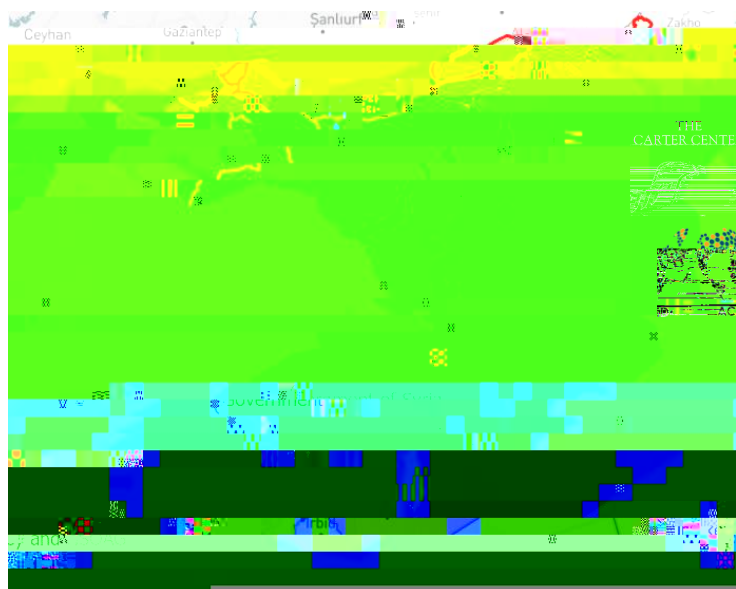




WEEKLY CONFLICT SUMMARY | 6 July - 12 July 2020

SYRIA SUMMARY

- NORTHWEST | The Russian and Turkish joint patrol reached Ain al-Hawr, Idlib Governorate, the longest distance to date. The first confirmed case of COVID-19 was reported in the region. There were increased clashes along the frontlines of Idlib and Aleppo Governorate. Anti-ISIS operations by Government of Syria (GoS) armed forces, GoS-backed militias, and the Russian air force continued in Hama Governorate. The United Nations Security Council renewed aid delivery to northwest Syria.
- SOUTH & CENTRAL | GoS and Iran signed a new military agreement. Increased infighting was reported between GoS armed forces, Russian-backed militias, and GoS-backed militias in the region. Attacks against GoS officials and former opposition fighters continued across the region.
- NORTHEAST | ISIS attacks and anti-ISIS operations continued. Fighting among GoS-backed militias and Iranian-backed militias was reported in Deir-ez-Zor Governorate. There were increased reports of GoS armed forces intercepting US patrols in Al-Hassakah Governorate. Protests continued in the region.



## NORTHWEST SYRIA-

For the first time, the joint Turkish and Russian armed forces patrol covered the longest distance of agreed upon length of the M4 highway in Idlib Governorate. On 7 July, the 20<sup>th</sup> joint patrol began in Turnabah in eastern Idlib Governorate and ended near the town of Badama,<sup>2</sup> roughly 10 kilometers from Ain al Hawr.<sup>3</sup> The joint patrol involved both land vehicles as well as air craft from both parties.<sup>4</sup> The Turkish-Russian joint patrols were mandated by the 5



program, and whether both the Bab al-Hawa and Bab al-Salaam crossings would be utilized. After several vetoes and failed draft resolutions, UNSC Resolution 2533<sup>14</sup> was reached on 12 July to extend aid to the region for another year, but only using the Bab al-Hawa crossing at Idlib Governorate.<sup>15</sup> Concerns persist that the use of only one crossing will be insufficient for fulfilling humanitarian needs.<sup>16</sup>

## SOUTH & CENTRAL SYRIA

On 8 July, GoS and Iran signed a new agreement to strengthen military cooperation between the two countries, focusing on strengthening GoS's air defense systems.<sup>17</sup> GoS advisors described the agreement as part of the country's response to the US-enforced Caesar Act.<sup>18</sup>

There were reports of increased infighting between GoS armed forces, Russian-backed militias, and GoS-backed militias in the region. On 7 July, the GoS Palestine Branch clashed with the GoS-backed National Defense Forces (NDF) as well as some 4<sup>th</sup> Division fighters in Damascus city. Fighting had erupted after the NDF fighters and 4<sup>th</sup> Division fighters refused to disarm.<sup>19</sup> On 8 July, GoS armed forces killed 3 former opposition fighters and arrested three civilians in Rukban camp in Rural Damascus Governorate. On 9 July, Russian-backed 5<sup>th</sup> Corps fighters attacked a GoS armed forces checkpoint in Sayda town in eastern Dara'a Governorate. The clashes came after complaints that local GoS armed forces were harassing citizens.<sup>20</sup> On 12 July, Russian-backed Liwa al-Areen militia arrested three GoS armed forces officers, including a brigadier general in eastern Homs Governorate, on charges of treason and corruption.<sup>21</sup> In recent months, tensions between various pro-government factions have increased in the region, at times erupting into armed clashes.

Attacks against GoS soldiers, GoS administrators, and former opposition fighters continued across the region. On 6 July, an unidentified armed group planted an IED near the office of a Central Committee member, seriously wounding him in Atman, Dara'a Governorate. On 6 July, unidentified gunmen threw grenades at a GoS municipality building in Karak, Dara'a Governorate. The next day, unidentified gunmen attacked a GoS air force intelligence checkpoint in Karak. On 9 July, an unidentified armed group threw explosives at the vehicle of a suspected Hezbollah member in Da'el, Dara'a Governorate. The alleged Hezbollah member reportedly escaped without injury. The same day in Karak, unidentified gunmen killed the head of the GoS water department. On 10 July, one GoS air force intelligence officer was killed by an IED planted by an unidentified group in Da'el, Dara'a Governorate. The same day, a GoS municipal council member escaped an assassination attempt by unidentified gunmen in Eastern Karak in Dara'a Governorate. On 10 July, an IED

<sup>14</sup> <https://news.un.org/en/story/2020/07/1068181>

<sup>15</sup> <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2020/07/renews-syria-aid-turkey-access-points-shut-200712054420871.html>

<sup>16</sup> <https://www.enabbaladi.net/archives/400329>

<sup>17</sup> <https://ar.farsnews.ir/iran/news/13990418000849>

<sup>18</sup> <https://www.almasdarnews.com/article/syrian-iranian-military-agreement-is-first-step-to-breaking-caesar-act-shaaban/>

<sup>19</sup> <https://nedaa-sy.com/news/21203>

<sup>20</sup> <https://tinyurl.com/y9j7uq7e>

<sup>21</sup> <https://nedaa-sy.com/news/21276>

planted by unidentified gunmen targeted a GoS 4<sup>th</sup> Division checkpoint on the eastern outskirts of Sahm El Golan, Dara'a Governorate. On 12 June, unidentified gunmen killed a former opposition leader by Jasim in northern Dara'a Governorate.<sup>22</sup> Since 1 January 2020, there have been at least 101 reported attacks against GoS members or former opposition fighters. In contrast, the same period in 2019 saw only 46 attacks.

## NORTHEAST SYRIA

ISIS attacks and anti-ISIS operations continued this week across northeast Syria. On 6 July, alleged ISIS fighters killed a civilian in Shiheil in Deir-ez-Zor Governorate. The same day, the predominantly Kurdish-Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) with US support arrested ISIS fighters in northern Deir-ez-Zor Governorate and southern Al-Hassakah Governorate. These raids were preceded by a 4 July announcement of a new anti-ISIS campaign along the Euphrates river valley.<sup>23</sup> On 6 July, ISIS fighters killed an Asayish fighter near Abu Khashab in Deir-ez-Zor Governorate. On 6 July, ISIS fighters attacked a SDF checkpoint in the eastern outskirts of Ar-Raqqa city in Ar-Raqqa Governorate, reportedly killing 1 SDF fighter. On 8 July, two alleged ISIS gunmen killed a former SDF fighter in Basira town in Deir-ez-Zor Governorate. The same day, alleged ISIS fighters attacked GoS armed forces and the GoS-backed Quds Brigade in Kabbaj in southern Deir-ez-Zor Governorate.<sup>24</sup> On 10 July, ISIS fighters attacked a SDF commander's house in Abu Hamam in Deir-ez-Zor Governorate. The SDF commander survived the attack.

There were increased reports of infighting between GoS-backed militias and Iranian-backed militias<sup>25</sup> in Deir-ez-Zor Governorate. On 6 July, the GoS-backed NDF clashed with the GoS-backed Eastern Lions militia in Deir-ez-Zor citye Tc[e.000008866 0 594.96 840.96 reW\*0 1 89.808 520.46 Tm0 g0 G[fig)-4(h)-7(te)6(r)-5(.)JTJ

Qamishli city outskirts.<sup>30</sup> On 10 July, GoS armed forces stopped a US patrol in Mansaf Tahtani near Tal Tamer in western Al-Hassakah Governorate.<sup>31</sup> On 10 and 11 July, GoS armed forces prevented a US patrol from passing through their checkpoint in Tal Tamer, forcing the US patrol to return to base. On 11 July, GoS armed forces and protesters prevented a US patrol from progressing in the villages of Al-Sibat, Tal Shamiran, and Mansaf Tahtani,<sup>32</sup> near the US base in Tal Tamer. On 12 July, another confrontation between US forces and GoS armed forces was reported at Mansaf Tahtani village.<sup>33</sup>

Demonstrations against the SDF, GoS, and US forces increased during the reporting period. On 6 July, protesters in Tartab, Al-Hassakah Governorate called for the withdrawal of US forces from Syria. On 8 July, teachers in Abu Hamam and Kishkiyeh in Deir-ez-Zor demonstrated against alleged corruption in the local governing council. Three protests were reported on 10 July: in Shiheil, Al-Asbah Farms, and Al-Qasir in Deir-ez-Zor and Al-Hassakah Governorates. In Shiheil in eastern Deir-ez-Zor Governorate, civilians demanded the release of prisoners held by the SDF. In Al-Asbah Farms in northern Deir-ez-Zor Governorate, demonstrators called for the overthrow of GoS, the expulsion of Iranian-backed militias, and the release of prisoners. In Al-Qasir near Qamishli city in Al-Hassakah Governorate, protesters denounced the recently applied Caesar Act sanctions and demanded the expulsion of US and Turkish armed forces from Syria. On 11 July, demonstrators in Gharanij in eastern Deir-ez-Zor Governorate called for the release of prisoners from SDF jails and better living conditions. Protests and public anger have erupted in recent weeks due to deteriorating economic conditions across the country. Since 1 January 2020, there have been 64 reported demonstrations in the region (see figure 3), 44 of

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