

Video: Maarat Al-numan Is About to Fall to Syrian Army

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On January 24, the Syrian military resumed its offensive against Hayat Tahrir al-Sham (formerly the Syrian branch of al-Qaeda) and its Turkish-backed allies.

Warplanes of the Syrian Air Force and the Russian Aerospace Forces carried out over 3 dozens of airstrikes on militants' positions across Greater Idlib. Pro-government forces, led by the 25th Special Mission Forces Division (also known as the Tiger Forces) started a ground operation in southeastern Idlib. They liberated Deir Gharbi, Ma'ar Shimmareen, Abu Jurif, Kursiyan and a few other villages. According to reports, over 30 militants were killed or injured. Four vehicles belonging to Hayat Tahrir al-Sham were destroyed.

On January 25, government forces liberated Ma'ar Shamshah, Talmenes and deployed in the vicinity of Maarat al-Numan. The town, located on the M5 highway, is the key militant stronghold and the largest urban center in Idlib province.

On the same day, army units, led by the 4th Armoured Division, attacked positions of militants near Aleppo city. They liberated the al-Sahafyeen residential complex and the Ghabat al-Assad hilltop, and destroyed a large weapon depot of Hayat Tahrir al-Sham. An OTR-21 Tochka tactical ballistic missile reportedly hit a militant HQ near Bawabiya. Nonetheless, government troops appeared to be unable to achieve more gains there.

https://southfront.org/wp-content/uploads/video/IMR_27012020.mp4

On January 26, southeastern Idlib remained the main area of clashes, while the army offensive near Aleppo city fizzled. Syrian soldiers took control of Ghadqah, and repelled a counter-attack by Hayat Tahrir al-Sham southeast of Maarat al-Numan.

Currently, the army is working to cut off the M5 highway south and north of Maarat al-Numan. When the city is fully isolated, government forces will storm it. The fall of Maarat al-Numan will sign the total collapse of Idlib militants' defense and open a road to liberate al-Barah, Kafranbel and the entire area along the M5 highway south of them.

The Russian military deployed an advanced Tu-214R reconnaissance aircraft amid the Syrian Army advance on Maarat al-Numan. Pro-government sources speculate that this move is linked with the military escalation in Idlib.

US forces are working to limit the freedom of movement of the Russian Military Police in northeastern Syria. According to reports, US troops blocked at least three Russian patrols in

the province of al-Hasakah. Local sources link the soft Russian reaction to these actions with the ongoing diplomatic effort of Moscow to normalize relations with Washington.

Late on January 25, a car bomb exploded in the Turkish-occupied city of Azaz in northern Aleppo. At least 8 civilians were killed and at least 20 others were injured in the attack. Turkish sources as always accused Kurdish rebels of the attack. However, no evidence was provided. During the last few months, a series of IED and car bomb attack hit villages and towns controlled by Turkish proxies. The main reason of the Turkish inability provide a popper security in these areas is that its proxy groups, with their criminal and radical behavior, are among the key sources of instability.

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