

Video: Fighting ISIS-Daesh in Desert Syria

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The Syrian Arab Army (SAA) and its allies are shifting the focus of their military operations following the implementation of the safe zones agreement signed in Astana.

In the eastern Homs countryside, government forces recaptured a number of high points from ISIS terrorists, including the Al-Madraj hill. This advance contributes to a larger government effort aimed at securing the area north of the Tiyas Military Airbase, including the road to Salamiyah. In case of a success, this should allow the Syrian military to shorten a frontline in the area and to improve security of the Ithriyah-Aleppo road, the only government supply line to Aleppo city.

Meanwhile, reports appeared that government forces are going to resume operations against ISIS in the eastern part of the Aleppo province, aiming the Jirah Military Airbase. If the airbase is liberated, the strategic town of Maskaneh will become the next target of the advance.

Earlier it was revealed that the Tiger Forces and the Qalamoun Shield Forces were being redeployed from the province of Hama to other frontlines in order to increase the government forces capabilities in a battle against ISIS on other frontlines. The activity of another elite unit, the Desert Hawks Brigade, was also reported along the road linking up Palmyra and the Tiyas Airbase.

All these operations and efforts should set a foothold for a widely expected government advance against ISIS along the Palmyra-Dier Ezzor road. Thus, the town of al-Sukhnah will be a mid-term goal of the government operation. This attack will likely be synchronized with the US-backed Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) push towards the ISIS stronghold of Raqqah.

Now, the SDF is still struggling to push ISIS terrorists out from the town of Tabqah and the nearby dam.

South of al-Qaryatayn, the SAA advanced in the area east of the al-Seen Military Airbase, according both pro-government and pro-militant sources. Pro-government fighters reportedly captured al-Sabab Biyar and reached the Zaza Checkpoint. Thus, the SAA cut off one of the important roads that could be used by militants to link up their territory in the Syrian desert with the Qalamoun pocket.

Clashes between government forces and of the Hayat Tahrir al-Sham(HTS)-led militant coalition continued in northern Hama countryside despite the safe zones agreement. Last weekend, the SAA and its allies captured Al-Zallaqiyat village and the nearby hill. However, clashes north of Zallaqiyat continued until Monday.

Meanwhile, Jaish al-Izza destroyed a BMP-1 in Al-Zallaqiyat and targeted two gatherings of Syrian soldiers using US-made TOW anti-tank guided missiles. Airstrikes and artillery strikes were reported in Lataminah, Morek, Kafrzita, Al Bweida and Lahaya.

HTS (formerly Jabhat al-Nusra, the Syrian branch of al-Qaeda) is a widely recognized terrorist group. It as well as ISIS and other al-Qaeda-linked terrorists are excluding from the ceasefire. Now, HTS forces are operating in northern Hama alongside with Ahrar al-Sham, Jaish al-Izza and smaller units from other militant groups. Thus, the northern Hama countryside will remain a point of tensions despite efforts to implement cessation of hostilities in the province of Idlib and in the nearby areas.

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