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THE
CARTER CENTER



WEEKLY CONFLICT SUMMARY | 8 - 14 JULY 2019

WHOLE OF SYRIA SUMMARY

- **NORTHWEST** | Opposition groups organized attacked Hammamiyat town in the south of the Hayyat Tahrir ash Sham-dominated Idleb enclave, capturing the town for 24 hours, before it was retaken again by government forces. Opposition armed groups continued arresting civilians in the Turkish-backed Operation Olive Branch and Euphrates Shield areas. A car bomb detonation was recorded in Afrin City.
- **SOUTH & CENTRAL** | Low-level attacks against government-aligned personnel occurred in the central and southern areas of the country. An oil pipeline in the Sha'er area was sabotaged.
- **NORTHEAST** | Despite ongoing Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) security operations in the north east, low-level small arms fire and improvised explosive device (IED) attacks continued. In Hassakeh and Qamishli cities, IED activity was recorded.

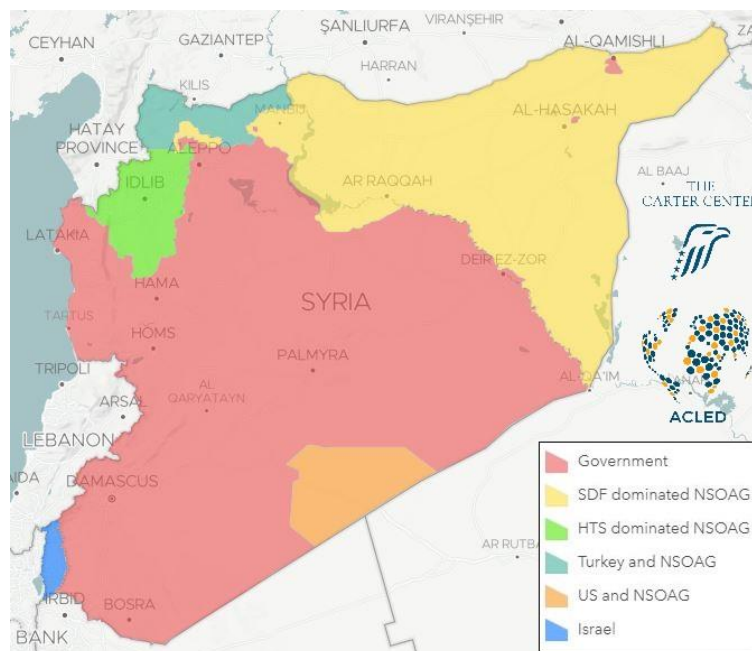


Figure 1: Dominant Actors' Area of Control and Influence in Syria as of 14 July 2019. NSOAG stands for Non-state Organized Armed Groups. For more explanation on our mapping, please see the footnote on page 2.

NORTHWEST SYRIA

After a month of static frontlines, opposition groups, including Jaish al Izza and Ahrar ash Sham, launched an assault on Hamamiyat town, east of the Government of Syria's (GoS) forces staging town of Kurnaz. Despite opposition gains on 11 July, government forces re-captured the town 24 hours later, with fighting focused on the eastern edges of the town at the time of writing (Figure 2). Pro-GOS forces also [reported](#) HTS and other groups attempted to assault Jalmeh town south of Tal Mallah, on 14 July without success.

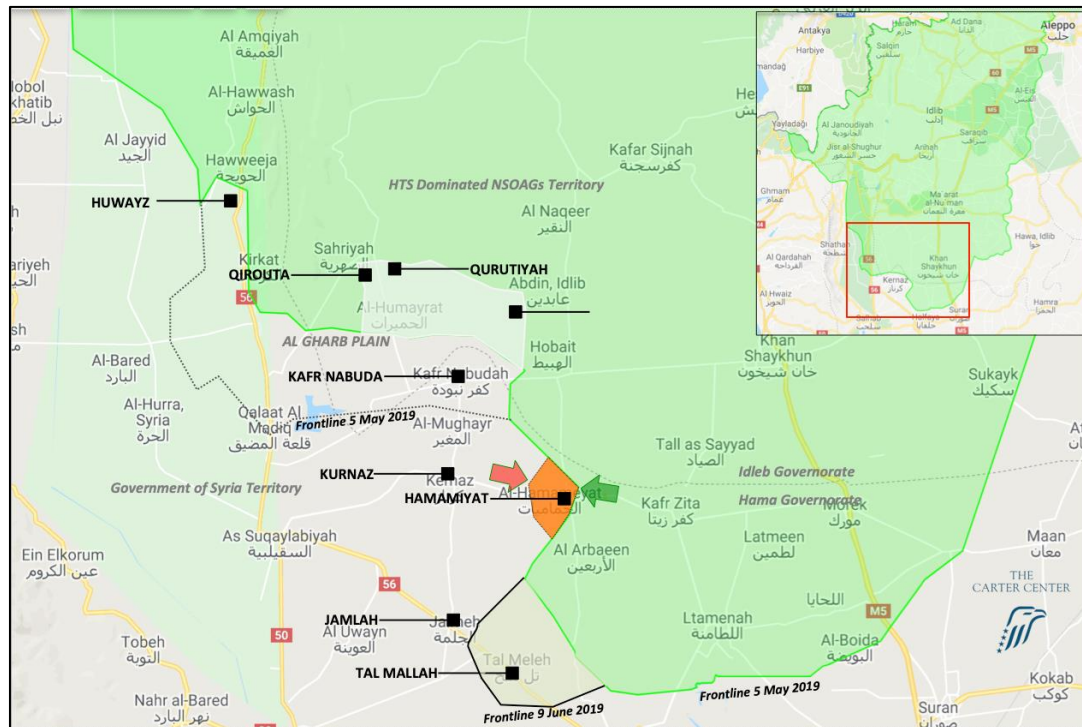


Figure 2: Current Frontlines in the northwest of Syria as of 14 July 2019 with contested areas around Hammamiyat Town highlighted in Orange.

Despite ongoing GOS and Russian aerial and ground bombardments in the past month, with 1,119 events, including 239 this week, this week's offensive is the second offensive launched by various opposition groups in the south of the Idlib enclave since Tal Mallah was taken in early June.

HTS and other aligned groups launched ground attacks against [several](#) fortified government positions close to [Attarah](#) town, in the Jebal Turkman area in Northern Latakia. According to some [sources](#), Turkish-backed National Liberation Front (NLF) groups provided artillery support to these operations for the first

¹ Figure 1 denotes dominant actors' control and influence. Russia, Iran, Hezbollah and Iraqi militias maintain a presence in Syrian government-dominated territory. Non-state organized armed groups (NSOAG), including the Kurdish dominated, US backed SDF and a variety of other groups operate in areas not under Syrian government control. The NSOAG labeled area along the 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. Data collected is by the publicly available project ACLED.

time.

At least 13 government-dominated areas were also bombarded with rockets and artillery during the week, including the [New Aleppo](#) area of Aleppo City and Hama Airbase (Figure 3).² The Russian Center for Reconciliation and Conflict Sides also [reported](#) that three weaponized drones were shot down near the Russian operated Hmeimim Airbase in northern Latakia Governorate on 12 July. Such attacks have been common since the Idleb offensive began earlier in the year.

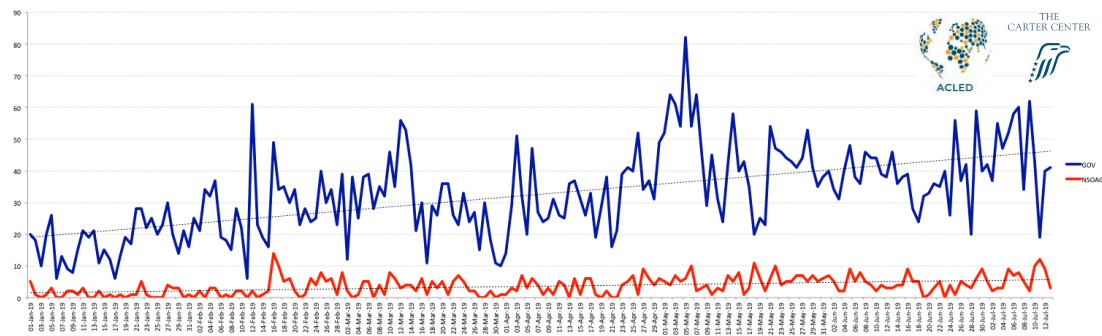


Figure 3: Government and NSOAG (including HTS) Conflict Activity in northwest Syria 2019.

The situation in Idleb continues to affect civilians and humanitarian efforts heavily. According to a UNOCHA [report](#) from 12 July, at least four medical facilities were impacted by airstrikes in the past two weeks, including Mara'at al Numan and in Jisr ash Shaghour hospitals, both of which had several hundred patients inside at the time of the strikes. These facilities had previously shared their location coordinates with parties in the conflict as part of the humanitarian notification system.³ Five schools, three IDP settlements, two bakeries, two markets, and one major water station (serving 80,000 people in Idleb) have also been struck by aerial and ground bombardments since early July.

Further north in the Turkish-backed Operation Euphrates Shield and Olive Branch areas of Afrin, Azaz, and Jarablus districts of Aleppo governorate, Turkish-backed opposition groups, including the Ash Sham Corps and the Sultan Murad Division, continued to conduct arrest operations against civilians with alleged links to Kurdish-aligned opposition groups. Six raids were recorded this week in Jandairis, Ma'btali (x2), Sharan, Shiekh al Hadid, and Qurt Qulaq al Kabira towns. As previously [reported](#), such activity has increased since May.

On 11 July, a car bomb detonated on the outskirts of Afrin town, killing at least ten people, wounding [up to](#) 25 more and damaging buildings around it, including an [NGO](#) office. While improvised explosive device (IED) activity is common in the city, with 46 IED attacks in the last 12 months, only eight have involved vehicle born IEDs (VBIEDs), of which, five have occurred in 2019.

² The areas impacted were Aziziyah (x3 events), Al Shari'ah (1), Ar Rasif (2), As Suqaylabiya (3), Asharneh (1), Bab ElTaqa (1), Bahsa (3), Baideej (1), Jid (1), Kurnaz (2), Madiq Castle (1), and Maghir (1)

³ Also known as the de-confliction system. At least 35 incidents of conflict involving health facilities or personnel have been recorded since late April 2019.

SOUTH AND CENTRAL SYRIA

Low-level attacks against government-aligned personnel continued this week with five attacks recorded in Busra al Harir, Da'el, Hrak, Yadudah, and in Sahwa town, where an IED detonated as a joint Syrian Army/Russian Military Police convoy passed on the Haraba–Maaraba road. The Russian Ministry of Defence later [confirmed](#) the incident, which did not result in any Russian casualties or damages.

This now brings the number of recorded attacks against government-aligned personnel and its allies since August 2018⁴ to 160. In the past four months, IED activity in the south has increased, with 13 events recorded since 1 March compared to just five events the previous four months (Figure 4).

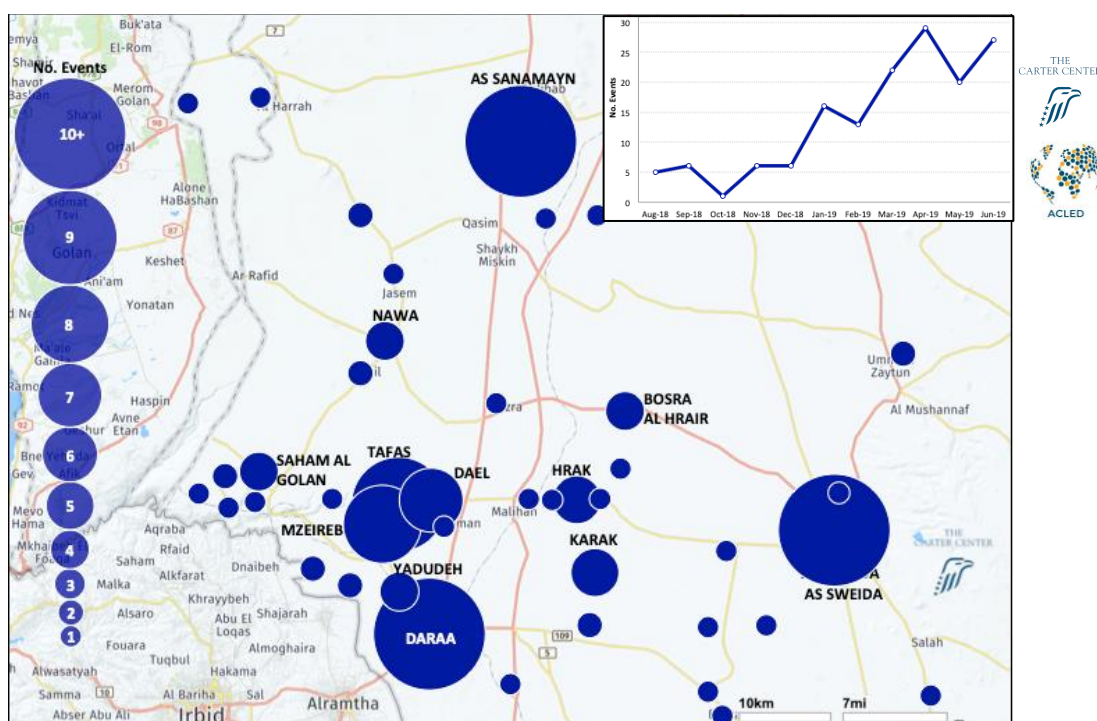


Figure 4: Attacks against government-aligned personnel in southern Syria since August 2018 (Note not all locations of attacks highlighted).

In the central part of the country, pro-government [sources](#) reported an explosive attack that [damaged](#) a pipeline connected to the Sha'er/Ibla Gas Fields on 14 July. Attacks against major oil and gas infrastructure in Syria are uncommon, with two attacks on record, including last month's attack on an underwater pipeline in Banyas. It is uncertain if the two events are linked.

Following increased ISIS activity in central areas of the country in recent months, the Syrian military [began](#) clearance operations against the group in the deserts between Deir Ez Zor and Sokhneh city. This is the third large-scale, security operation by GoS forces in central Syria in 2019. However, these government

⁴ When the area was retaken from a variety of opposition groups including HTS and ISIS.

attempts have done little to curb ISIS activity so far (Figure 5).

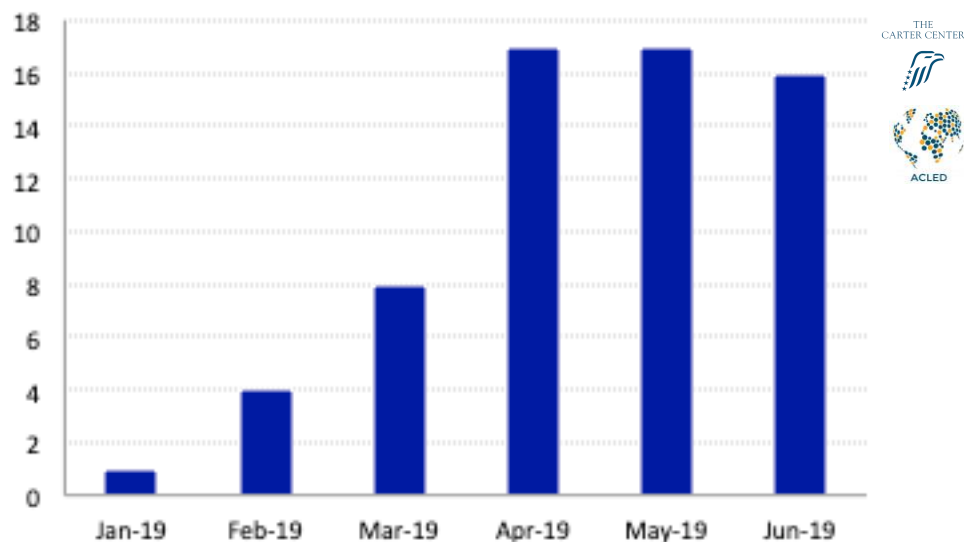


Figure 5: ISIS Activity in central areas of Syria in 2019

NORTHEAST SYRIA

Arrests by the US backed Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) continued this week, with six operations recorded in Hasakeh City (x2), Abu Nitel, Shadadah, Tariqiyeh, and Zir. US-led Global Coalition against Daesh ground forces also conducted an aerial insertion near Abu Nitel town on 12 July to arrest suspected ISIS members. Some w20 Global Coalition against Daesh security operations have been recorded since ISIS's last stronghold of Baghuz Faqwani was captured by the SDF in late March 2019.

Despite these security operations, low-level attacks against SDF personnel continued, including four small arms fire attacks in Basira, Al Ghaz, Suq Jamma, and Gharanji, as well as IED attacks in Sur, Al Hawayji, Markada, Khurafi, Jazza, Hassakeh City, and Shiheil. Two additional IED attacks destroyed former SDF command centers in Tayyana and Al Hawayji towns on 8 July. An IED attack against civilians was also recorded in Qamishli, where a VBIED detonated in the predominantly Christian Al Wusta neighbourhood killing at least 14 civilians.

VBIED attacks are uncommon in Qamishli, with five recorded events since February 2018. However, in Hassakah City, a total of 39 IED attacks have occurred in the past 12 months.

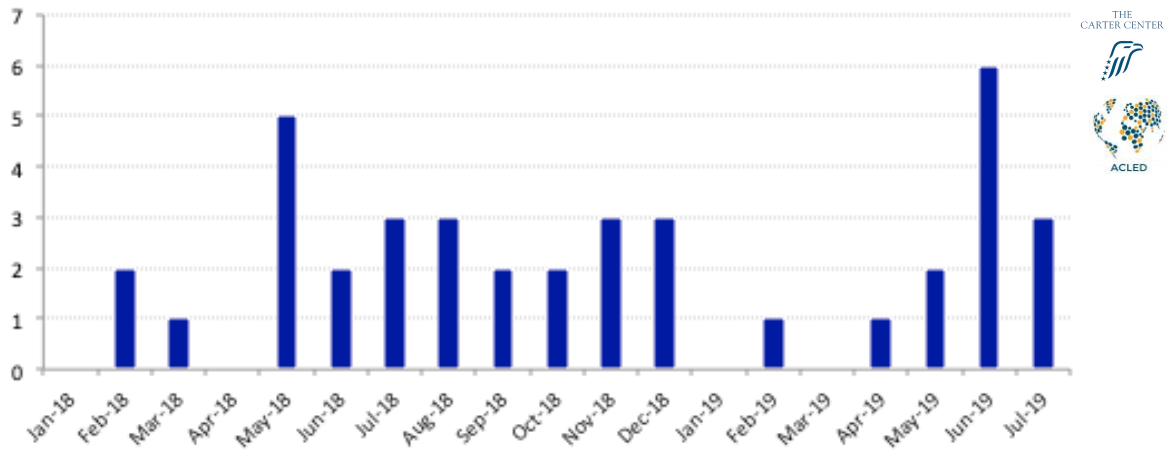


Figure 6: IED activity in Hasakeh City in 2019