

**Weekly Conflict Summary**

June 01-07, 2017

Over the course of this reporting period, ISIS continued to lose large portions of territory,

### Anti-ISIS offensives

On June 6, the Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) announced the beginning of the first phase of the battle for Raqqa city, the de facto ISIS capital. The announcement came as the SDF expelled ISIS forces from the western, northern, and eastern countryside of Raqqa city, reaching and breaching the edges of the city itself.

Figure 2 - Map of areas of control around Raqqa city by June 7

Kurdish YPG forces captured positions in Heraqla, west of Raqqa city, and briefly advanced to the eastern outskirts of Raqqa before retreating. The fight for Raqqa is likely to be a long and difficult one, as close air support will be limited in the populated urban environment, and the city will be heavily booby-trapped to slow the offensive.

A pro-government force, including the elite Tiger Forces, advanced again this week against ISIS in the eastern countryside of Aleppo, capturing M 4JETQ EMC q0 pt0a is-li

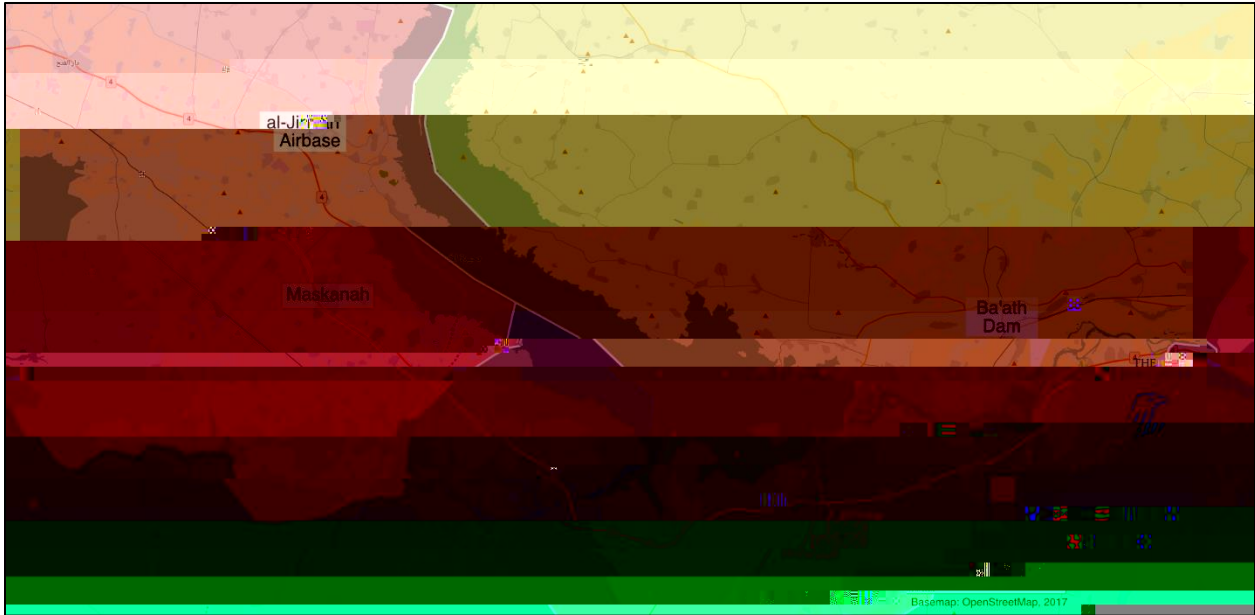


Figure 3 - Map of areas of control in the eastern countryside of Aleppo and western countryside of Raqqa by June 7

Pro-government forces, including Hezbollah, progressed in their offensive east of Tadmor towards Deir Ezzor. Pro-government forces advanced towards the T3 pumping station area and the Arak gas fields, which they have attempted to capture and hold for weeks.

In the city of Deir Ezzor, ISIS forces (perhaps bolstered by troop withdrawals elsewhere) conducted a renewed offensive against government-held positions in and around the city. ISIS attacked pro-government positions in Deir Ezzor from two flanks, focusing on the area southwest of the city. On June 3, ISIS forces broke through pro-government defenses around Brigade 137 (west of the city), capturing areas south of the base by June 4. Despite initially losing ground to the large ISIS offensive, government forces rallied and regained all territory lost by June 6.

### Government offensives and counter-offensives

After several weeks of focusing primarily on ISIS, this reporting period saw pro-government forces initiate new offensives against opposition forces.

A new offensive northwest of Aleppo city, led by the Palestinian pro-government force Liwa al-Quds and elements of the Republican Guard, targeted opposition territory in the Andan and Hayyan suburbs of Aleppo city. Though these areas have long been strongholds for the opposition, it is possible that persistent infighting may facilitate a pro-government advance in the area. Additionally, clashes between pro-government and opposition forces erupted near al-Bab in northern Aleppo after months of relative calm.

The tense situation around the al-Tanf border crossing between Syria and Iraq grew even more tense this reporting period with a surge in troops, weapons, and rhetoric regarding the contested area. On June 1, the US sent more troops and supplies to protect al-Tanf base as Iranian-backed militias came closer. On June 4, Maghaweir al-Thawra, other FSA forces, and US special forces set up a new garrison at Zaghif, 70km north of al-Tanf. This new garrison is an expected launching point for operations on the eastern border crossing of al-Bukamal (130km north of Zaghif). On June 5, FSA forces launched an attack on pro-government militias using Grad rockets, while government and Russian planes launched airstrikes on opposition fighters in the area. The attacks led to clashes along the Damascus-Baghdad highway, during

which the FSA regained a few positions south of Zaza checkpoint and destroyed some armored vehicles. On June 6, the US conducted a strike targeting more than 60 militia soldiers inside the de-confliction zone around al-Tanf, destroying two artillery pieces and an anti-aircraft weapon, as well as damaging a tank. Despite the continued resistance by US-backed armed groups, pro-government forces are expected to continue their mission to reach the Syrian-Iraqi border at al-Tanf.

Also in the southern desert, the opposition's Jaysh Asoud al-Sharqiya destroyed a government warplane leaving Dumayr Military Airport on June 5 and pro-government forces captured Tal Abed south of the airbase from Jaysh Asoud al Sharqiya on June 6.

In Daraa city, the opposition al Bct Summ

Tell Touqan near Saraqeb, Idleb to attempt to resolve the dispute ended in open fighting as HTS attacked Liwa Asood al-Islam, a sub-unit of Ahrar al-Sham.

Tensions between the two rivals also escalated in Idleb and Aleppo due to a feud over the purchase of wheat. The service arm of HTS issued a mandate on May 28 requiring wheat farmers in opposition-controlled territory in northern Syria to sell their yields to HTS at a price of 103-105 SYP per kilogram. This mandate was the dispute ended in open fighting a mandate