The Coalition did not report any US or SDF casualties.

Aug. 17: Iranian Delegation Meets with Assad in Damascus to Discuss UN Political Process and UAE–Israel Normalization. Syrian President Bashar al-Assad met with Iranian Special Assistant to the Foreign Minister Ali Asghar Khaji in Damascus. They discussed the situation in the region including the normalization of ties between Israel and the United Arab Emirates (UAE), according to the Iranian readout. They also discussed the upcoming meeting of the UN-facilitated Syrian constitutional committee in Geneva.

Aug. 17: ISIS Claims Responsibility for Assassination of Russian General in Deir e-Zor. Russian Major General Vyacheslav Gladkikh and the Syrian National Defense Forces (NDF) Commander for Mayadin, Deir e-Zor Province, were killed in a roadside bombing near Al-Taym oil field, south of Deir e-Zor city. ISIS claimed responsibility for the attack.

Aug. 18: Likely Pro-Regime Katyusha Rocket Attack on CJTF-OIR Patrol Intended to Increase Security Pressure on US Forces in Deir e-Zor. Unknown militants fired three Katyusha rockets near a CJTF-OIR base at Conoco Oil Fields in eastern Deir e-Zor Province. The spokesman for CJTF-OIR stated that no there were no casualties or damage.

Key Takeaway: The US partner force in northeast Syria is facing major challenges to its efforts to stabilize formerly ISIS-held areas of Deir e-Zor Province. The largest tribal confederation in Deir e-Zor issued the US-led Anti-ISIS Coalition a one-month ultimatum, which expires on September 11, to give tribes the authority to govern Deir e-Zor in the wake of an assassination of a high profile tribal elder in early August. Both the Syrian Regime and ISIS are seeking to exploit tribal grievances with the SDF to expand their presence in Deir e-Zor. The regime is encouraging the formation of tribal forces that will threaten the security of US personnel operating in the area.