THE CARTER CENTER



WEEKLY CONFLICT SUMMARY | 1 - 8 SEPTEMBER 2019

WHOLE OF SYRIA SUMMARY

NORTHWEST | Government of Syria (GoS) momentum slowed in Idleb this week, with no advances recorded. Further civilian protests denouncing Hayyat Tahrir ash Sham (HTS) took place in the northwest, in addition to pro-HTS and pro-Hurras al Din demonstrations. HTS and Jaish al Izza also launched a recruitment drive in the northwest.

SOUTH & CENTRAL | Attacks against GoS-aligned personnel and former opposition members continued in southern Syria, including two unusual attacks claimed by ISIS. GoS forces evicted civilians and appropriated several hundred houses in Eastern Ghouta.

NORTHEAST | The first joint US/ Turkish ground patrol took place in Tal Abiad this week as part of an

in northern Syria. Low-level attacks against the Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) and SDF arrest operations of alleged ISIS members continued. Two airstrikes targeting Hezbollah and Iranian troops occurred in Abu Kamal.

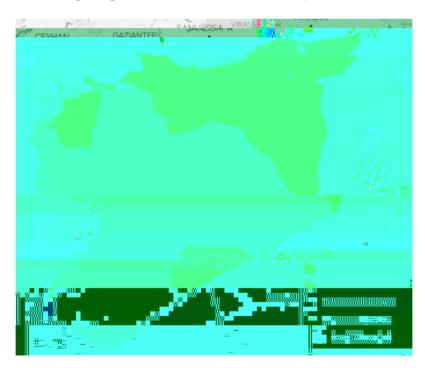


Figure 1: Dominant Actors' Area of Control and Influence in Syria as of 8 September 2019. NSOAG stands for Non-state Organized Armed Groups. For more explanation on our mapping, please see the footnote on page 2.

make a payment of between 500,000 and 4 million Syrian pounds (\$970 - \$7776 USD) in order to return to their homes.

GoS forces recaptured the former Jaish al Islam-dominated area in March 2018, where Faylaq al Rahman, Fajr al Umma, HTS, and Ahrar ash Sham were also present. Since then, consistent reports of property seizures and evictions have been reported in Eastern Chouta, most recently, in July, in Kafr Batna, Hezzeh, Beit Sawa, Ein Terma, Hamouriya, and Saqb towns.

NORTHFAST SYRIA

The US and Turkish militaries conducted a joint ground patrol in the vicinity of Tal Abiad town on 8 September. The ground patrol, which was <u>supported</u> with helicopters and drones, took place around the Turkish/Syrian border and areas <u>south</u> of Tal Abiad town, checking for the removal of defensive berms and trenches around four Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) <u>bases</u>.

This was the first joint US-Turkish ground patrol in northeast Syria since the 22 August agreement on the first phase of a safe zone. This first patrol followed the withdrawal of YPG and SDF forces from the area and the <u>establishment of</u> a joint operations center. The Turkish Defense Ministry <u>stated</u> that joint land and aerial patrols with the US were expected to continue in the coming weeks.

The SDF conducted further security operations against suspected ISIS members along the Euphrates River valley in Thiban, Shiheil, and in Western Jaabar, where Gobal Coalition against Daesh jets supported the raids. As previously reported, such activity has not decreased levels of attacks against SDF in the northeast, which continued during this reporting week. At least three small arms fire attacks occurred in Shiheil, Danarj and Maskhekh villages, while IED detonations against SDF patrols occurred in Basira, Sajar, and on the Kharafi road in the southern Shuhada district of Hassakeh Governorate.

Two unusual airstrikes took place in GoS-held Abu Kamal City in the southeast of Deir Ez Zor Governorate this week. On 3 and 8 September, strikes targeted a Hezbollah site and an Iranian Republican Guard Corps (IRGC) location in the city. Pro-government sources <u>reported</u> the events as drone strikes, while other media reported the events as airstrikes.

At least three other airstrikes targeting Hezbollah or Iran have occurred in the Abu Kamal in 2019. None of the attacks have been attributed to a particular actor. However, Israel is one of the only entities in the Syrian conflict to consistently use airstrikes