

## Aleppo Liberated, Exodus of Al Qaeda Rebels, Turkey's Problems Increase

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Region: [Middle East & North Africa](#)

Theme: [Terrorism](#), [US NATO War Agenda](#)

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*As planned by the Russian forces the liberation of east-Aleppo was completed before Christmas. There are no longer beheadings by Takfiris in East-Aleppo. Instead a Christmas mass could be held in the damaged Elias Cathedral in the Old City in east-Aleppo.*

A [total](#) of about 88,000 people left the area during the evacuation of east-Aleppo. According to the International Committee of the Red Cross some 35,000 (13,000 militants and their immediate families) left to al-Qaeda held areas in Idleb governate. The UN Humanitarian Relief Organization found that 54,000 entered the government held west Aleppo.

Currently the area is searched by sapper teams and several hidden bombs were found. Several exploded and [killed dozens](#) of Syrian army soldiers. [Mass graves](#) were found of Syrian soldiers and civilians executed by al-Qaeda, Ahrar al Sham and other U.S. supported groups, presumably shortly before their evacuation. The Syrian government had wanted to negotiate their release before the evacuation. But an estimate of the additional death toll by a prolonged presence of the Takfiris during negotiations was high and international politics demanded a fast solution of the crisis.

Many weapon and food storage were found as well as intact health clinics. The fighters and their families were obviously well supplied while the rest of the population suffered. The weapons and ammunition found (video of just one stash - [1](#), [2](#)) - mostly produced in Bulgaria, paid by the Saudis and [transported and distributed](#) by the U.S. - are estimated to be about \$100 million in value.

The Turkish forces and some of its Syrian Islamist proxies are trying to capture Al-Bab, east of Aleppo, from Islamic State forces. Their "Euphrates Shield" operation has run into severe problems. The proxy forces ran away instead of fighting ISIS. On Dec 22 a suicide bomber killed some 16 Turkish soldiers. In total some 80-90 Turkish soldiers were killed during the short campaign so far - more than Russian soldiers killed in Syria since the start of their campaign more than a year ago. [Ten](#) of the most modern tanks in the Turkish army, German build Leopard 2A4, have been damaged or destroyed by ISIS forces. These use U.S. manufactured TOW anti-tank missiles provided by the CIA to support "moderate rebels" fighting the Syrian government. [ISIS pictures](#) of battle damage in Al-Bab show UK/U.S. supported "White Helmets" doing "rescue" work.

The Turkish army now sent 500 additional special forces as well as artillery to get a hold of Al-Bab. Turkish jets are not allowed in Syrian air space and the U.S. has denied all air support. Today the Russian air forces(!) [gave](#) air support to Turkish troops fighting ISIS in Al-Bab. (Remember that not so long ago neocon propagandists were claiming that [Russia's](#)

## [Giving ISIS An Air Force.\)](#)

In east-Syria ISIS is again trying to capture the government held enclave in Deir Ezzor but has failed so far to make any gain. Kurdish YPG forces and some bribed tribal Arab groups with the (rather funny) name Syrian Democratic Forces, both [under U.S. command](#), slowly approach the ISIS held city of Raqqa.

Shortly before Christmas the U.S. president signed a new directive that allows the distribution of air-defense MANPADs to “moderate rebels” in Syria. Like with the TOWs the CIA distributed to “moderate rebels” some of these MANPADs will inevitably end up with ISIS and may well be used against civilian airliners outside of Syria. The Kurdish YPG/SDF also [wants](#) these weapons though their only potential enemy with an air forces is the Turkish NATO army. The Russians [understand](#) the distribution of MANPADs to their enemies in Syria as a “hostile act” and will likely respond in kind.

With his losses in Syria accumulating the Turkish president Erdogan now accused the U.S. of [supporting ISIS](#) and other terrorist groups in Syria – groups Erdogan himself supported until the probably U.S. induced coup against him was warded. His permanent ideological U-turns (pro-ISIS/anti-ISIS; pro-Russian/anti-Russian/pro-Russian etc) are [taking a toll](#) with his followers. (The economic problems don’t help either.) The recent assassination of the Russian ambassador in Turkey by some Islamist policeman can be seen as a result of these confusions.

Erdogan followers are not the only ones who are getting confused about the various actors, allies and interests in Syria. Elijah Magnier has written an insightful year-end recap about the current “Regional and international balance in the Levant”. Part one covers the [Turkish shifts in the Syrian war](#) and part two [Russia’s role in the Syrian war and the tactical differences with Iran](#). He concludes:

Syria is headed toward more battles but a peace deal is visible on the 2017 horizon. Sometimes diplomacy necessitates the language of guns and fire to impose peace on the participants. One thing is certain: the jihadists certainly will not be laying down their arms for the simple reason that this would blow away the essence of their ideology: they would have to choose to migrate to a country outside Syria.

The first choice of the migrating Takfiris will be Turkey where they have a support base and many followers of their ideology. With the pursuit of the war on Syria and support for radical Islamists Erdogan has put his country in the same position Pakistan had put itself when Muhammad Zia-ul-Haq supported the CIA supplied Mujahedin in Afghanistan against the progressive Afghan government in 1978. The result in Pakistan has been a slow boiling, deadly insurgency ever since. It will probably take decades for Turkey to rid the formerly secular country of such deadly cancer.

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