

Links between Turkey and ISIS are now 'undeniable'

By [Natasha Bertrand](#)

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A US-led raid on the compound housing the Islamic State's 'chief financial officer' produced evidence that Turkish officials directly dealt with ranking ISIS members, Martin Chulov of the Guardian [reported recently](#).

Islamic State official Abu Sayyaf was responsible for [directing the terror army's oil and gas operations](#) in Syria. Islamic State (aka ISIS, ISIL, or Daesh) earns [up to \\$US10 million](#) per month selling oil on black markets.

Documents and flash drives seized during the Sayyaf raid reportedly revealed links "so clear" and "undeniable" between Turkey and ISIS "that they could end up having profound policy implications for the relationship between us and Ankara," a senior western official familiar with the captured intelligence told the Guardian.

NATO member Turkey has long been accused by [experts](#), [Kurds](#), and [even Joe Biden](#) of enabling ISIS by turning a blind eye to the vast smuggling networks of weapons and fighters during the ongoing Syrian war.

The move by the ruling AKP party was apparently part of ongoing attempts to trigger the downfall of Syrian President Bashar al-Assad's regime.

Ankara officially ended its loose border policy last year, but not before its southern frontier [became a transit point](#) for cheap oil, weapons, foreign fighters, and pillaged antiquities.

Fight against Islamic State

Kurdish fighters in Syria accused the Turkish army of shelling their positions on Monday, one week after Ankara granted the U.S.-led coalition's use of its air bases against Islamic State.

● Primary airbase ● Emergency airbase

IS control status

Attack zone

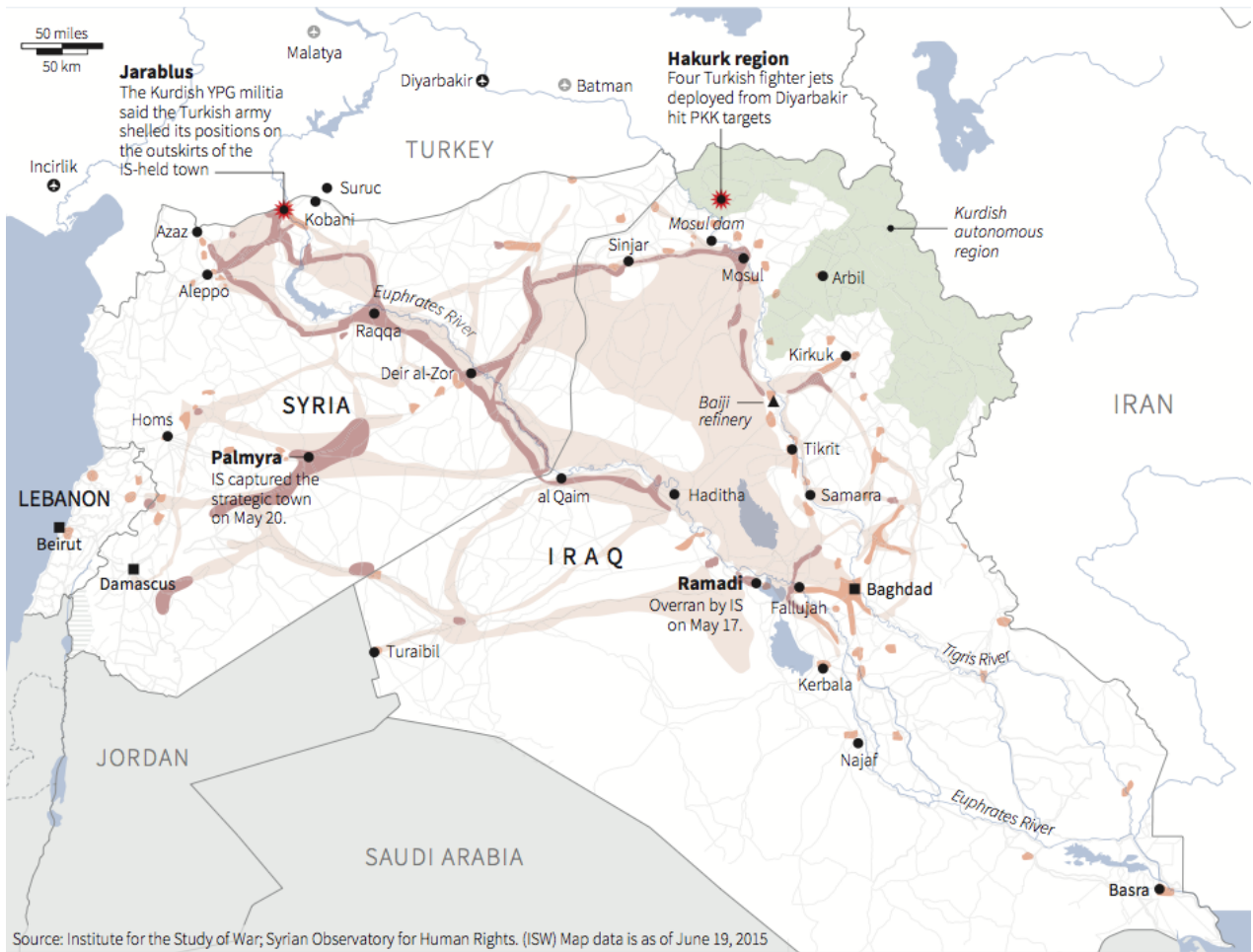
Where IS participated in or perpetrated attacks

Control zone

Where IS has defensible control

Support zone

Where IS moves freely and attacks are often staged



G. Cabrera; C. Inton, 27/07/2015

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In November, a former ISIS member [told Newsweek](#) that the group was essentially given free reign by Turkey's army.

"ISIS commanders told us to fear nothing at all because there was full cooperation with the Turks," the fighter said. "ISIS saw the Turkish army as its ally especially when it came to attacking the Kurds in Syria."

But as the alleged arrangements progressed, Turkey allowed the group to establish a major presence within the country — and created a huge problem for itself.

"The longer this has persisted, the more difficult it has become for the Turks to crack down [on ISIS] because there is the risk of a counter strike, of blowback," Jonathan Schanzer, a former counterterrorism analyst for the US Treasury Department, [explained to Business Insider](#) in November.

"You have a lot of people now that are invested in the business of extremism in Turkey," Schanzer added. "If you start to challenge that, it raises significant questions of whether" the militants, their benefactors, and other war profiteers would tolerate the crackdown.



REUTERS/Osman Orsal An armed man, believed to be an Islamic state militant, is seen near the northern Syrian town of Tal Abyad as he is pictured from the Turkish border town of Akcakale, southeastern Sanliurfa province January 29, 2015.

A Western diplomat, speaking to the [Wall Street Journal](#) in February, expressed a similar sentiment: “Turkey is trapped now — it created a monster and doesn’t know how to deal with it.”

Ankara had begun to address the problem in earnest — arresting [500 suspected extremists](#) over the past six months as they crossed the border and raiding the homes of others — when an ISIS-affiliated suicide bomber [killed 32 activists](#) in Turkey’s southeast on July 20.

Turks subsequently took to the streets [to protest](#) the government policies they felt had enabled the attack.



REUTERS/Sertac Kayar Demonstrators burn tyres to block a street during protests against Monday's bomb attack in Suruc, in the Kurdish dominated southeastern city of Diyarbakir, Turkey, July 21, 2015.

Amidst protestors' chants of "Murderous ISIL, collaborator AKP," Erdogan finally agreed last Thursday [to enter the US-led campaign](#) against ISIS, sending fighter jets into Syria and granting the US [strategic use of a key airbase](#) in the southeast to launch airstrikes.

At the same time, Turkey [began bombing](#) Kurdish PKK shelters and storage facilities in northern Iraq, the AP reported, indicating that the AKP still sees Kurdish advances as a major — [if not the biggest](#) — threat, despite the Kurds' [battlefield successes](#) against ISIS in northern Syria.

"This isn't an overhaul of their thinking," a Western official in Ankara told the Guardian. "It's more a reaction to what they have been confronted with by the Americans and others. There is at least a recognition now that ISIS isn't leverage against Assad. They have to be dealt with."

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