

Hard Times for U.S. Forces in Northeast Syria. Army Prepares for Idlib Escalation

By [South Front](#)

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The Syrian Army and local self-defense forces have carried out an operation against ISIS cells hiding in the desert area on the administrative border of Raqqah and Deir Ezzor provinces. According to pro-government sources, Syrian forces eliminated up to 10 ISIS members and destroyed their hideouts.

The security operation came in response to the recently increased IED attacks and ambushes conducted by ISIS cells near Deir Ezzor city and the town of Mayadin. At least 5 Syrian service members and 8 civilians were killed during the past 2 weeks alone.

The Afrin Liberation Forces, affiliated with the Kurdish People's Protection Units, conducted a new series of attacks on Turkish proxies in the region of Afrin. The attacks took place in Kafr Hashir and on the road between Chima and Deir Survan. A vehicle was destroyed and several Turkish proxies were killed.

Sources affiliated with Hayat Tahrir al-Sham and other Turkish-backed militant groups are accusing the Syrian Army of violating the ceasefire regime in southern Idlib. According to them, over the past few days government forces have repeatedly shelled their positions near Jisr al-Shughur, Sarmin and al-Barah. They also claimed that over the same few days Russian aircraft have increased reconnaissance flights over this area.

Pro-government sources say that these strikes were retaliatory actions to ceasefire violations by militants. However, it should be noted that the Syrian military is not hiding that it is actively deploying reinforcements and rearming troops on the frontline in southern Idlib. All the sides of the conflict understand that the current status quo in the area cannot last long. Al-Qaeda-linked militants and other radicals remain a constant source of terrorist threat in Greater Idlib and nearby areas.

On April 7, Syrian troops and patriotic activists blocked a US military convoy near the city of al-Qamishly in northeastern Syria and forced it to turn back to its permanent positions. This became the third such incident in the area in the last two weeks.

Since the very first moment of the deployment of the Syrian Army and the Russian Military Police in Syria's northeast, US forces have been trying to limit their movement by blocking Russian and Syrian convoys. They apparently forgot that two can play at this game. So, now US troops prefer to stay put in their bases and conduct their own 'patrols' in a very limited area only.

The situation reached such an extent that the US-led coalition was forced to airdrop supplies to its forces deployed in the Omar oil fields area on the eastern bank of the Euphrates. Another problem is the terrorist threat from ISIS. For a long time, the US coalition and its proxies were turning a blind eye to actions of ISIS cells along the Euphrates because this allowed them to justify the seizure of the oil fields with the need of protecting them from ISIS. As might be expected, this allowed ISIS cells to strengthen their presence in the area and now they regularly conduct attacks on US-backed forces and intimidate locals.

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