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WEEKLY CONFLICT SUMMARY | 5 - 11 July 2021

SYRIA SUMMARY

- The United Nations Security Council reaches an agreement to continue humanitarian aid delivery in northwest Syria.
- The Russian-backed 5th Corps raids the village of Mataeiyyeh, eastern Dara'a Governorate.
- Iranian-backed militias attack U.S. armed forces in Deir-ez-Zor Governorate.

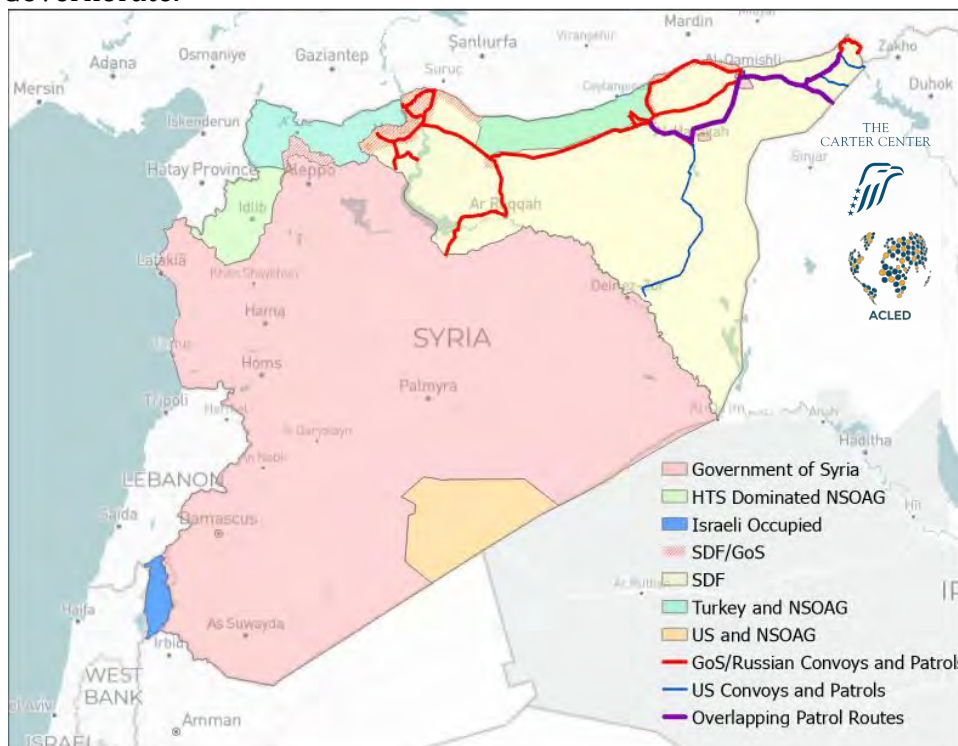


Figure 1: Dominant actors' area of control and influence in Syria as of 11 July 2021. NSOAG stands for Non-state Organized Armed Groups. Also, please see footnote 1.

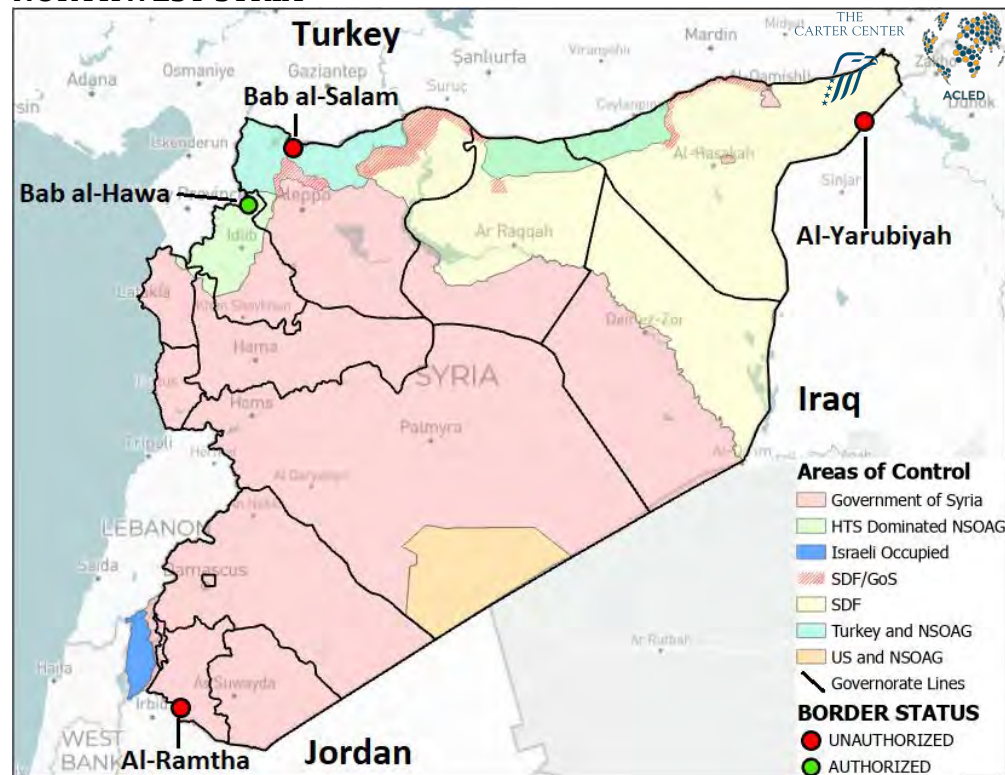
NORTHWEST SYRIA¹

Figure 2: The four original border crossings for the cross-border mechanism and current status for UN aid delivery. Data from The Carter Center and ACLED.

The Cross-Border Mechanism

United Nations Security Council (UNSC) Resolution 2533 authorized the use of the Bab al-Hawa crossing in northwest Syria for delivering humanitarian aid for a period of one year. The Cross-Border Mechanism (CBM) was set to expire on July 10, 2021. Millions of people across Syria depend on humanitarian aid, making the renewal of aid delivery vital for alleviating the humanitarian situation in Syria.² (Read The Carter Center’s paper on the topic [here](#)).

On 9 July, Russia and the United States reached a compromise, allowing the UNSC to unanimously approve the extension of the CBM through the Bab al-Hawa border crossing.³ Humanitarian aid would continue to be transferred through the

¹ Figure 1 depicts areas of the dominant actors’ control and influence. While “control” is a relative term in a complex, dynamic conflict, territorial control is defined as an entity having power over use of force as well as civil/administrative functions in an area. Russia, Iran, and Hezbollah maintain a presence in Syrian government-controlled territory. Non-state organized armed groups (NSOAG), including the Kurdish-dominated SDF and Turkish-backed opposition groups operate in areas not under GoS control. The area along the junction of the Syrian border with Iraq and Jordan is a 55km de-confliction zone, established by the US-led coalition that also includes a number of aligned local armed groups. Patrols are also depicted in the map to show the presence of actors that may have influence in an area. This is particularly relevant as US and Russian forces regularly patrol towns and routes in the northeast. While they do not control local administration or local forces, there is an assumption of a high degree of coordination with local de facto authorities. Data collected is by the publicly available project [ACLED](#).

² https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/syria_2021_humanitarian_needs_overview.pdf

³ <https://www.voanews.com/middle-east/un-security-council-extends-cross-border-aid-syria-1-year>

crossing for another 6 months, with an additional automatic 6-month extension subject to a report by the UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres.⁴ Both the United States and Russia praised the resolution, holding it up as a sign of diplomacy and cooperation.⁵ Some humanitarian organizations criticized the resolution, arguing that it is insufficient to meet the humanitarian needs in Syria, due to the failure to open up additional crossings elsewhere in the region.⁶

The renewal of the CBM was contentious among Syrian and international actors. Russia and the Government of Syria (GoS) argue that direct cross border aid to opposition-controlled territories (northwest) and by-passing GoS-controlled border crossings would violate Syria's sovereignty, discriminate against Syrians in GoS-controlled territory, and benefit Hayat Tahrir al-Sham. Western and Syrian opposition supporters of CBM argue that humanitarian aid only through entry points controlled by Damascus would give the GoS the ability to limit the delivery of humanitarian aid to opposition-controlled territories, and potentially be used to coerce the opposition.⁷

SOUTH & CENTRAL SYRIA



Figure 3: Mataeiye in Dara'a Governorate. Data from The Carter Center and ACLED.

⁴ <https://tinyurl.com/yny5f2x9>

⁵ <https://www.msn.com/en-us/news/politics/us-russia-cooperation-extends-access-to-key-syrian-humanitarian-crossing/ar-AALYsKD>, <https://www.msn.com/en-us/news/world/russias-un-ambassador-grateful-to-us-others-for-reaching-agreement-on-syrian-aid/ar-AALYwN9>

⁶ <https://www.al-monitor.com/originals/2021/07/un-extends-syria-cross-border-assistance-compromise-russia>, <https://reliefweb.int/report/syrian-arab-republic/syria-un-security-council-s-compromise-resolution-falls-short>

⁷ <https://tinyurl.com/39e3uet8>, <https://english.enabbaladi.net/archives/2021/04/domestic-and-border-crossings-russias-mean-to-stifle-northern-syria/>

Violence in Mataeiyyeh

In Dara'a and Quneitra Governorates, some former opposition commanders gained prominence by leading influential political and military groups, occasionally leading to tensions with GoS soldiers and officials. The 8th Brigade of the 5th Corps, a Russian-backed military formation made up of former opposition fighters, maintains a stronghold in eastern Dara'a Governorate. The 8th Brigade has often intervened in tensions between GoS and former opposition fighters and maintained order in eastern Dara'a Governorate.

7 July

A 8th Brigade commander was killed during a raid to arrest a wanted individual in Mataeiyyeh, eastern Dara'a Governorate.⁸

8 July

In retaliation for the killing of an 8th Brigade commander, the 8th Brigade retaliated and stormed the town of Mataeiyyeh and arrested 36 individuals. In addition, the 8th Brigade reportedly looted and destroyed 10 houses in the town.⁹

10 July

The 8th Brigade released 7 of the individuals arrested in Mataeiyyeh. Some of the released prisoners reported that they were tortured.¹⁰ One of the prisoners reportedly died while in the 8th Brigade's custody.¹¹

NORTHEAST SYRIA

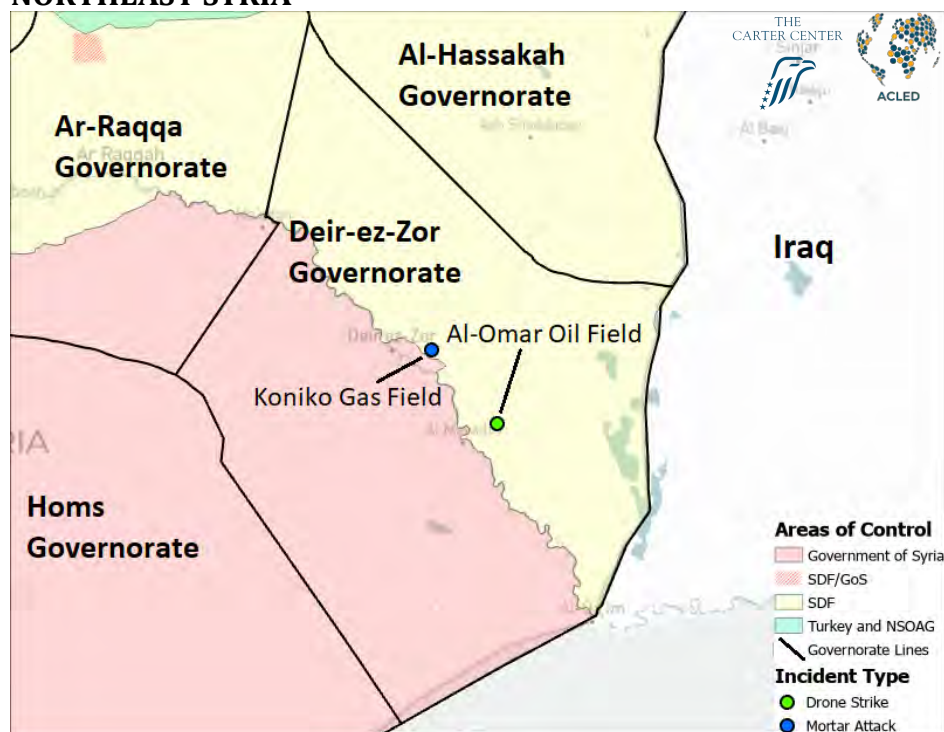


Figure 4: Attacks against U.S. armed forces in Deir-ez-Zor Governorate between 5-11 July 2021. Data from The Carter Center and ACLED.

⁸ <https://www.horanfree.com/?p=9317>

⁹ <https://syrianobserver.com/news/67858/8th-brigade-arrests-dozens-and-burns-houses-east-of-daraa.html>

¹⁰ <https://www.horanfree.com/?p=9353>

¹¹ <https://www.enabbaladi.net/archives/492467>

Attacks Against U.S. Armed Forces

Iran and its allied militias maintain a significant presence in GoS-controlled territory in Deir-ez-Zor Governorate. Iranian-backed¹² Iraqi militias like Kataib Hezbollah and Kataib Sayyid al-Shuhada have conducted attacks against U.S. armed forces in Iraq. In response to attacks in Iraq, the U.S. bombed Iranian-backed militias on 26 February and 27 June. The latter airstrike reportedly killed 4 militia fighters.¹³

6 July

The leader of the Iranian-backed Sayyid al-Shuhada Brigades vowed to retaliate against U.S. armed forces in Syria and Iraq.¹⁴ The Sayyid al-Shuhada Brigade is an Iraqi militia that was the target of U.S. airstrikes on 27 June.

7 July

U.S. armed forces and the predominantly Kurdish Syrian Democratic Forces intercepted suspected Iranian-backed Iraqi militia drones near the Al-Omar oil field, Deir-ez-Zor Governorate.¹⁵ The drone strike coincided with a mortar shelling of a U.S. armed forces base in Iraq.¹⁶

10 July

Suspected Iranian-backed Iraqi militias shelled U.S. armed forces near the Koniko gas field, Deir-ez-Zor Governorate.¹⁷

For earlier weekly conflict summaries, please click [here](#). For an interactive map of historical areas of control in Syria, please click [here](#).

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¹² Iranian-backed militias refers to armed groups that are supported by Iran, like Hezbollah, and include militias from Lebanon, Iraq, Afghanistan, or Pakistan.

¹³ <https://www.al-monitor.com/originals/2021/06/us-forces-syria-come-under-attack-after-airstrikes-iran-backed-militias>

¹⁴ <https://tinyurl.com/adzsc86v>

¹⁵ <https://www.msn.com/en-us/news/world/series-of-attacks-target-us-personnel-in-iraq-and-syria/ar-AALSjGK>

¹⁶ <https://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/bases-housing-us-troops-iraq-syria-attacked-injured-78705413>

¹⁷ <https://halabtodaytv.net/archives/193902>, <https://www.ipost.com/breaking-news/explosion-heard-near-us-base-in-eastern-syria-report-673454>