

## Video: Fall of Saraqib: Syrian Army Retreat Under Turkish Strikes in Eastern Idlib

By [South Front](#)

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*Members of al-Qaeda-linked groups embedded with Turkish troops have reentered the town of Saraqib in eastern Idlib following the collapse of the Syrian Army defense northwest of the town.*

The attack was backed by Turkish artillery strikes on positions of the Syrian Army. Al-Qaeda members were actively using Turkish-supplied armoured vehicles and even MANPADs.

Since the evening of February 26, government troops have lost the villages of Salihiya and Afis and been forced to retreat towards the eastern and southern vicinities of Saraqib. Turkish forces reportedly captured three battle tanks, including a Russian-supplied T-90, in the course of the attack. Several other military vehicles were destroyed. Earlier, Syrian troops withdrew from Nayrab leaving behind 2 battle tanks, 4 armoured vehicles and 2 bulldozers as well as other weapons and equipment.

The Turkish Defense Ministry reported on February 26 that 2 Turkish soldiers were killed and 2 others injured in a Syrian airstrike. This became another official confirmation of the participation of Turkish troops in the fighting.

[https://southfront.org/wp-content/uploads/video/IMR\\_27\\_02\\_2020.mp4](https://southfront.org/wp-content/uploads/video/IMR_27_02_2020.mp4)

The fall of Saraqib is a major blow to the plans of the Damascus government to reopen the M5 highway and to threaten Idlib city with a possible offensive operation.

Local sources name the Syrian Army overcommitment to the advance south of the M4 highway as one of the causes of the recent setbacks in Saraqib. According to them, a large number of trained and experienced units, including the 25th Special Forces Division and the 4th Division, were redeployed from Saraqib to southern Idlib. Other issues are the lack of coordination among pro-government units and close-air-support.

According to pro-government sources, on the morning of February 27 army troops regrouped and launched a counter-attack. Clashes are ongoing.

The setbacks of government forces in Saraqib came amid the ongoing army advance in the southern part of the Idlib zone. Syrian troops have cleared another dozen villages of militants and reached the administrative border with the province of Hama. Now, the militant strongholds of Sahn and Barah are the two main obstacles in the way of the Syrian Army towards the M4 highway.

However, if government forces are not able to stabilize the frontline in the area of Saraqib

and put an end to advances by Turkish-led forces, the gains in southern Idlib may not be enough to achieve a strategic victory over al-Qaeda in Idlib.

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