

# The Retreat of Al Qaeda in Syria. The Liberation of Aleppo. Russian Air Strikes Contemplated against Remaining Terrorist Pockets

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*On December 3, Syrian government forces broke again Al-Nusra-led militant coalition (Jaish al-Fatah) defense lines in Aleppo city significant areas west of the Aleppo International Airport. The Syrian army, Liwa al-Quds and their allies liberated Tareeq al-Bab and al-Myassar Jazmati neighborhoods and seized a number of points in Sheikh Lutfi. Government forces advance in Seikh Saeed didn't result in any gains.*

On December 4, the army and its allies started the day with liberation of the Jazmati roundabout and the Halwaniyah square. Then government forces secured the neighborhoods of al-Miysar, Jurat Awad and Dahret Awad, and engaged militants in intense firefights in al-Qaterriji and al-Shi'ar.

Earlier at this day, 'moderate' jihadists downed a L-39 Albatros jet belonging to the Syrian Arab Air Force over the Syrian city of Aleppo. The L-39 Albatros was conducting air raids against militant targets in the area between Aleppo Citadel and the National Hospital when it was hit from the ground. Both pilots died in the crash.

By December 5, government forces liberated Karm Tahan and al-Qaterriji neighborhoods and the National Hospital in about 800m from the Aleppo Citadel. In coming days, the army and its allies will likely be able to reach the Aleppo Citadel and militant defenses north of it will collapse.

Meanwhile, reports appeared that Syrian engineers are working to restore the Ramouseh-Sheikh Saeed road in order to ease troop movement and supply deliveries for the advancing government forces in the area.

The Syrian military sees constant pressure on militant forces on multiple fronts in Aleppo city as an important task because this allows pro-government forces to exploit Jaish al-Fatah's lack of manpower. With liberation of areas north of the Aleppo Citadel and appearing of possibility of fall of Sheikh Saeed and nearby areas, terms and conditions of surrender agreement offered to al-Nusra and its allies by the government will be step up.

In case of total collapse of al-Nusra defenses in central in southern Aleppo, the army and its allies will likely withdraw from any ideas to make a deal with the al-Qaeda linked opposition and will purge all remaining militants in the area despite the hysteria in the mainstream media. All these developments will likely take place in coming few weeks.

Pro-government media activists and outlets spread rumors that the Russian military is going to deliver cruise missile strikes against militant targets in the Eastern Ghouta region, located near the Syrian capital Damascus. After missile strikes, Russia's Admiral Kuznetsov heavy aircraft-carrying missile cruiser will allegedly launch an air campaign to support the long-awaited government advance on the key town of Douma, controlled by Jaish al-Islam militant group.

However, this looks hardly possible. Especially part about missile strikes near Damascus. All previous missile strikes and a major part of Russian airstrikes were delivered in a low or medium populated areas, targeting militant HQs, ammunition depots, oil facilities and convoys. The Russian military has avoided conducting of massive air campaigns against militant targets in high populated areas.

Reports about possible Russian strikes in the area came after Eastern Ghouta militants rejected the government proposal to evacuate to Idlib province. Most likely pro-government sources disseminate these reports as a part of the ongoing psychological operation aimed to push Eastern Ghouta militants to surrender.

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