

U.S. Intends to Increase Control over Southern Syria

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The U.S. continues to expand military presence in Syria. Nowadays, Washington is setting up a second base at Syria's Al-Zakf to the northeast, Reuters reported.

Abu al-Atheer, military spokesman for the U.S.-backed Maghawir al-Thawra opposition group, told Reuters U.S. forces had spread from their initial location in Al-Tanf to set up a second base at Al-Zakf, around 60-70 km (40-50 miles) to the northeast. Besides, al-Atheer stressed that the opposition units had already got the U.S.-made weapons. In addition, he said that the U.S. Special Forces frequently patrolled distances of up to 100 km from Al-Tanf.

Muzahem Saloum, a militant official close to Maghawir al-Thawra, also confirmed this. According to him, the second base was expected to be a "first line of defense" against any attack by Iranian-backed Syrian pro-government militias.

Despite of militants' statements, the Coalition Command is still denying the fact of setting up the new base in Syria. Colonel Ryan Dillon, spokesman for the U.S.-led Coalition in Iraq and Syria, reported that the U.S. conducted patrolling outside the Al-Tanf base to increase the level of protection against sudden attacks.

Against the background of this, recent reports of the U.S. deliveries of High Mobility Artillery Rocket System - HIMARS to the Al-Tanf base are easy to explain. According to a journalist of National Interest, Amitai Etzioni, the U.S. current administration intends to use armed opposition militants to prevent the Syrian Army's confident advance to the south of the country. That is why the positions of the Syrian Army turned into the targets of militants and the U.S.-led Coalition Air Force.

Taking into account all of the above, it becomes clear that creating the new military base, Washington intends to escalate and influence the situation in Syria. In addition, it will allow the United States to prevent the unification of Syrian government forces with the Iraqi Hashd al-Shaabi.

Anna Jaunger is a freelance journalist at Inside Syria Media Center.

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