

Turkish Military Strikes Syrian Army, Suffers First Casualties Since March

By [South Front](#)

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Syrian-Turkish tensions have ramped up in the region of Greater Idlib over the past few days.

On September 5, heavy clashes between Syrian troops and Turkish-backed militants broke out near the town of Fleifel and Saraqib in southeastern Idlib, near the town of al-Enkawi in northwestern Hama and Kafr Taal in western Aleppo. According to pro-militant sources, at least 5 Syrian Army troops were killed and injured in the confrontation. They claim that it is the Damascus government that violated the ceasefire triggering the confrontation. At the same time, Syrian sources say that the clashes started after the Turkish Armed Forces conducted several artillery strikes on Syrian Army positions near the town of Saraqib.

A day later, on September 6, the Turkish military once again shelled Syrian troops near Saraqib, and near Kafr Nabl. The impact of the strikes remain unclear. Nonetheless, pro-government sources did not report any casualties. In response to the attack, Syrian forces launched a series of strikes on positions of the Turkish-backed terrorist group Hayat Tahrir al-Sham near the towns Fatterah, Sufuhon, Kafar Aweed and Kinsafra in the southern part of the so-called Idlib de-escalation zone.

Meanwhile, unidentified gunmen attacked a checkpoint of Hayat Tahrir al-Sham near the town of Kafar Takharim reportedly killing and injuring several terrorists. After the attack, Hayat Tahrir al-Sham security forces arrested five militants of a small local armed faction called the Hananu Brigade. The terrorist group suspected that these fighters were behind the attack, but this turned out to be untrue. The detained militants were released within a few hours. The real identity of the attackers remains unclear.

On September 7, the Turkish Defense Ministry said that a Turkish soldier had died from wounds received in an attack in southern Idlib. The attack by unidentified militants took place near Ariha. Syrian troops refrain from striking positions of the Turkish military, likely trying to avoid further escalation and demonstrate that the ceasefire regime still exists at least formally.

Nevertheless, the current situation, when Turkish forces attack the Syrian Army with impunity under the cover of the ceasefire, cannot last long and will likely inevitably lead to an escalation if the Erdogan regime does not change its behavior.

The Russian Aerospace Forces have intensified strikes on identified ISIS targets in the central Syrian desert, according to reports by pro-militant sources. Despite the recently

concluded operation of the Syrian Army and the Russian military in the desert that allegedly resulted in the elimination of over 300 ISIS members, ISIS continues its attacks. The most recent attacks took place in western Deir Ezzor, south of Mayadin, in the area between the town of Hamimah and the T3 station and near Itriyah. Therefore, Russia, Syria and Iran continue their joint effort against ISIS.

On September 5, the Syrian Military Intelligence Directorate, the National Defense Forces and the Iranian Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps detained 5 ISIS members wearing Iranian military uniforms and driving a vehicle with pro-Iranian slogans in Mayadin.

On September 7, local sources revealed that the Syrian Army with support of the Russian Aerospace Forces has launched a new security operation covering eastern Homs, eastern Hama, southern Aleppo and southern Raqqa. According to reports, up to 25 ISIS terrorists were already neutralized in these areas.

Some sources claim that the Damascus government is eager to neutralize the ISIS threat in the Homs-Deir Ezzor desert before the start of any new open confrontation with Turkey. If the new Turkish-Syrian conflict starts before this, ISIS terrorists will become an even more serious security problem for government forces.

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