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WEEKLY CONFLICT SUMMARY | 9 - 15 SEPTEMBER 2019

WHOLE OF SYRIA SUMMARY

- **NORTHWEST** | The Government of Syria (GoS) did not gain more territory in the Hayyat Tahrir ash Sham (HTS) dominated enclave this week. However, aerial activity resumed after a 10 day pause. GoS shelling also increased this week. Inside the de-escalation zone, HTS cracked down on dissent. In the Turkish occupied areas of northern Aleppo Governorate, opposition armed groups continued arrests for extortion purposes.
- **SOUTH & CENTRAL** | Attacks against GoS-aligned personnel and former opposition members continued in southern Syria. In the Qudsaya neighbourhood of Damascus, GoS conducted the third arrest operation of the year. GoS also announced the end of an anti-ISIS operation in Homs.
- **NORTHEAST** | Another joint US/Turkish patrol took place in Tal Abiad this week. Low-level attacks against the US-backed Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) continued despite SDF security operations in the region. Evidence of further Iranian influence in Deir Ez Zor was seen with an announcement by the Baqir Brigade.

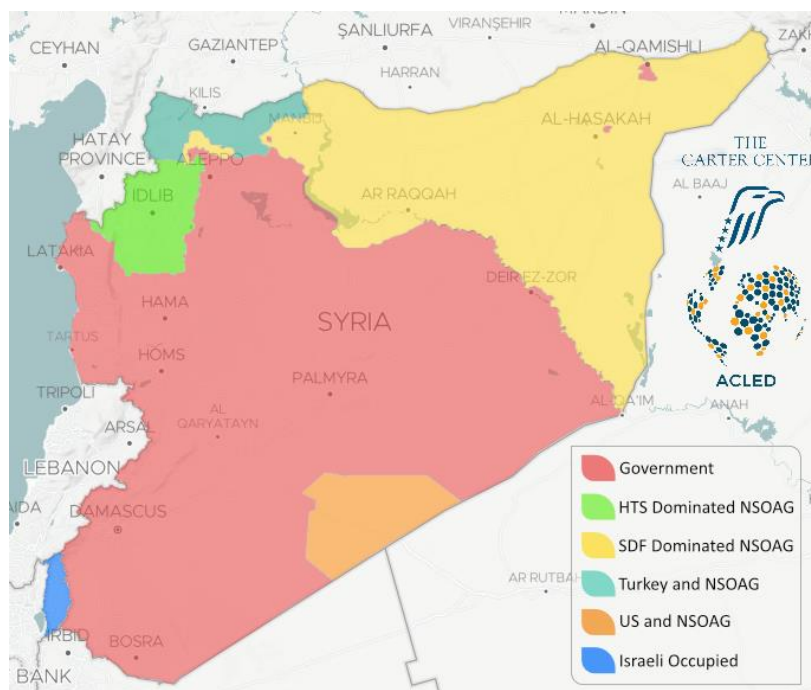


Figure 1: Dominant Actors' Area of Control and Influence in Syria as of 15 September 2019. NSOAG stands for Non-state Organized Armed Groups. Also, please see the footnote on page 2.

NORTHWEST SYRIA

The Government of Syria (GoS) did not have new advances in the northwest this week. However, GoS aerial activity resumed on the Hayyat Tahrir ash Sham (HTS)-dominated enclave on 10 September, with at least 23 attacks targeting 18 communities.² These were the first airstrikes in the northwest since GoS announced a ceasefire on 31 August.

GoS ground shelling on the Idleb pocket also increased this period, despite the ceasefire, with 139 such events reported. This is an increase from the previous week’s 85 events (Figure 2). One shelling incident also affected the Turkish Military Observation Post in Maar Hattat town. Since May, this is the eighth shelling targeting Turkish Observation Posts in the northwest.

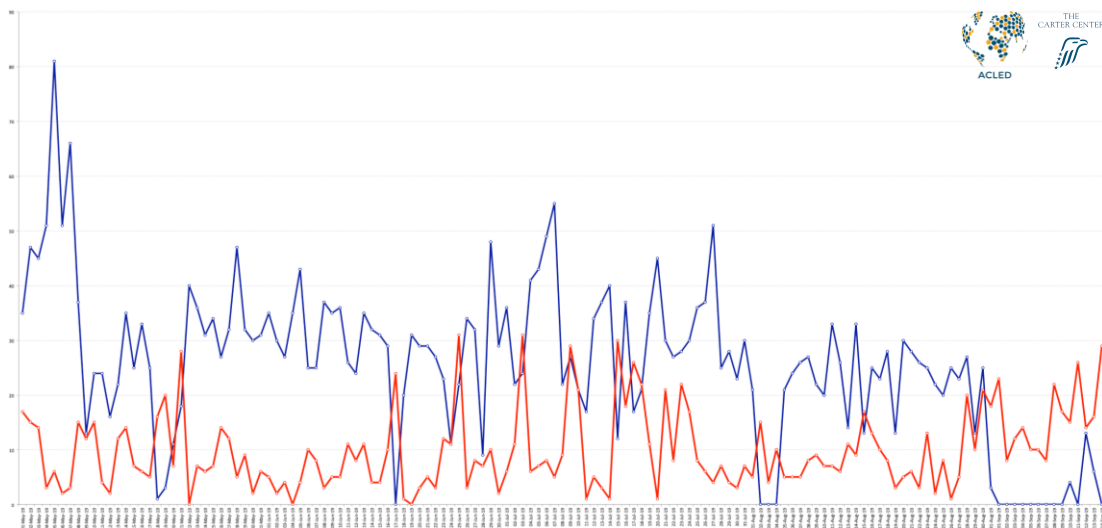


Figure 2: GoS Aerial Activity (Blue) and Shelling (Red) in Northwest Syria Since May 2019. Data from ACLED and The Carter Center.

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.

² Bazabur, Benin (x2), Bsanqul, Dar al Kabira, Darkosh, Has (x2), Hazarin, Jbala, Jisr al Shaghour, Kabani, Kafr Mars, Kafr Takharim, Kafruma, Maraat al Numaan (x2 events), Maar Zita (x2), Sarja (x2), Sfuhen, and Shinan.

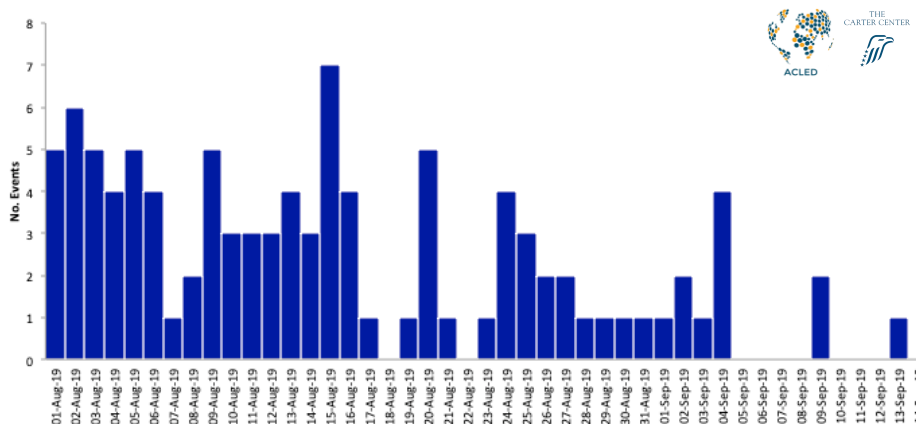


Figure 3: HTS and Other Groups Shelling of GoS Areas in Northwest Syria since 01 August. Data from ACLED and The Carter Center.

HTS and other opposition groups also resumed shelling on government areas during the period. However, just three events occurred in Khan Sheikhun, Sanjar, and Zarbah towns. Incidents of groups from inside the de-escalation zone shelling government positions have decreased since the end of August (Figure 3).

Inside the Idleb enclave, HTS conducted a crackdown on dissent, arresting media activists and local HTS-aligned council members. At least four arrest operations were conducted in Rif al Mohandessin, Mhambal, Idleb, and Batabu. In Jisr al Shaghour, HTS executed two people accused of involvement in IED attacks.

The operations come a week after popular protests against HTS in several locations in the northwest. It is also the second HTS crackdown in the past month.

In the Turkish-occupied areas of northern Aleppo Governorate,³ during the week local armed groups continued arresting civilians and demanding payment of sums for their release. The Turkish backed National Liberation Front (NLF) aligned-Al Sham Corps and Liwa Samarkand groups conducted at least three arrest/extortion activities against civilians on the Jandairis to Afrin Road, Deir Ballut Village and Kafr Safa. As previously [reported](#), such activity has increased since May of this year.

SOUTH & CENTRAL SYRIA

As has been common throughout 2019, attacks against GoS-aligned personnel and former opposition members continued in southern Syria this week. At least three such events occurred in Dael, against a Baath Party member, in Tassil, targeting three former opposition members, and in Daraa City, where an IED detonated against the vehicle of a former commander of the opposition-aligned Houran Operations Room.

Pro-government [sources](#) also reported a small arms attack against a police station in Nawa and the Popular Resistance Group released a [video](#) of an IED attack against a bus on the Karak–Eastern Ghariyah road on 31 August. Since

³ Operation Olive Branch and Operation Euphrates Shield

February 2019, attacks against moving vehicles, fortified military or police locations, and checkpoints have remained high compared to the previous six months (Figure 4).

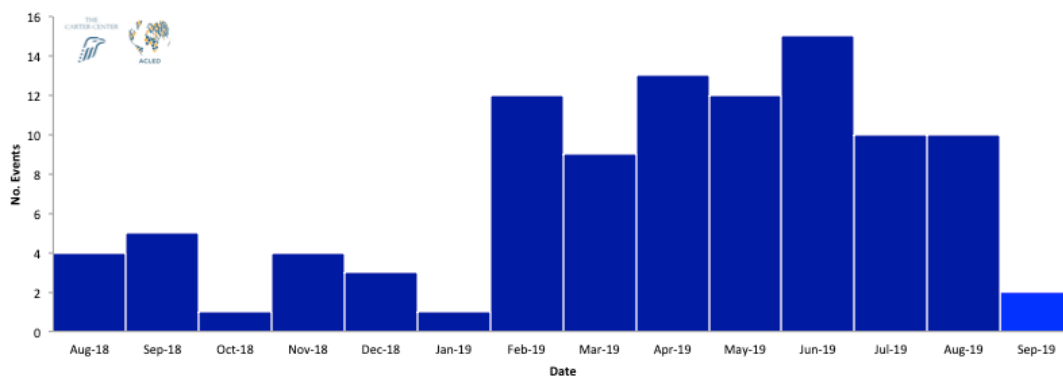


Figure 4: Attacks against checkpoints, fortified military / police locations and moving vehicles in Southern Syria since 1 August 2018. Data from ACLED and The Carter Center.

In Damascus, GoS Military Intelligence arrested 15 people in the northern suburb of Qudsaya during raids on 10 and 11 September. It was also reported in ACLED data that as many as 35 persons were wanted in connection with planning attacks against GoS personnel. This arrest campaign, the third in the suburbs since February, comes nearly two weeks after an IED detonation injured the head of the Qudsaya Municipal Council on 29 August.

In central areas of the country, pro-government [sources](#) reported that the Syrian military and National Defense Forces had completed an ISIS clearance operation in the Al Fidah area of Homs Governorate. It is the latest in a series of major security operations in central and eastern parts of Syria against the group.

NORTHEAST SYRIA

On 12 September, the US and Turkish militaries conducted a joint helicopter patrol in the Tal Abiad area. It was the second joint aerial patrol since 29 August, and follows last week's joint ground patrol in the city. Also, it aligns with a Turkish Defense Ministry [announcements](#) that it is expecting such joint action with the US to continue as part of implementing "[security mechanisms](#)" in the northeast.

In Deir Ez Zor City, the Iranian backed al Baqir Brigade [announced](#) that it was willing to participate in attacks against the US backed Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) in the northeast of Syria. The group has a [history](#) of making unreliable claims of conducting attacks in the northeast. However, this announcement is part of a growing number of Iranian backed forces in Deir Ez Zor City, including Al Nujabaa Force, Al Quds Force, the Fetimiyoun Forces, Hezbollah, the Iranian Republican Guard Corps (IRGC), and the Zaynabiyoun Forces.

Attacks against SDF and its allies continued in the northeast this week. At least five attacks occurred in Abu Hardoub, Raqqa City, Thiban, Hasakeh City, and Zir, despite ongoing SDF security operations. including against ISIS members and ?ISIS? recruitment campaigns in Hasakeh City (x2), Shadadah (x2) and in Basira

(x3). In Basira, the SDF also destroyed boats allegedly used to transport goods to GoS areas.

In Al Hole Camp⁴, women stabbed an Iraqi national held in the camp. At least four cases of non-Syrian camp resident have been attacked by other camp residents since July. The most recent attack occurred on 5 September and targeted an Iraqi national.

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⁴ Al Hole camp is one of several internally displaced persons (IDP) camps in northeast Syria. It primarily holds Syrian and foreign women and children who previously lived in ISIS dominated areas of Syria.