

UPDATE on Syrian Crisis and America's grossly Illegal Interference

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Syria Summary: The Idlib Battle Comes Into Sight

There have been few significant movements during the last weeks. The war on Syria slowly grinds towards its end. The political tussle continues as ever. U.S. Secretary of Defense Mattis made a curious announcement of plans he can not fulfill.

Our last [Syria summary](#) looked at the situation around the last refuge area of the Islamic State near the Syrian-Iraqi border:

The twin-cities of Abu Kamal (al-Bukamal) in Syria and al-Qaim in Iraq are ISIS' last urban refuge. The cities are on the south side of the Euphrates with the important border crossing between them. Coming from the east Iraqi government troops retook the al-Qaim crossing today. They now control the border and are breaking into the city proper. Syrian government forces approach Abu Kamal from the north-west and from south-east.

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The U.S. proxy forces north of the Euphrates announced that they had taken several oil-fields north of the river and were also progressing towards Abu Kamal. The Syrian government and its allies fear that the U.S. [is trying to take] Abu Kamal itself. It could then claim to have control over the border crossing towards Iraq and sever that important line of communication. A race is on to prevent that.

For a few days it seemed that Syrian government forces were easily winning the race. Coming through Iraq, troops moved deep into Abu Kamal and found it empty. They prematurely declared victory but had been deceived. ISIS used tunnels to move undetected into well prepared positions and attacked them from the rear. The Syrian forces were badly mauled and had to retreat.

Since then more troops have arrived and are now ready to launch an all out attack. Coming from Russia long range bombers hit ISIS positions. The U.S. is trying to make such support more difficult by claiming an "air corridor" over the city:

Russia on Tuesday accused the United States of providing de-facto cover for Islamic State units in Syria

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Specifically, the Russian Defence Ministry said the U.S. air force had tried to hinder Russian strikes on Islamic State militants around Abu Kamal.

In October, after the U.S. made a [deal](#) with ISIS fighters to evacuate Raqqa, it had [escorted foreign ISIS fighters](#) towards Abu Kamal:

He says the convoy went to the countryside of eastern Syria, not far from the border with Iraq.

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From the cab of his truck, Abu Fawzi watched as a coalition warplane flew overhead, dropping illumination flares, which lit up the convoy and the road ahead.

Abu Kamal is now well defended with the most ferocious ISIS troops inside. They have nowhere to go. It will be difficult to dig them out of their positions. Meanwhile the U.S. SDF proxy forces north of the Euphrates move further towards the area.

But the whole SDF concept is in trouble. The U.S. proxy forces are led by Kurds. They need local Arabs to take the remaining areas north of the Euphrates but the Arabs do not want to fight under Kurdish command. Talal Silo, the SDF spokesperson, just defected to Turkey. With such allies any semi-permanent U.S. position in Syria is further in doubt.

East of Damascus, a mix of militant groups including Al-Qaeda, are still holding the area of East Ghouta. Last month a propaganda campaign (implausibly) claimed that people in the surrounded area were starving. On October 30 a large Red Cross convoy was dispatched from Damascus and delivered supplies to East Ghouta. Twelve days later the militants in East Ghouta launched an attack on the surrounding Syrian army positions. At the same time they fired salvos of missiles and mortars into the capital and killed several civilians there. People there are wondering how the militants managed to acquire [fresh ammunition](#).

The aim of the terrorists (green) is to cut off and capture a Syrian army base (red) that protrudes into the area. A Syrian general was killed during their attack, the militants capture some positions (blue) and vicious fighting is ongoing. It may take a week or two to defeat these attacks and to regain the lost positions.

The U.S. and Russia agreed on a de-conflicting area in the south-west of Syria, next to the Golan heights and the Jordan border. There is a significant ISIS contingent near the Golan height which is protected by Israeli artillery. Israel claimed that the new de-conflicting agreement will forbid Iranian led groups or Lebanese Hizbullah forces to come near to the area. Russia denied that any such restrictions are part of the deal. When the right time comes ISIS and other militants in the area will be fought down by whatever group in the Syrian government alliance is available. It does not matter how much Netanyahu is [howling](#) about "Iran". Israel is not in a position to launch any significant attack and will not be allowed to have any say on the issue.

In the north-east of Syria Al-Qaeda and its allies are still holding Idlib governate and Idlib city. As soon as the Syrian army operations at Abu Kamal are finished, Idlib will become the main battlefield. Already troops were put into position for an all out attack. Probing moves on several axes were launched to disperse the al-Qaeda fighters over a wide area. [Several towns](#) were liberated in a move towards the Ad Duhur area.

Over the next six month Idlib governate will be at the center of the war. Al-Qaeda, which rules the area, is not willing to give up without a fight. They are Takfiri terrorists. There is nothing to negotiate with them.

The Syrian government position is now better than at any other point of the war. It can concentrate experienced forces and it has the full support of significant allies. Syria's external enemies have mostly given up. It is unlikely that al-Qaeda will have and significant new supplies or support. I expect the fighting for Idlib province to be intense but relatively short.

U.S. Secretary of Defense General Mattis has announced that he wants to stay in Syria:

The U.S. military will fight Islamic State in Syria "as long as they want to fight," Defense Secretary Jim Mattis said on Monday, describing a longer-term role for U.S. troops long after the insurgents lose all of the territory they control.

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He also stressed the importance of longer-term peace efforts, suggesting U.S. forces aimed to help set the conditions of a diplomatic solution in Syria, now in its seventh year of civil war.

One wonders if Mattis has cleared the issue with his president. It is wishful thinking. Syria, Turkey, Iraq, Iran and Russia are against any residual U.S. troops in Syria. The U.S. has absolutely no right to be in the country. That its troops were so far allowed to operate there, was conditioned on the fight against ISIS. When ISIS has lost the last area it still holds, that fight will be over and the U.S. will have to leave. The rest of ISIS will be nothing more than a defeated guerilla movement on the run which the Syria government can easily hold down and eventually destroy.

Preparations have already been made to fight the U.S. troops in Syria should they not move out on their own. Local cells have been prepared in the north-east to attack U.S. forces wherever they move. The U.S. public does not support the hostile occupation of another Arab state. With all surrounding countries against a U.S. stay, Mattis' announcement is clearly of an unsustainable endeavor. Sec Def Mattis will have to climb down from his position. He is another example for the inability of military men to grasp a bigger political situation.

Large parts of Syria and its cities were damaged or destroyed by the war against its sovereignty. But destroyed cities can and will be rebuilt. The wounds will heal. This picture of some devastated street in east-Aleppo exemplifies the hope and will of its people. Ahmed is back and reopened his shop. Five years on these streets will again be full of life.

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<http://www.informationclearinghouse.info/48225.htm>

Jungle Drum Prose/Poetry. <http://jungledrum.lingama.net/news/story-2998.html>