

The War in Syria, Report from the Battlefield

International Military Review

By [South Front](#)

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In March 2011 Syria fell into a full, intense and bloody war. After 4 years of full-scale war the battlefield of Syria is still complicated. The fight to wrest territory away from the Islamic State and al-Qaeda extremists as well as from the Syrian government of President Bashar al Assad has opened multiple front lines.

Many anti-Islamic State operations have been led by Kurdish forces, sometimes fighting in parallel with factions of the Free Syria Army (FSA), an alliance that includes Sunni Arab tribal leaders. Meanwhile, Syrian Islamist factions in the northern countryside of Aleppo, reached an agreement with fighters of the Islamic State to open routes between the areas controlled by the two parties.

Recently, we observed a series of military events in Syria: Syrian Kurdish YPG forces supported by FSA-affiliated rebels in the Euphrates Volcano Operations Room seized the ISIS border crossing at Tel Abyad in northern ar-Raqqa Province on June 15, 2015. 2 days later forces of YPG took control of border area to west from Tel Abyad.

TO VIEW VIDEO:

<http://southfront.org/international-military-review-syria-july-1-2015/#>

The fall of Tel Abyad severs a key line of ISIS reinforcement and resupply sourced from the Turkish border and positions joint YPG-FSA forces for a potential offensive south towards the ISIS stronghold of ar-Raqqa City. The YPG seizure of Tel Abyad also directly connects the Kurdish cantons of Kobane (Ayn al-Arab) and Cizire (Hasakah) for the first time in a major enabling step towards the eventual formation of a contiguous Kurdish autonomous region in northern Syria.

In response, Islamic State militants have been counter-attacked in directions of Suluk and Ayn Issa.

ISIS captured the city of Ayn Issa on June 18.

After fierce clashes, on June 25 joint forces of YPG and FSA "Burkan al-Furat" managed to recapture the Ayn-Issa city and completely clean it from the ISIS militants. Then joint forces moved further southwards - to the village of Hirbet-Hadla, located just 40 kilometers away from ISIS city of ar-Raqqa.

At the same time Kurdish forces knocked out ISIS militants from several settlements southwest of the town Sulyuk and greatly advanced on the highway of Tel Abyad - Raqqa.

Earlier, ISIS launched an offensive against Syrian government forces positions south of Hasakah City on May 30 in an apparent attempt to divert Kurdish resources and disrupt the ongoing YPG offensive.

However, ISIS efforts failed to draw significant numbers of Kurdish fighters towards Hasakah City.

Also, ISIS continued to expand its gains southwest of Palmyra, seizing the Busairi Junction on May 24, 2015, and advancing into the Eastern Qalamoun Mountains.

Meanwhile, Jabhat al-Nusra, Ahrar al-Sham, and other terrorist factions participating in the Jaysh al-Fatah Operations Room seized the town of Mahambel and a number of surrounding government-held villages east of Jisr al-Shughour on June 6, 2015, largely eliminating the remaining government-held salient in Idlib Province.

Finally, FSA-affiliated rebel factions successfully overran the Brigade 52 military base in eastern Deraa Province on June 9, 2015, eliminating the largest government military position in southern Syria and bringing rebel forces in direct proximity with the Druze-majority city of Suwayda as well as the nearby Thalah Airbase. On June 24 "Southern front of the Free Syrian Army," announced the beginning of operation "Southern Storm" to capture the city of Deraa. In the morning Deraa was stormed from the south-east, west and north directions.

On the same day the Islamic State launched offensive on the Hasakah city. After more than two days of fierce fighting the terrorists captured almost all the south-western regions of Hasaka and broke on the eastern outskirts of the city. In the evening of June 26 the Kurdish YPG forces after lengthy negotiations finally joined Syrian Army to repel the ISIS assault.

More likely, the next steps of anti-ISIS operations will involve a joint YPG-FSA offensive south from Ayn Issa, sever interior ISIS lines of communication, and threaten ar-Raqqa City. This operation could potentially enable anti-ISIS forces to penetrate into ISISs core stronghold in a development which may produce positive ramifications for other anti-ISIS operations across Iraq and Syria.

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