

Turkey Boosts Military Presence in Northeast Syria. Al Qaeda Fighters “Protected” by Turkish Forces?

By [South Front](#)

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Members of al-Qaeda-linked Hayat Tahrir al-Sham repelled a Syrian Army attack on the area of al-Katibat al-Mahjura in southern Idlib on December 12. A day earlier militants captured this area and repelled a first Syrian Army attempt to regain it. Pro-militant sources claim that at least 25 soldiers were killed in the clashes.

It's interesting to note that radicals are using areas close to Turkish observation posts to shell government-controlled villages and towns.

On December 11, another video showing Hayat Tahrir al-Sham militants shelling Msheirfeh from the Turkish post at Suramn appeared online. Furthermore, militants used the Turkish-supplied HY-12 mortar.

The Afrin Liberation Forces, a group affiliated with the Kurdish-led Syrian Democratic Forces, announced that they had killed at least eleven Turkish-backed militants in attacks in northern Aleppo during the past few days.

The Turkish military is expanding its presence in the captured part of northeastern Syria. On December 12, the Turkish Defense Ministry announced that its forces had established 41 checkpoints between the border towns of Ras al-Ayn and Tell Abyad.

The defense ministry said that commandos are deployed at the checkpoints, registering vehicles' chassis numbers, engine numbers and the personal IDs of the owners.

“Road checks are being carried out 24-7 in order to prevent incursions by PKK/YPG and ISIS terrorists, mainly their car-bomb attacks. Additionally, our commandos are also preventing smuggling thanks to the in-depth search and sweep operations being conducted,” the statement said.

8,272 vehicles have been checked and tagged on Turkish checkpoints, so far. More checkpoints are to be established soon.

Earlier, it was revealed that the Turkish Army set up fortified positions south of Tell Dhi'ab and southwest of Tell Barqah. Turkish troops there were reinforced by several Leopard 2A4 battle tanks and ACV-15 armored personnel carriers.

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