

Video: Syria SAA Forces Reverse Al Qaeda Gains in Northern Hama

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Last weekend, the Syrian Arab Army (SAA), the National Defense Forces (NDF), led by the SAA's Tiger Forces, recaptured the strategic town of Souran and the Bizam Hill located north of the Ma'ardes village in the northern Hama countryside. The successful advance followed a massive bombing campaign in the area. Over 50 airstrikes reportedly hit militant positions around Souran. Thus, the SAA reversed all gains made by Haya'at Tahrir Al-Sham (HTS) and its allied militant groups last month and reached the strategic M5 highway north of another militant stronghold – Taibat al-Imam.

HTS claimed its fighters had destroyed an SAA tank around the town. Separately, Jaish Al-Ezzah and Jaish Al-Nasser – shelled the Hama airbase with over 40 Grad rockets. The rockets caused a fire and damaged the control tower. Nonetheless, the airbase is still operational and no jets were destroyed.

On Monday, clashes continued in the vicinity of Taibat al-Imam and government forces advanced on Tell Massin. Controlling Tell Massin, the SAA and its allies will be able to secure a part of the M5 highway north of Taibat al-Imam and to pose a threat to the HTS stronghold from this direction. If the Syrian military command decides to continue operations in the area, it will have two options:

1. The first option is to storm Taibat al-Imam from the directions of Souran and Maardas. In this case, the SAA and its allies will be engaged in heavy clashes in the heavily fortified urban area of the city. This will likely lead to a notable casualties and will not lead to a success if government forces are not able to create a dramatic advantage in manpower, tanks, armoured vehicles and artillery pieces in this part of the frontline.
2. Another option is to develop the advance in the western direction in an attempt to seize Buwaydah, Markabah and Lahaya. If government forces are able to do this and to entrench in the area, HTS militants and its allies remaining in Taibat al-Imam, Masasnah, Kfair al-Taiba, Zor al-Heisa and Halfaya will face significant problems in defending their rear and repelling front attacks of government forces.

Clashes between the Syrian Arab Army (SAA) and HTS-led forces continued in the Qaboun district in northeastern Damascus. The SAA targeted militant positions with more than 10 heavy rockets and carried out an attempt to advance but without any success. Separately, Ahrar Al-Sham fighters destroyed a T-72 Shafrah tank after it was hit by what appeared to be a heavy IED. The Syrian Air Force bombed HTS and Jaish al-Islam positions in Jobar and

Qaboun.

Separately, Syrian warplanes carried out airstrikes against ISIS positions in Raqqah after receiving more info from the Iraqi intelligence. The Syrian Air Force destroyed a HQ of ISIS' Hesbah (religious police) and the ISIS finance ministry building. Airstrikes also destroyed the ISIS Fatwa council inside Raqqah. Two ISIS commanders were killed. One of them is "Abu Bakr Bin Habib Al-Hakim" a France-Algerian terrorist. He was described as a military leader of ISIS in Raqqah.

The US-backed Syrian Democratic Force (SDF), supported by the US-led coalition, are storming the ISIS stronghold of Tabqa west of Raqqah. The SDF had already taken control of the Aeed Al-Saker neighborhood in the western part of the town and the Al-Eskandaria neighborhood in its eastern part. SDF fighters reportedly destroyed 2 VBIEDs and killed up to 30 ISIS members in clashes inside the town.

The SDF also captured the village of Kabash Ghribi in the northern Raqqah countryside. Kabash Ghribi was the second village captured by SDF after the group had crossed the Al-Ray water channel.

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