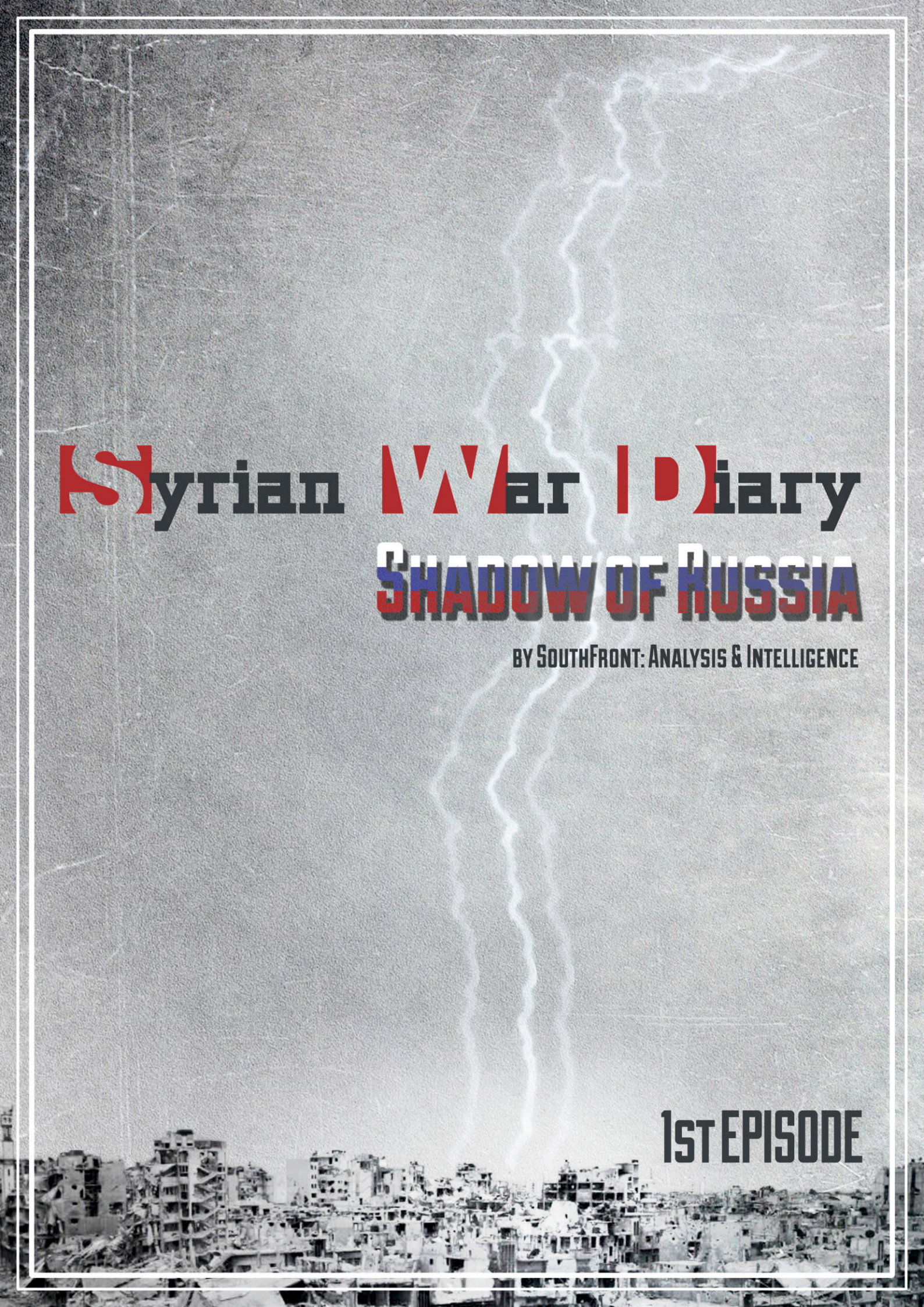




Syrian War Diary

SHADOW OF RUSSIA

BY SOUTHFRONT: ANALYSIS & INTELLIGENCE

1ST EPISODE



"SYRIAN WAR DIARY. SHADOW OF RUSSIA" EXCLUSIVE DIGITAL BOOK IS FINALIZED FOR PUBLICATION BY SOUTH FRONT: ANALYSIS & INTELLIGENCE.

SOUTH FRONT: ANALYSIS & INTELLIGENCE IS A PUBLIC ANALYTICAL PROJECT MAINTAINED BY AN INDEPENDENT TEAM OF EXPERTS FROM THE FOUR CORNERS OF THE EARTH FOCUSING ON INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS ISSUES AND CRISES. THE PROJECT PROVIDES MILITARY OPERATIONS ANALYSIS, THE MILITARY POSTURE OF MAJOR WORLD POWERS, AND OTHER IMPORTANT DATA INFLUENCING THE GROWTH OF TENSIONS BETWEEN COUNTRIES AND NATIONS. WE TRY TO DIG OUT THE TRUTH ON ISSUES WHICH ARE BARELY COVERED BY STATES CONCERNED AND MAINSTREAM MEDIA.

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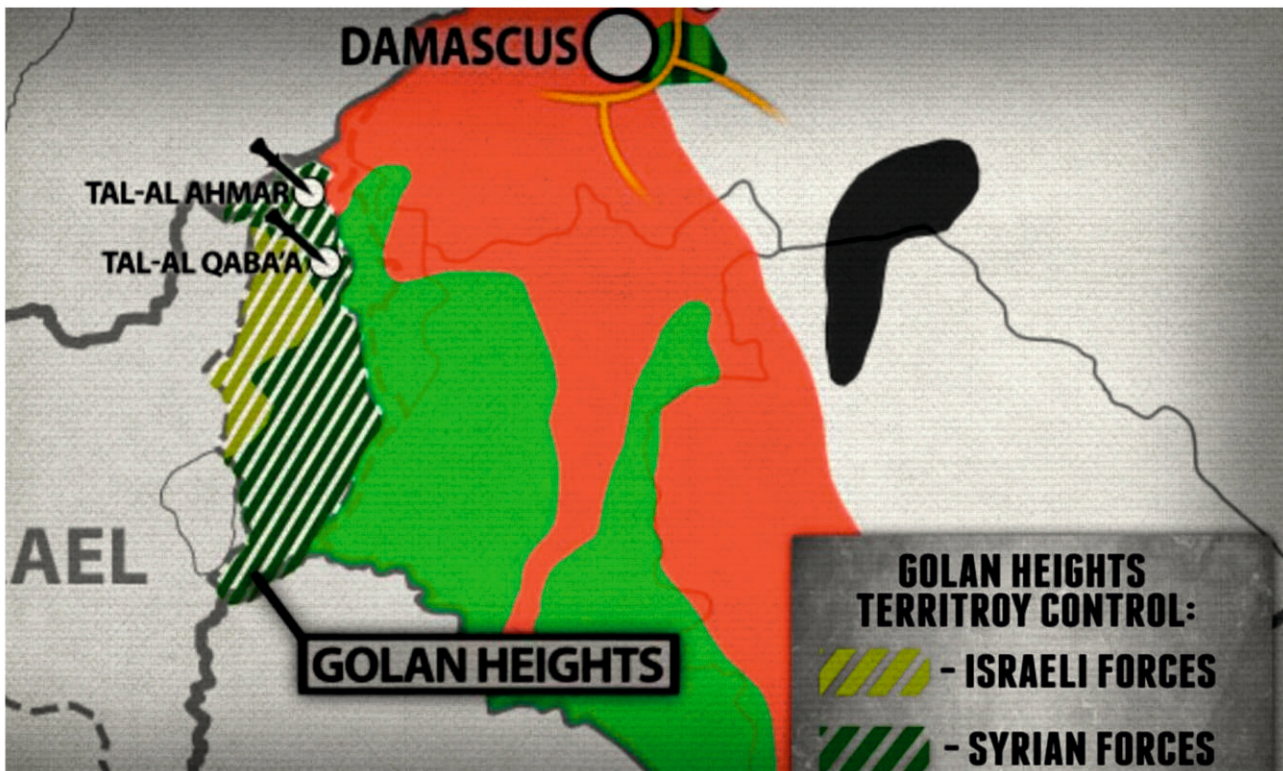
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SEPTEMBER 29, 2015

RUSSIA TAKES INITIATIVE IN THE MIDDLE EAST





RUSSIA HAS TAKEN THE INITIATIVE IN THE MIDDLE EAST. RUSSIA, IRAN, IRAQ AND SYRIA HAVE MADE AN AGREEMENT TO SET A JOINT INFORMATION CENTER TO COORDINATE THEIR OPERATIONS AGAINST ISIS. THE CENTER WILL BE BASED IN BAGHDAD. THE MAIN GOAL OF THE CENTER WILL BE GATHERING, PROCESSING AND ANALYZING CURRENT INFORMATION ABOUT THE SITUATION IN THE MIDDLE EAST – PRIMARILY FOR FIGHTING IS. THE IRAQI ARMY'S JOINT OPERATIONS COMMAND CONFIRMED THE AGREEMENT ON SATURDAY.

MEANWHILE, THE SYRIAN TROOPS TOOK CONTROL OF THE HILLS OVERLOOKING THE EASTERN GHOUTA REGION EAST OF DAMASCUS, PUSHED THE JAISH AL-ISLAM TERRORIST GROUP FROM THERE. POSITIONS ON THE TOP HILLS ALLOW TO MAINTAIN SUPPLY ROUTES IN THE SECTOR. THE FIGHT ALSO HAS BEEN GOING IN THE TOWN OF HARASTA LOCATED IN THE AREA OF DAMASCUS. PRO-GOVERNMENT SOURCES REPORTS THAT "SCORES OF TERRORISTS WERE KILLED AND DOZENS MORE FLED DURING THE OPERATIONS IN THE TWO AREAS". IN ALEPPO PROVINCE SYRIAN FORCES HAVE BEEN CONTINUING TO FIGHT AGAINST AL-NUSRA FRONT MILITANTS. 120 TERRORISTS WERE REPORTEDLY KILLED THERE. NUMBER OF MILITARY EXPERTS ARGUE THAT RUSSIAN MILITARY ADVISERS' ASSISTANCE IS THE MAIN REASON OF THE SYRIAN GOVERNMENT'S GAINS ON THE BATTLEFIELD.

IN TURN, THE AMIN US ALLY IN THE REGION, ISRAEL, FIRED A NUMBER OF MISSILES INTO THE SYRIAN GOLAN HEIGHTS. THE SYRIAN SOLDIERS PROTECTING THE STRATEGIC HILLTOPS OF TAL AL-AHMAR AND TAL AL-QABA'A BELIEVE THAT THESE IDF MISSILE STRIKES WERE AN ATTEMPT TO PROPEL THE ISLAMIST REBELS OF THE FREE SYRIAN ARMY AND "JABHAT AL-NUSRA" PAST THEIR FORTIFICATIONS.

THUS, THERE ARE 2 DIFFERENT ALLIANCES ON THE SYRIAN BATTLEGROUND. THEY ARE THE US WITH EUROPEAN ALLIES AND THE RUSSIA, IRAN, SYRIA TRIANGLE. THE WESTERN MEDIA ARGUE THAT THE US REGIONAL ALLIES PARTICIPATE IN THE US COALITION, BUT INDEED THEY FOLLOW OWN INTERESTS. THE UNKNOWN FEATURE IS CHINA. AT THE FIRST SIGHT, IT'S IMPOSSIBLE THAT CHINA WILL PARTICIPATE IN SOLVING THE CRISIS. BUT CHINA HAS A LONG STANDING GOALS IN THE MIDDLE EAST. THE REGION IS CRUCIAL FOR ITS OIL SUPPLIES. AND IT'S EVIDENT THAT BEIJING WON'T PARTICIPATE IN THE US COALITION.

OCTOBER 1, 2015

STUDYING RUSSIAN MILITARY OPERATION





ON WEDNESDAY MORNING, THE FEDERATION COUNCIL UPPER HOUSE OF PARLIAMENT GRANTED PERMISSION TO THE RUSSIAN PRESIDENT TO USE THE COUNTRY'S TROOPS IN SYRIA. KREMLIN CHIEF OF STAFF SERGEY IVANOV SAID THAT RUSSIA WILL USE ONLY ITS AIR FORCE IN SYRIA AND IT DOES THIS ON SYRIAN PRESIDENT BASHAR ASSAD'S REQUEST.

ON WEDNESDAY AFTERNOON, THE RUSSIAN AIR FORCE BEGAN TO CONDUCT AIR RAIDS AGAINST THE ISLAMIST REBELS OF JABHAT AL-NUSRA INSIDE THE LATAKIA AND HAMA GOVERNORATES IN THE WESTERN PART OF SYRIA. THESE PROVINCES WOULD REPORTEDLY BE THE PRIMARY TARGET FOR THE RUSSIAN AIR FORCE AND THE SYRIAN ARAB ARMY. ACCORDING TO SCRAPPY REPORTS, THE RUSSIAN AIR FORCE TARGETED THAT AREAS OF AL-LATAMINAH, KAFR ZITA, THE JABAL AL-ZAWOOD, KASSAB, AND DEIR HANNA. AT THE MOMENT AIRSTRIKES ARE AIMED ON THE SYRIAN BRANCH OF AL-QAEDA. HOWEVER, IT'S CLEAR THAT THE ISIS POSITIONS INSIDE EASTERN SYRIA WILL BE TARGETED IN THE NEAREST FUTURE.

MEANWHILE, THE SYRIAN ARAB ARMY'S SPECIAL FORCES DIVISION KNOWN AS THE "TIGER FORCES" HAVE DEPLOYED THEIR UNITS TO THE EAST ALEPPO FRONT TO HELP LIFT THE ISIS'S SIEGE OF THE KUWEIRES MILITARY AIRPORT. LIFTING THE SIEGE FROM THE AIRPORT WILL OPEN ADDITIONAL OPPORTUNITIES OF THE SYRIAN AIR FORCE'S USAGE IN THE CONFLICT AND FREE FORCES AND FACILITIES WHICH COULD BE USED TO RELIEVE THE SITUATION IN THE SECTOR.

IT'S VERY POSSIBLE THAT RUSSIA WILL USE IRAQ'S VAST AIRSPACE IN THE NEAREST FUTURE. IRAQ IS IMPERATIVE TO RUSSIA'S FIGHT AGAINST ISIS DUE TO ITS GEOGRAPHICAL LOCATION. IN OTHER CASES, RUSSIA'S AIRSTRIKES IN EASTERN SYRIA WOULD BE LIMITED BECAUSE OF TERRORISTS' ABILITY TO USE IRAQ'S WIDE-OPEN HIGHWAYS.

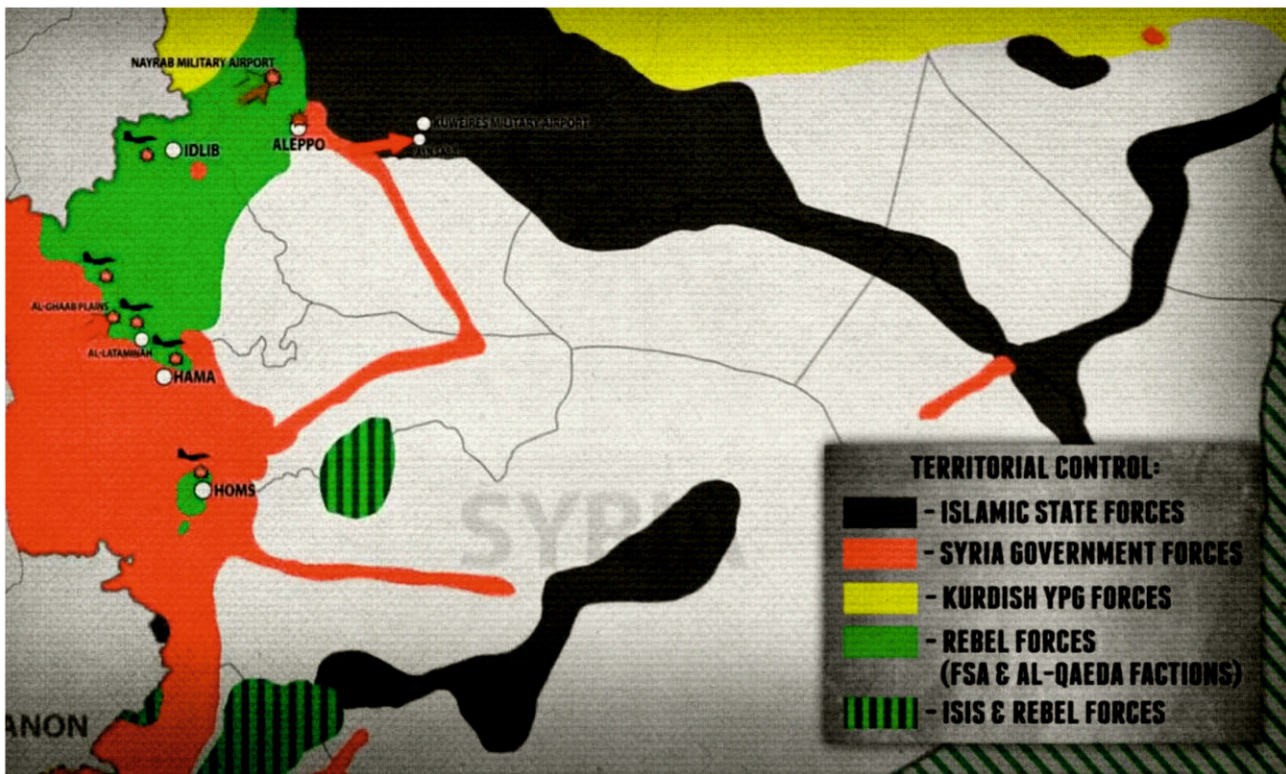
EARLIER, SOUTHFRONT: ANALYSIS & INTELLIGENCE REPORTED THAT RUSSIA, IRAN, IRAQ AND SYRIA HAVE MADE AN AGREEMENT TO SET IN BAGDAD A JOINT INFORMATION CENTER TO COORDINATE THEIR OPERATIONS AGAINST ISIS.

THE POSITIONING OF RUSSIAN AIRCRAFT IN SYRIA GIVES THE KREMLIN AN ABILITY TO SHAPE AND CONTROL THE BATTLESPACE IN BOTH SYRIA AND IRAQ OUT OF ALL PROPORTION TO THE SIZE OF THE RUSSIAN FORCE. IT COULD IMPACT THE U.S. TO ACCEPT A COMBINED COALITION WITH RUSSIA, SYRIA, IRAN, IRAQ AND LEBANESE HEZBOLLAH IN SUPPORT OF OPERATIONS AGAINST ISIS AND JABHAT AL-NUSRA. SEPARATELY, THE CONTEMPORARY SITUATION CAN PROBABLY LEAD TO THE ESTABLISHMENT OF A PERMANENT RUSSIAN AIR AND NAVAL BASE IN THE EASTERN MEDITERRANEAN.

OCTOBER 3, 2015

SYRIAN FORCES ADVANCE FOLLOWING RUSSIAN AIRSTRIKES





SINCE YESTERDAY, RUSSIAN SU-34, SU-24M AND SU-25 JETS CONDUCTED EIGHTEEN FLIGHTS FROM THE HMEIMIM BASE IN LATAKIA PROVINCE ON THE MEDITERRANEAN COAST, TARGETING 12 TERRORIST TARGETS. MORE THAN 50 RUSSIAN WARPLANES ARE USED IN THE SYRIAN OPERATION. BASED ON INTELLIGENCE GATHERED FROM A VARIETY OF SOURCES, INCLUDING "SPACE AND DRONE RECONNAISSANCE," THE MINISTRY CONFIRMED THE "TOTAL DESTRUCTION" OF TERRORIST TARGETS IN IDLIB PROVINCE BY SU-24 M JETS. ONE OF THE TARGETS WAS AN ISLAMIC STATE COMMAND POST. THE OTHER WAS A TERRORIST TRAINING CAMP. EARLIER IN THE DAY, RUSSIAN MILITARY ALSO RELEASED FOOTAGE OF THE OVERNIGHT AIR RAIDS ON FOUR TERRORIST FACILITIES, INCLUDING AN AMMUNITION DEPOT NEAR IDLIB, A THREE-LEVEL HQ NEAR HAMAH, AND A REPORTED CAR-BOMB PLANT IN THE NORTH OF HOMS.

RUSSIAN PILOTS ALSO PREVENTED THE ISLAMIC STATE FIGHTERS FROM RESTORING ONE OF ITS COMMAND POSTS IN HAMA PROVINCE WHICH HAD BEEN STRUCK BY RUSSIAN JETS ON WEDNESDAY. TO STOP FURTHER ISIS ACTIVITY ON THE OBJECT NEAR AL-LATAMNA VILLAGE, RUSSIAN JETS CONDUCTED AN ADDITIONAL STRIKE, WHICH LED TO THE DESTRUCTION OF THE TARGET. THE STRIKE CARRIED OUT BY THE SU-24M FIGHTER JET.

MEANWHILE, THE SYRIAN ARMED FORCES HAVE ATTEMPTED TO RECAPTURE THE AL-GHAAB PLAINS FROM THE POSSESSION OF THE SYRIAN AL-QAEDA AFFILIATES IN "JAYSH AL-FATEH". THE CLASHES HAVE BEEN CONTINUING THERE.

JABHAT AL-NUSR WITH SUPPORT OF HAKKAT AHRAR AL-SHAM AND THE FREE SYRIAN ARMY ATTEMPTED TO ADVANCE ON THE NAYRAB MILITARY AIRPORT'S ON THURSDAY AFTERNOON. IN A SERIES OF INTENSE FIREFIGHTS, THE PRO-GOVERNMENT PALESTINIAN GROUP "LIWAA AL-QUDS" DEFENDED THE SECTOR.

THE SYRIAN ARAB ARMY (SAA) AND THE NATIONAL DEFENSE FORCES (NDF) CARRIED OUT ANOTHER ASSAULT ON THE ISIS POSITIONS AT THE VILLAGE OF 'AYN SABIL AROUND THE KUWEIRES MILITARY AIRPORT.

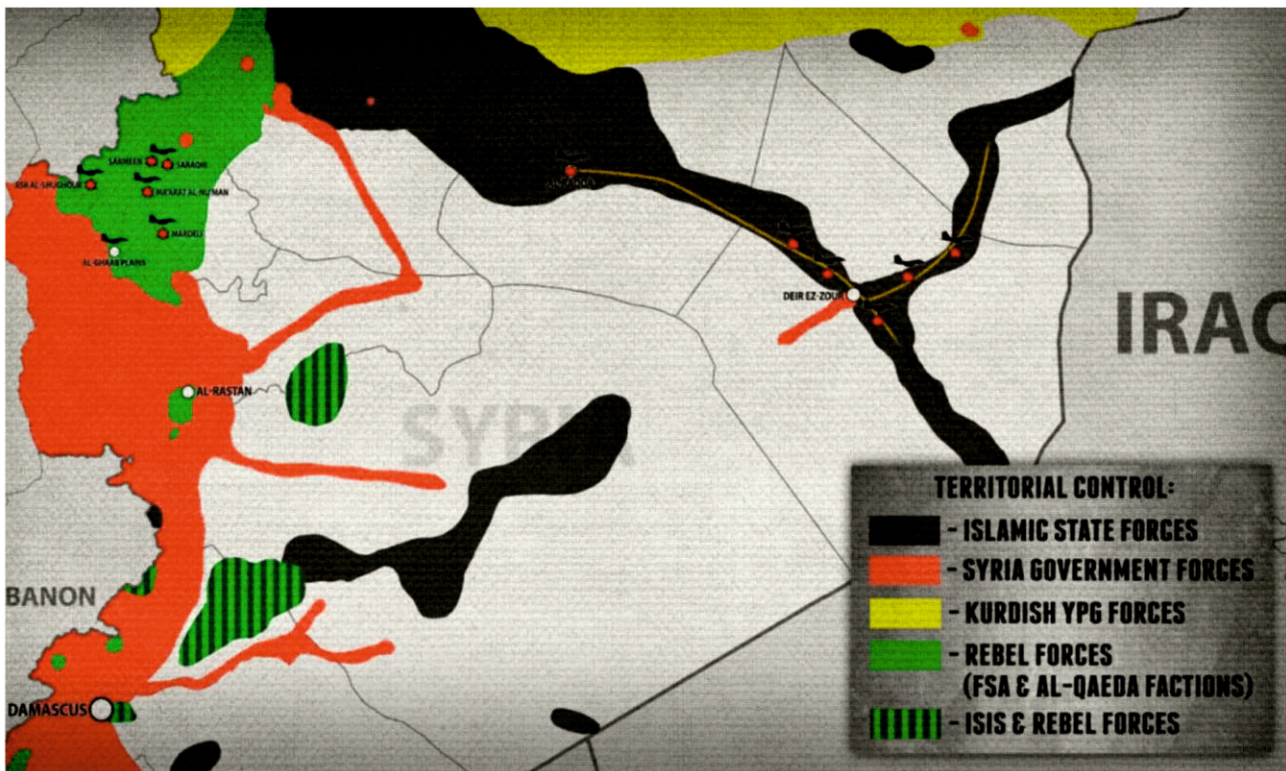
INSIDE OF THE PROVINCIAL CAPITAL SAA AND LIWAA AL-QUDS CONTINUED THEIR COUNTER-OFFENSIVE AT THE SCIENTIFIC RESEARCH FACILITY IN THE AL-RASHIDEEN DISTRICT.

EXPECTED OFFENSIVE OF THE GOVERNMENT FORCES IN EAST ALEPPO WILL LIKELY LEAD TO THE MOST VIOLENT BATTLE INSIDE SYRIA SINCE THE ISIS OFFENSIVE INSIDE THE PROVINCIAL CAPITAL OF AL-HASAKAH IN JULY OF 2015 COULD BE STARTED.

OCTOBER 5, 2015

450 FSA MILITANTS SURRENDERED TO SYRIAN FORCES





THE SYRIAN ARMY IS PREPARING FOR OFFENSIVE ACTIONS AGAINST AL NUSRA AND ISIS NEAR THE TOWN OF AL-RASTAN. IN THE RECENT INTERVIEW, THE COMMANDER OF THE 147TH SYRIAN TANK BRIGADE SAID THAT THEY COORDINATE PERFECTLY WITH THE RUSSIAN FORCES PROVIDING THEM INTELLIGENCE AND AIR SUPPORT.

ACCORDING TO THE GOVERNMENT SOURCES, OVER 450 MILITANTS FROM THE FREE SYRIAN ARMY (FSA) AND ANOTHER 250 PEOPLE WANTED BY GOVERNMENTAL AUTHORITY HAVE TURNED THEMSELVES INTO THE SYRIAN SECURITY FORCES AT THE PROVINCIAL CAPITAL OF THE DARA'A GOVERNORATE (DARA'A CITY). THERE ARE NO CONFIRMED REPORTS ABOUT THE REASONS OF SUCH ACTIVITY, BUT ANYBODY CAN EASILY SUPPOSE WHY THEY DID THIS. MEANWHILE, THE SYRIAN AIR FORCE STRUCK THE SYRIAN AL-QAEDA GROUP "JABHAT AL-NUSRA" AND THEIR ALLIES FROM THE FSA AROUND THE CITY OF BUSRA AL-SHAM.

ON SATURDAY MORNING, THE RUSSIAN AEROSPACE DEFENCE FORCES (VKO) TARGETED THE JAYSH AL-FATEH (ARMY OF CONQUEST) MILITANT GROUP POSITIONS IN THE IDLIB GOVERNORATE: MARDEIJ, MA'ARAT AL-NU'MAN, JISR AL-SHUGHOUR, SARAQIB AND SARMEEN.

SEPARATELY, THE RUSSIAN AIR FORCE'S DESTROYED A COMMAND-AND-CONTROL CENTER OF JABHAT AL-NUSRA AT SARAQIB. RUSSIAN WARPLANES CONDUCTED A RECONNAISSANCE FLIGHT ABOVE THE AL-GHAAB PLAINS OF THE HAMA GOVERNORATE. THIS COULD BE A FEATURE OF THE FUTURE MILITARY ACTIVITY IN THIS SECTOR.

ISIS HAS BEEN TARGETED BY THE RUSSIAN WARPLANES AT THE CITY OF AL-RAQQA SECTOR AT LEAST 25 TIMES AND EACH TIME. THIS INCLUDES THE TABAQA MILITARY AIRPORT AND TABAQA NATIONAL HOSPITAL TURNED INTO THE ISIS' PRIMARY MILITARY BASE AND HEADQUARTERS IN AL-RAQQA.

RECENTLY, THE VKO HAS TARGETED THE TERRORIST GROUP INSIDE THE DEIR EZ-ZOUR GOVERNORATE. THE ISIS POSITIONS ALONG THE IMPERATIVE DEIR EZZOR-RAQQA INTERNATIONAL HIGHWAY AND AL-MAYADEEN-DEIR EZ-ZOUR ROAD WERE DESTROYED.

THE RUSSIAN AEROSPACE DEFENCE FORCES HAS CONDUCTED MORE THAN 60 FLIGHTS AND BOMBED OVER 50 ISLAMIC STATE TARGETS IN THREE DAYS. ACCORDING TO THE LIEUTENANT GENERAL ANDREY KARTAPOLOV, HEAD OF THE MAIN OPERATION DIRECTORATE OF THE GENERAL STAFF OF RUSSIA'S ARMED FORCES, THE STRIKES HAVE SIGNIFICANTLY REDUCED THE TERRORISTS' COMBAT CAPABILITIES.

SYRIA: WAR ALL AGAINST ALL



THIS MIGHT SOUND LIKE AN EXAGGERATION, BUT THE CONFLICT IN SYRIA IS A FREE-FOR-ALL, WITH VERY FEW GENUINE ALLIANCES. NEARLY ALL THE PARTICIPANTS HAVE A SHARED INTEREST OF SOME SORT WITH NEARLY ALL OF THE OTHER PARTICIPANTS. AT THE SAME TIME, THERE ALSO EXIST MAJOR DISAGREEMENTS AND EVEN CONFLICTS AMONG THEM, SO THAT NO TWO ACTORS CAN BE REGARDED AS RELIABLE ALLIES. THIS STATE OF AFFAIRS CREATES CONSIDERABLE OPPORTUNITIES FOR RUSSIA TO PLAY A CONSTRUCTIVE ROLE IN SOLVING THE PROBLEMS CREATED BY THE US AND SOME OF ITS CLIENTS.

UNITED STATES

A FADING HEGEMONIC POWER, IT HAS MANAGED TO UNDERMINE ITS RELATIONSHIP WITH THE EU DUE TO THE UKRAINE CRISIS AND NOW THE MIDDLE EAST REFUGEE CRISIS THAT IS BEING BLAMED SQUARELY ON US POLICIES AND WHICH THE US IS PLAINLY REFUSING TO ADDRESS. US AND TURKEY MIGHT BE ALLIES TOO, BUT TURKEY IS CLEARLY PURSUING ITS OWN FOREIGN POLICY WHOSE FOCUS INVOLVES THE SUPPRESSION ONE OF THE MAJOR BENEFICIARIES OF US INVASION OF IRAQ, NAMELY THE KURDS.

LIKewise THE US AND SAUDI ARABIA ARE ALLIES, EXCEPT WHEN IT COMES TO THE QUESTION OF OIL PRICES WHERE THE VIRTUAL OIL "PRICE WAR" HAS DAMAGED THE FINANCES OF SAUDI ARABIA AND THREATENS TO DESTROY THE NASCENT US FRACKING INDUSTRY. WHILE BOTH COUNTRIES WOULD LIKE TO SEE THE ASSAD REGIME GO, US-TRAINED "MODERATE REBELS" TEND TO FACE GREATER THREATS FROM "MODERATE REBELS" SUPPORTED BY SAUDI ARABIA AND THE GULF ARAB STATES THAN FROM ASSAD'S FORCES.

US AND IRAN REMAIN AT ODDS, IN SPITE OF THE IRANIAN NUCLEAR DEAL WHICH DOES NOT SEEM TO HAVE BROUGHT ABOUT A SIGNIFICANT CHANGE IN THE RELATIONSHIP.

ISRAEL MIGHT WANT TO SEE THE ASSAD REGIME GO AND BE REPLACED BY A STRONGER SUNNI PRESENCE IN SYRIA IN ORDER TO SEVER THE HEZBOLLAH-IRAN CONNECTION, WHICH EXPLAINS WHY ISRAEL SEEMS UTTERLY UNCONCERNED ABOUT THE ISLAMIC STATE (WHICH IN TURN IS KIND ENOUGH NOT TO DEMAND "DEATH TO ISRAEL!"). BUT THE US-IRAN NUCLEAR DEAL HAS DAMAGED THE RELATIONS WITH THE US TO A SIGNIFICANT DEGREE.

US CONTINUES TO VIEW RUSSIA AS A COMPETITOR AND EVEN AS A TARGET OF ITS EXPANSIONISTIC PLANS, AND YET IT IS CLEAR THAT THE US IS INCAPABLE OF CARRYING OUT ITS POLICIES TO A SUCCESSFUL CONCLUSION ANYWHERE IN THE WORLD, NOT IN UKRAINE, NOT IN THE MIDDLE EAST, NOT IN AFGHANISTAN. AND THAT IN THE ABSENCE (EXCEPT IN UKRAINE) OF ACTIVE RUSSIAN COUNTERVAILING EFFORTS.

EU

THE EU HAS BECOME SOMETHING OF A "SICK MAN OF EUROPE" (AND, BY EXTENSION, THE REST OF THE WORLD). IT IS A DE-FACTO US MILITARY PROTECTORATE, INCAPABLE OF AFFECTING EVENTS IN THE STATES AROUND ITS PERIPHERY, YET IT IS RESENTFUL AT THE US INABILITY AND/OR UNWILLINGNESS TO DEAL WITH THE REFUGEE CRISIS AND ITS DESTRUCTIVE MEDDLING IN UKRAINE (HENCE THE US-FREE NORMANDY FOUR AND MINSK FORMATS).

LIKewise EU'S RELATIONSHIP WITH TURKEY IS STRAINED DUE TO THE LATTER'S DESIRE TO PRESSURE THE EU BY OPENING THE REFUGEE FLOODGATES PRESUMABLY IN THE HOPES OF SUPPORTING TURKEY'S OWN DESIGNS ON THE REGION.

THE SANCTIONS WAR WITH RUSSIA IS ANOTHER PROBLEM FOR THE EU, YET IT IS RUSSIA WHICH IS MOST LIKELY TO TAKE EU'S CONCERNS AND INTERESTS INTO ACCOUNT, MORE SO THAN THE US OR TURKEY.

SAUDI ARABIA

THIS COUNTRY IS STUCK IN A TWO-FRONT LAND WAR IN BOTH SYRIA AND YEMEN WHICH IS GOING BADLY ON BOTH FRONTS AND WHICH IS STRAINING THE COUNTRY'S BUDGET. THE BUDGET IS ALSO BEING HAMMERED BY ANOTHER TWO-FRONT WAR, THE OIL PRICE ONE, AGAINST BOTH RUSSIA AND THE US. AND SAUDI ARABIA IS CONSIDERABLY MORE DEPENDENT ON OIL REVENUE THAN THE US OR EVEN RUSSIA, EVEN THOUGH ITS OIL IS BY FAR THE CHEAPEST TO EXTRACT.

ITS MAIN CONCERN IS TO ESTABLISH ITSELF AS THE REGIONAL HEGEMON, FOLDING THE GULF STATES UNDER ITS WING AND ISOLATING IRAN. SYRIA IS OF INTEREST BECAUSE IT WOULD BREAK THE LEBANON-IRAQ-IRAN SHIA BELT AND PROVIDE ACCESS FOR PIPELINES TO TURKEY AND THEN EUROPE THAT WOULD COMPETE WITH RUSSIAN NATURAL GAS SUPPLIES. HOWEVER, CONSIDERING THAT MANY GULF STATES MAINTAIN THEIR OWN PROXY ARMIES IN SYRIA WHICH COMPETE WITH SAUDI ARABIA, THE SAUDI LEVEL OF CONTROL OVER THE REGION IS FAR FROM TOTAL.

TURKEY

ITS ECONOMY IS ALSO CONSIDERABLE TROUBLE, AND THE COUNTRY IS TRYING TO POSITION ITSELF AS THE GATEWAY BETWEEN EUROPE AND THE MIDDLE EAST. FOR THAT REASON IT IS SOMEWHAT INTERESTED IN HEATING UP THE UKRAINE CRISIS, BUT ONLY TO THE POINT THAT RUSSIAN PIPELINES RUN THROUGH TURKEY AS OPPOSED TO UKRAINE. IF JOINED BY SIMILAR PIPELINES FROM THE MIDDLE EAST, TURKEY BECOMES EUROPE'S ENERGY HUB.

SECONDLY, TURKEY'S BIG REGIONAL CONCERN ARE THE KURDS, WHICH INCIDENTALLY PITS THEM AGAINST THE US WHO HAVE HISTORICALLY FAVORED THEM AGAINST THE SUNNI AND EVEN THE SHIA, TO THE POINT OF (PARTIALLY) ARMING THEM IN THE SYRIA CONFLICT. WHICH ONLY RESULTED IN TURKISH AIRSTRIKES ON THE US-ARMED KURDS.

ISRAEL

ITS CURRENT MAIN AND, REALLY, ONLY INTERNATIONAL CONCERN IS IRAN AND ITS SUPPORT FOR HEZBOLLAH WHICH IN TURN CONTROLS MAJOR PARTS OF LEBANON AND IS CAPABLE OF EXISTING ISRAELI MILITARY ADVANCES. IT MAKES IT A DE-FACTO ALLY OF SAUDI ARABIA. ITS RELATIONS WITH TURKEY ARE MORE STRAINED, AND EVEN THE RELATIONSHIP WITH THE US DOES NOT APPEAR AS CORDIAL AS IT ONCE WAS.

OPPORTUNITIES FOR RUSSIA

RUSSIA'S BIGGEST OPPORTUNITY RESIDES IN US WEAKNESS OR, SPECIFICALLY, ITS INABILITY TO FULFILL THE ROLE OF THE HEGEMONIC (OR MAYBE IMPERIAL) POWER CAPABLE OF CONTROLLING ITS VASSALS AND CLIENTS AND RESOLVING CONFLICTS AMONG THEM. SYRIA REVEALED THE CONFLICTS AND CONTRADICTIONS AMONG THEM IN FAR GREATER RELIEF THAN UKRAINE, IF ONLY BECAUSE THE CONFLICTS ARE MORE FUNDAMENTAL AND THE NUMBER OF ACTORS INVOLVED GREATER. THE CONFLICTING INTERESTS OF THE MAJOR PLAYERS AND THE US INABILITY TO RESOLVE THESE CONFLICTS THAT HAS BEEN MADE EVIDENT BY THE SYRIA CONFLICT LIKEWISE ILLUSTRATES WHILE "ISOLATING RUSSIA" WAS ALWAYS A FOOL'S ERRAND. RUSSIA NOT SIMPLY TOO IMPORTANT AN ACTOR TO ISOLATE, IT OFFERS TO PROVIDE THAT WHICH THE US HAS BEEN FAILING TO PROVIDE IN THE LAST DECADE. EVEN SOME OF THE CLOSER US CLIENTS ARE BEGINNING TO LOSE CONFIDENCE IN THE US ABILITY TO MAINTAIN ORDER IN THE MIDDLE EAST AND THEREFORE MIGHT VIEW RUSSIA AS, IF NOT A SUBSTITUTE, THEN AT LEAST A SUPPLEMENT TO US INFLUENCE.

WHEN IT COMES TO TAKING ADVANTAGE OF THE FRAGMENTING PAX AMERICANA, (WHICH MIGHT BE MORE APPROPRIATELY CALLED BELLUM AMERICANUM, AS IT IS WAR, NOT PEACE, THAT THE US IS PROMOTING) RUSSIA'S "BEST BETS" ARE EU AND IRAN. THE EU BADLY WANTS THE REFUGEE CRISIS TO END AND THEREFORE MIGHT JUMP ON WHATEVER CONFLICT RESOLUTION THAT RUSSIA COMES UP WITH. EU'S WILLINGNESS TO CHART A COURSE SEPARATE FROM THE US WAS ALREADY EVIDENT DURING THE MINSK ACCORDS, AND IT IS LIKELY TO BECOME EVEN MORE SO IN THE FUTURE. THE EU IS ALSO INTERESTED IN A BETTER RELATIONSHIP WITH IRAN, WITH RUSSIA BEING IDEALLY POSITIONED TO BRING THEM TOGETHER. MOREOVER, THE RUSSIA-SYRIA-IRAQ-IRAN ALLIANCE WHICH APPEARS TO BE EMERGING REPRESENTS THE BEST HOPE FOR EUROPE'S NOT ONLY ENERGY SECURITY BUT ALSO PLAIN SECURITY FROM INSTABILITY FOMENTED BY US POLICIES.

TURKEY AND ISRAEL ARE LIKELY TO BE LESS SUSCEPTIBLE TO RUSSIAN APPROACHES, THOUGH EVEN THERE IS POTENTIAL FOR PROGRESS. ISRAEL SIMPLY HAS TO BE CONVINCED THAT RUSSIA REPRESENTS A BETTER OPTION FOR ISRAEL, WHEN IT COMES TO INFLUENCING IRANIAN ACTIONS, THAN THE CLUMSY AND INEFFECTUAL US WITH ITS PROVOCATIVE POLICIES.

TURKEY WILL REQUIRE ITS CUT OF THE OIL/GAS ACTION, IT DOES NOT CARE AS MUCH WHERE THE GAS COMES FROM, THOUGH ERDOGAN MIGHT BE RESISTANT TO THE IDEA OF RUSSIA HAVING INFLUENCE OVER SO MUCH OF THE ENERGY TRANSITING THROUGH TURKEY. THE COOPERATION BETWEEN RUSSIA, SYRIA, IRAQ, AND IRAN, WHICH (ASIDE FROM RUSSIA) HAPPEN TO BE THE MAIN COUNTRIES WHERE KURDS RESIDE ALSO SHOULD MAKE IT EASIER TO ADDRESS TURKEY'S CONCERN ABOUT ITS OWN "KURDISH PROBLEM."

US, SAUDI ARABIA, AND THE GULF STATES ARE THE HARD CASES. THE US IS SIMPLY NOT READY TO TREAT RUSSIA AS AN EQUAL PARTNER, THOUGH AT THE SAME TIME IT ALSO PROVED UNWILLING TO RISK A MILITARY CONFRONTATION—NOT IN UKRAINE, NOT IN SYRIA. CLEARLY IMPRESSED WITH RUSSIA'S POWER, IT MIGHT BE PERSUADED TO ACHIEVE A "SPHERE OF INFLUENCE" AGREEMENT WITH RUSSIA WHICH WOULD ALSO CONVENIENTLY ADDRESS THE ISSUE OF UKRAINE. SAUDI ARABIA AND THE GULF ARAB STATES WOULD BE THE BIG LOSERS, AND IT'S DIFFICULT TO SEE HOW IT COULD BE OTHERWISE—RUSSIA IS NOT GOING TO SACRIFICE ITS RELATIONS WITH IRAN FOR THE SAKE OF SAUDI ARABIA. THEREFORE THE SAUDIS MIGHT HAVE TO CONTENT THEMSELVES WITH BEING ENERGY SUPPLIERS TO NORTH AMERICA, WHILE LEAVING EUROPE TO RUSSIA, IRAN, AND IRAQ.

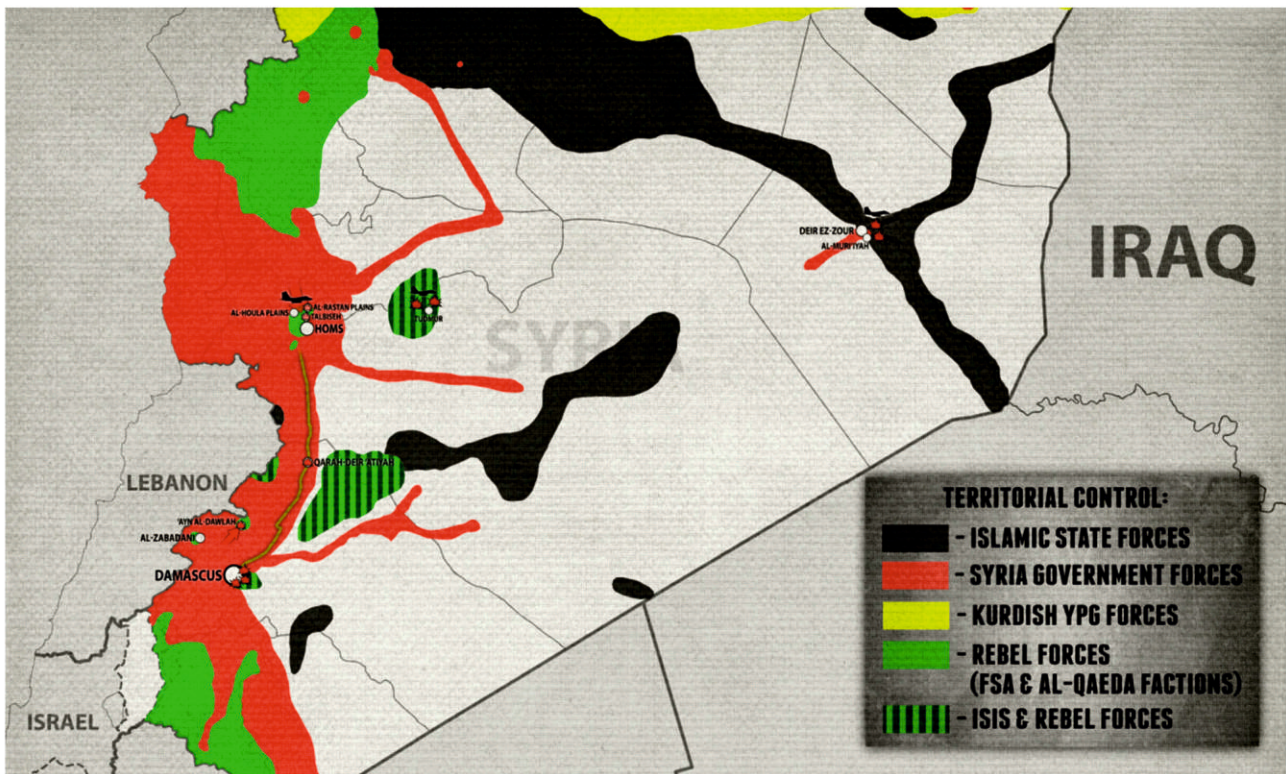
CAN IT WORK? THERE IS NO REASON WHY IT SHOULDN'T. RUSSIA'S STOCK HAS RISEN ENORMOUSLY IN RECENT DAYS. IT HAS PROVEN TO BE A POWER TO BE RECKONED WITH, AS IT COMBINES POLITICAL RESTRAINT AND DECISIVENESS WITH AN UNDERSTANDING HOW TO PROPERLY APPLY MILITARY FORCE. THAT MAKES IT A VERY CREDIBLE ALLY AND PROTECTOR, IN CONTRAST TO THE ERRATIC AND INCOMPETENT US POLICY THAT HAS LEFT EVERYONE DISSATISFIED. ONE THING IS CERTAIN: SERGEY LAVROV HAS HIS WORK CUT OUT FOR HIM!



OCTOBER 6, 2015

GROUND OPERATION IN THE NORTHERN HOMS
IS SUPPORTED BY
RUSSIAN WARPLANES





THE SYRIAN ARAB ARMY (SAA), THE NATIONAL DEFENSE FORCES (NDF) AND THE SYRIAN SOCIAL NATIONALIST PARTY (SSNP) IS PREPARING FOR A FULL-SCALE GROUND OFFENSIVE INSIDE OF NORTHERN HOMS. THE AL-HOULA AND AL-RASTAN PLAINS ARE THE FIRST TARGET OF ASSAD'S FORCES.

SINCE SATURDAY, THE SYRIAN FORCES CONDUCTED A PREPARATION FIRE ON THE MILITANTS' POSITIONS AT AL-RASTAN AND TALBIESEH. THE SYRIAN AL-QAEDA BRANCH, AL NUSRA, AND ITS ALLY FREE SYRIAN ARMY (FSA) HOLD THE GROUND THERE.

THE GROUND OFFENSIVE IN NORTHERN HOMS IS SUPPORTED BY THE RUSSIAN AIR FORCE TARGETING A LARGE CONCENTRATION OF AL NUSRA MILITANTS INSIDE THIS AREA. TO THE EAST OF HOMS, NOT FAR FROM TUDMUR, A PAIR OF SU-25M ATTACK AIRCRAFT AND A SU-24 BOMBERS ATTACKED TWO AREAS OF CONCENTRATION OF ISIS MILITARY HARDWARE. IN TOTAL, ABOUT 20 T-55 TANKS SEIZED EARLIER FROM THE SYRIAN ARMY WERE DESTROYED. DETONATION OF THE FUEL AND MUNITIONS CAUSED MULTIPLE FIRES.

ONE OF THE MOST IMPORTANT STRATEGIC MISTAKES OF THE SYRIAN HEADQUARTERS IN THIS WAR WAS THAT THEY CONCEDED THE EXISTENCE OF THE NUMEROUS MILITANTS' ENCLAVES IN THE GOVERNMENT-CONTROLLED TERRITORY. THESE ENCIRCLED FORTIFICATIONS DRAW BACK THE PRO-GOVERNMENT FORCES' FROM THE MAIN FRONTLINE.

IF THE SYRIAN FORCES TAKE CONTROL OF THE AL-HOULA AND AL-RASTAN PLAINS, AL NUSRA MILITANTS WILL BE LOCKED INSIDE THE AL-WA'ER DISTRICT OF HOMS CITY. IT'S QUESTIONABLE IF THE SAA AND ITS ALLIES WILL BE ABLE TO DELIVER THE FINAL BLOW TO THE TERRORIST THERE, IN THE FORTIFIED AND MINE STUDDED RESIDENTIAL AREAS. NONETHELESS, IT WILL ALLOW THE ASSAD'S GOVERNMENT TO RELEASE ADDITIONAL MILITARY RESOURCES AND CAPABILITIES FOR OTHER AREAS.

MEANWHILE, ISIS LAUNCHED A FULL-SCALE ASSAULT ON THE PROVINCIAL CAPITAL OF THE DEIR EZ-ZOUR GOVERNORATE THE SYRIAN ARMED FORCES' POSITIONS AT THE MILITARY AIRPORT, THE AL-SINA'A, AL-HAWEEQA, AL-'AMAL DISTRICTS AND THE VILLAGE OF AL-MURI'IYAH CAME UNDER PRESSURE.

ACCORDING TO THE SYRIAN MILITARY SOURCES, ISIS' OFFENSIVE WAS ILL-PREPARED AND ENDED AS A DISASTER. THE MILITANT FORCES WERE CRUSHED BY THE SYRIAN ARAB ARMY ASSISTED BY THE RUSSIAN AIR FORCES. RUSSIAN WARPLANES PLAYED AN INTEGRAL ROLE POUNDING THE TERRORIST GROUP WITH AIRSTRIKES.

THE SYRIAN ARAB ARMY'S 42ND AND 63RD BRIGADES OF THE 4TH MECHANIZED DIVISION SUPPORTED BY THE NDF AND THE SSNP STARTED AN ADVANCE ON AL NUSRA, FSA AND HARAKAT AHRAR AL-SHAM AT THE VILLAGE OF 'AYN AL-DAWLAH IN THE EAST HILLS OF AL-ZABADANI. AT THE MOMENT CLASHES ARE GOING ON IN THE VILLAGE OF 'AYN AL-DAWLAH.

THE VERY SAME TIME, THE SAA FACED A GROUP OF ISIS MILITANTS IN THE NORTH OF AL-ZABADANI. THE CLASHES ARE GOING ALONG THE QARAH-DEIR 'ATYAH ROAD THAT LEADS TO THE IMPERATIVE DAMASCUS-ALEPPO HIGHWAY.

THE FIGHTS WERE OBSERVED AT THE SOUTHERN DAMASCUS DISTRICTS OF AL-TAQADAM, YARMOUK CAMP, AND AL-TADAMON. SAA LAUNCHED A SERIES OF AIRSTRIKES AGAINST ISIS POSITIONS THERE. THEN THE PALESTINE LIBERATION ARMY (PLA) – IN COORDINATION WITH THE POPULAR FRONT FOR THE LIBERATION OF PALESTINE-GENERAL COMMAND (PFLP-GC), FATAH AL-INTIFADA, AND THE NDF CARRIED OUT AN ATTACK AGAINST ISIS ON 30TH STREET IN THE YARMOUK CAMP DISTRICT.

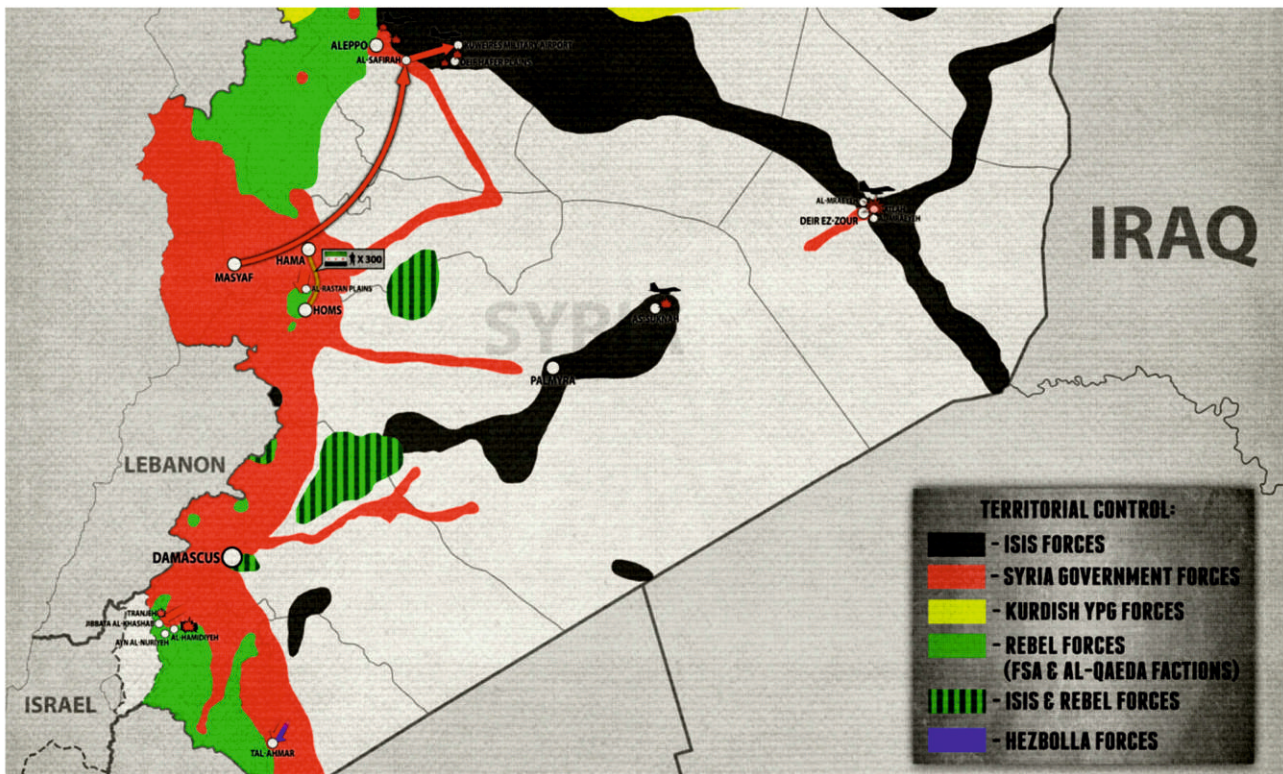
THUS, IT BECAME CLEAR THAT THE RUSSAIN AEROSPACE DEFENCE FORCES WERE A GAME CHANGER IN SYRIA. THE AIR-SUPPORT ALLOWED THE SYRIAN GOVERNMENT TO GO ON OFFENSIVE IN A NUMBER OF IMPORTANT AREAS AND START PREPARATION ACTIONS FOR THE FULL-SCALE GROUND OPERATION IN HOMS.



OCTOBER 7, 2015

SYRIA LAUNCHES LARGE-SCALE GROUND OFFENSIVE





ON TUESDAY THE SYRIAN ARMY AND THE LEBANESE STORMED THE POSITIONS OF THE MILITANT GROUPS IN THE NEARBY AREAS OF TAL-AHMAR AND RETOOK FULL CONTROL OVER THIS STRATEGIC HILLTOP. ARAB SOURCES FURTHER ADDED THAT SCORES OF THE MILITANT GROUPS' MEMBERS WERE KILLED OR WOUNDED. HOWEVER, IT'S MORE LIKELY THAT MILITANTS JUST RETREATED FROM THE POSITIONS CAPTURED ONLY TWO DAYS AGO.

IN THE MEANTIME, THE SYRIAN ARAB ARMY (SAA) AND HEZBOLLAH CARRIED OUT OPERATION AGAINST THE STRONGHOLDS OF THE MILITANT GROUPS IN AYN AL-NURIYEH AREA IN QUNEITRA PROVINCE. A CONVOY LOADED WITH WEAPONS AND AMMUNITIONS WAS DESTROYED NEAR AL-HAMIDIYEH IN QUNEITRA. THE CONVOY BELONGED TO THE MODERATE TERRORIST GROUP, FREE SYRIAN ARMY.

LAST NIGHT, THE SAA CONDUCTED OPERATIONS AGAINST POSITIONS OF AL NUSRA AND ITS ALLIES IN THE VILLAGES OF JIBBATA AL-KHASHAB AND TRANJEH. REPORTEDLY, THE MILITANTS' AMMUNITION DEPOT WAS DESTROYED. THE CLASHES WERE ALSO OBSERVED AT THE VILLAGE OF TRANJEH.

SEPARATELY, THE SAA'S SPECIAL FORCES ATTACKED ISIS POSITIONS IN DEIR EZ-ZOUR, AND REGAINED CONTROL OF SEVERAL TERRORISTS' CHECKPOINTS IN AN AREA OF DEIR EZ-ZOUR AIRPORT. THE MILITANTS TRIED TO TAKE CONTROL OF AREAS IN DEIR EZZUR PROVINCE IN SEPTEMBER, BUT THEY LOST THE MOMENTUM AND FACED THE GOVERNMENT FORCES' COUNTER ATTACK. THE SYRIAN AIR FORCES CONDUCTED AIRSTRIKES AROUND THE VILLAGES OF AL-MRAEYEH, AL-JAFRAH AND HATLAH TARGETING ISIS POSTIONS. THE OPERATION IN DEIR EZ-ZOUR PROVINCE HAS BEEN CONTINUING.

LARGE GROUPS OF SOLDIERS FROM THE SAA, THE NATIONAL DEFENSE FORCES (NDF), AND OTHER PRO-GOVERNMENT MILITIAS ARE CONCENTRATED IN THE PROVINCES OF ALEPPO AND HOMS. THEY PREPARE FOR MASSIVE OFFENSIVES AGAINST AL NUSRA AND ISIS.

THE FIRST WAVE OF REINFORCEMENTS WAS SENT FROM THE NATIONAL DEFENSE FORCES STRONGHOLD OF MASYAF IN EAST TARTOUS TO AL-SAFIRA IN THE EAST ALEPPO. THESE FIGHTERS JOINED THE SAA'S "CHEETAH FORCES" THAT HAVE ALREADY BEGAN AN OPERATION TO LIFT THE ISIS SIEGE OF THE KUWERIES MILITARY AIRPORT. ACCORDING TO REPORTS, THE TOTAL NUMBER OF SOLDIERS DEPLOYED AT THE DEIR HAFAIR PLAINS IS AS HIGH AS 4,500 MILITARY PERSONNEL.

IN THE HOMS GOVERNORATE'S NORTHERN COUNTRYSIDE, OVER 300 ADDITIONAL MILITARY PERSONNEL ARRIVED TO THE HAMA-HOMS AXIS IN ORDER TO REINFORCE THE SOLDIERS THAT ARE PREPARING TO LAUNCH A FULL-SCALE OPERATION TO CAPTURE THE AL-RASTAN PLAINS OF HOMS.

THE RUSSIAN AIR FORCE IS PROVIDING THE SYRIAN ARAB ARMY WITH NECESSARY AIR COVER AGAINST THE ISIS TERRORISTS THAT ARE LOCATED INSIDE THE DEIR TAHER PLAINS AND AROUND THE PROVINCIAL CAPITAL OF THE ALEPPO GOVERNORATE.

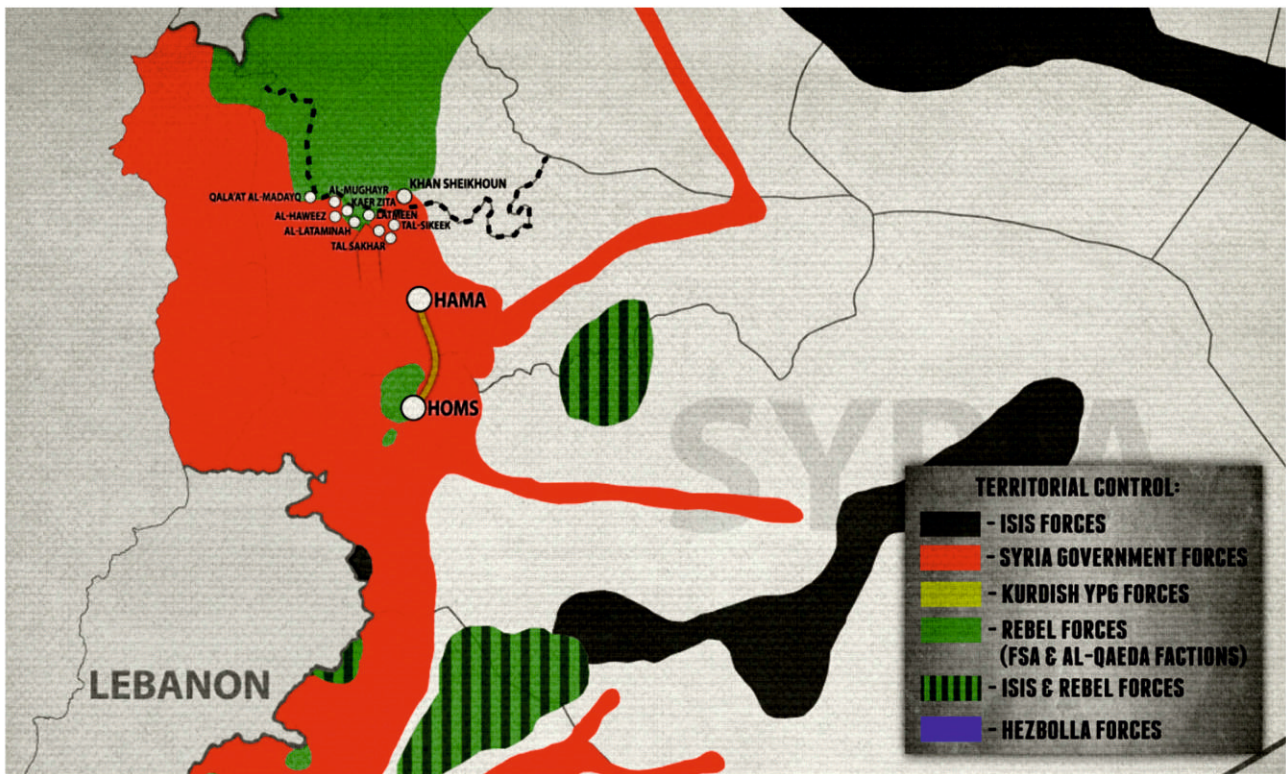
SEPARATELY, RUSSIAN WARPLANES HAVE BEEN CONTINUING RAIDS AGAINST MILITANT TARGETS OVER THE COUNTRY. YESTERDAY, THEY DESTROYED AN ISIS COMMAND CENTER NEAR THE TOWN OF AS SUKHAH 28 KM AWAY FROM PALMYRA. SEVERAL PICKUP TRUCKS AND ARMORED VEHICLES AND 40 MILITANTS WERE ALSO DESTROYED.



OCTOBER 8, 2015

THE RUSSIA-LED COALITION SHAPES THE SYRIAN BATTLEGROUND





ON OCTOBER 8, CHIEF OF THE GENERAL STAFF OF THE ARMY AND ARMED FORCES, GEN. ALI ABDULLAH AYOUB OFFICIALLY ANNOUNCED THAT THE SYRIAN ARMED FORCES HAD STARTED A LARGE-SCALE ASSAULT AIMED AT RETAKING SEVERAL KEY CITIES AND REGIONS FROM TERRORIST FORCES AFTER A WEEK-LONG BOMBING CAMPAIGN BY RUSSIA TARGETING THE JIHADISTS. A DAY EARLIER, SOUTHFRONT: ANALYSIS & INTELLIGENCE REPORTED THAT SYRIAN FORCES WERE ABOUT TO START FULL-SCALE OFFENSIVE. THE MAIN GOALS ARE THE HAMA-HOMS AXIS AND TO LIFT THE ISIS SIEGE OF THE KUWERIES MILITARY AIRPORT.

TODAY, THE SYRIAN ARAB ARMY (SAA) WITH THE NATIONAL DEFENSE FORCES (NDF) CONDUCTED A LARGE-SCALE OFFENSIVE AT THE TERRORIST-CONTROLLED TOWNS OF KAFR ZITA, QALA'AT AL-MADAYQ, LATMEEN, AND AL-LATAMINAH IN THE HAMA GOVERNORATE. THE FREE SYRIAN ARMY, CIA-BACKED LIWAA SUQOUR AL-GHAAB, SHAM LEGIONS, AL NUSRA AND HARAKAT AHRAR AL-SHAM MILITANT GROUPS OPPOSE THE SYRIAN FORCES THERE.

THE CLASHES STARTED OFF SUCCESSFULLY FOR THE SAA AS THEY RECAPTURED AL-MUGHAYR, LAHAYA, AND MARKABAH. FOLLOWING THIS SUCCESS THE SAA ADVANCED CLOSER TO THE IDLIB-HAMA BORDER, CAPTURING THE HILLTOPS OF TAL SAKHAR, TAL-SIKEEK, TAL UTHMAN AND THE TOWN OF AL-HAWEEZ NEAR THE CITY OF KAFR ZITA. AT THE MOMENT THE SAA IS REACHING THE LATMEEN-MOREK AXIS AND THE EASTERN PERIMETER OF LATMEEN.

THE PRIMARY OBJECTIVE OF THIS OFFENSIVE IS TO SEAL OFF THE NORTHERN HAMA BORDER WITH IDLIB AND BUILD A BUFFER-ZONE AROUND THE CITY OF KHAN SHEIKHOUN LOCATED ON THE IMPORTANT ALEPPO-LATTAKIA HIGHWAY. THEN THE GOVERNMENT FORCES WILL BE ABLE TO CONCENTRATE ON THE REMAINING POCKETS IN THE HAMA GOVERNORATE THAT ARE UNDER THE CONTROL OF THE MILITANTS.

ON OCTOBER 7, FOUR RUSSIAN NAVY WARSHIPS IN THE CASPIAN SEA FIRED 26 MISSILES AT THE POSITIONS OF ISIS IN SYRIA. THE MISSILES FLEW SOME 1,500 KM TO DESTROY 11 ISIS TARGETS. THIS FACT HIGHLIGHTS THE 3 IMPORTANT FEATURES OF THE ONGOING SITUATION:

FIRST IS RUSSIAN NAVY GOT A COMBAT EXPERIENCE OF USAGE OF THE RUSSIAN KALIBR MISSILE SYSTEMS (3M-54 KLUB), WHICH ARE INTENDED TO STRIKE NAVAL AND LAND TARGETS.

SECOND IS THIS ACTING REQUIRED COOPERATION FROM IRAN AND IRAQ BECAUSE THE MISSILES HAD TO TRAVEL THROUGH THEIR AIRSPACE TO REACH SYRIA. AT THE SAME DAY, THE CHAIRMAN OF IRAQI PARLIAMENT'S DEFENSE COMMITTEE HAKIM AL-ZAMILI SAID THAT BAGHDAD MAY SOON OFFICIALLY REQUEST RUSSIAN AIRSTRIKES AGAINST ISIS. IN THIS CASE, THE RUSSIA-IRAQ-IRAN-SYRIA JOINT INFORMATION CENTER'S ROLE WILL BE EXPANDED TO COORDINATE RUSSIA'S AIRSTRIKES IN IRAQ. THUS, WE COULD CONCLUDE IRAQ WAS ALMOST REMOVED FROM THE US ZONE OF INFLUENCE IN THE MIDDLE EAST.

THIRD IS IT'S A DEMONSTRATION OF POWER FOR RUSSIA'S "WESTERN PARTNERS". EARLIER, THE HEAD OF THE DEFENSE COMMITTEE OF RUSSIA'S STATE DUMA, VLADIMIR KOMOYEDOV, SAID THAT RUSSIA IS READY TO USE ITS NAVAL FORCES TO ESTABLISH A BLOCKADE ALONG THE SYRIAN COASTLINE TO PREVENT THE DELIVERY OF ARMAMENTS FOR TERRORISTS IN SYRIA. RUSSIA SHOWS THAT IT CAN DEFEND ITS MILITARY GROUP IN LATAKIA EVEN FROM THE CASPIAN SEA. THE RUSSIAN MILITARY GROUP IN SYRIA SERIOUSLY DEPENDS ON THE SUPPLIES THROUGH MARITIME PASSAGES. SO, IF TURKEY, WHICH FAILED WITH ITS POLICY IN SYRIA, DECIDES TO CUT IT FROM THE RUSSIAN NAVAL BASE IN CRIMEA CLOSING STRAITS, RUSSIA WILL BE READY.

ON OCTOBER 6, ERDOGAN SAID THAT RUSSIA COULD LOSE A FRIEND WITH TURKEY. BUT HIS RELATIONSHIP WITH THE US BECOMES COLDER ALSO. AT THE MOMENT, IT'S CLEAR THAT THERE ARE NO MODERATE REBELS, WHICH COULD BE PUBLICLY SUPPORTED BY THE US IN SYRIA. FREE SYRIAN ARMY (FSA) IS MORE A MYTH THEN REALITY. A LARGE PART OF THE FSA'S UNITS ARE DIRECTLY LINKED TO THE SYRIAN BRANCH OF AL QAEDA. THE US IN THIS CASE SURELY NEEDS SOME CONTROLLED FORCE IN SYRIA AS ALTERNATIVE TO ASSAD IN ORDER TO PREVENT HIM FROM REGAINING FULL CONTROL OVER THE COUNTRY. THE ONLY CANDIDATE FOR THIS ROLE IS THE KURDISH YPG. THE US WILL LIKELY SUPPORT THE KURDS IN AN ATTACK ON RAQQA, THE ISLAMIC STATE HEADQUARTER AND IMPORTANT LOGISTIC CENTER IN SYRIA. THIS ALLIANCE IS UNACCEPTABLE FOR TURKEY WHICH STRONGLY STANDS AGAINST ANY KIND OF KURDISH AUTONOMY AT ITS BORDERS. FURTHERMORE, RAQQA IS A CRUCIAL POINT FOR THE ISLAMIC STATE'S OIL TRADE WITH TURKEY. IF RAQQA FALLS, THEN BOTH WILL LOSE SIGNIFICANT MEANS OF MAKING PROFIT. ANYWAY, THE US HAS NO OTHER CHOICE BUT TO REPLACE ITS "MODERATE REBELS" WITH THE YPG AND PAY THE PRICE FOR IT - EVEN IF THE PRICE INCLUDES A COOLING DOWN OF WASHINGTON-ANKARA RELATIONS.

THUS, THE US-LED WEB OF POLITICAL ALLIANCES AND RELATIONSHIPS IN THE MIDDLE EAST IS DISINTEGRATING ROUGHLY. THE VESTIGES OF CONTROL ON TERRORISTS GROUPS SPONSORED BY THE PRO-WESTERN BLOCK COULD BE LOST. IT LEADS TO ESCALATION OF THE FREE FOR ALL WAR IN THE REGION. THE GROWING RUSSIAN-LED ANTI-ISIS COALITION IS THE ONLY CHANCE FOR REGIONAL STABILIZATION. THE COALITION ALSO INCLUDES IRAN, SYRIA AND IRAQ. CHINA AND EGYPT ARE CANDIDATES FOR MEMBERSHIP. EGYPT HAS A SERIOUS INTERNAL PROBLEM WITH THE LOCAL BRANCH OF ISIS ON THE SINAI PENINSULA. CHINA WILL PROBABLY PARTICIPATE ACTIVELY IN THE SYRIAN ANTI-ISIS CAMPAIGN, BECAUSE ITS ARMED FORCES DESPERATELY NEED COMBAT EXPERIENCE. SO A LIMITED MILITARY GROUND AND AIR FORCE CONTINGENT COULD TAKE PART IN THE ANTI-ISIS CAMPAIGN.

RUSSIA: WE ARE
HEADING EAST



THE APPEARANCE OF RUSSIAN AIR FORCE IN SYRIA IN THE FORM OF AN AVIATION REGIMENT AND SUPPORTING SERVICES DRAMATICALLY CHANGED THE SITUATION IN THE REGION. THOUGH IN PRINCIPLE ONE COULD HAVE EXPECTED SOMETHING ELSE: EXTERNAL OBSERVERS APPARENTLY BELIEVED MOSCOW WILL CONTINUE TO FOLLOW THE SOVIET SCENARIO.

IN OTHER WORDS, IT WOULD BLAME THE WEST FOR ALL THE PROBLEMS, DEPLOY A CLUMSY MILITARY MACHINE THAT COULD BE EASILY ATTACKED WITH COVERT (OR OVERT) SUPPORT FOR THE MILITANTS, LIKE SENATOR MCCAIN IS CURRENTLY DEMANDING. IT WOULD BE INTERESTING TO KNOW, WILL THE WEST DELIVER MODERN SHOULDER-LAUNCHED SAMs TO THE TERRORIST GROUPS, CONSIDERING WHAT HAPPENED BETWEEN THE US AND TERROR GROUPS AFTER THE 9/11 TERROR ATTACKS. BECAUSE IT'S SELF-EVIDENT THEY COULD BE USED TO ATTACK ANY AIRCRAFT, HELICOPTERS, AND UAVs, STARTING WITH THE AMERICAN ONES. AND RUSSIA WOULD NOT LEAVE SUCH ACTIONS UNANSWERED.

WHO'S CRYING FOR SYRIA?

CONTRARY TO ALL THE PREDICTIONS, RUSSIA ACTED STEALTHILY, SWIFTLY, AND EFFECTIVELY. WHICH WAS TO BE EXPECTED, BASED ON THE ANALYSIS OF ITS OPERATIONS IN OSSETIA AND CRIMEA. IT WAS EXTRAORDINARILY "POLITE" AND CONSTRUCTIVE, BUT ALSO FIRMLY PROPOSED EVERYONE CONCERNED TO COLLABORATE OR GET OUT OF THE WAY AND NOT INTERFERE IN ITS FIGHT AGAINST TERRORISTS IN A WAY IT CONSIDERED APPROPRIATE. ASSAD'S GOVERNMENT ENSURED THE LEGITIMACY OF ITS OPERATIONS IN SYRIA. WHAT IS MORE: IF THE RUSSIAN LEADERSHIP MAKES THE CORRESPONDING DECISION, IT WILL HAVE A FREE HAND TO CONDUCT COMBAT OPERATIONS IN IRAQ, SINCE THAT COUNTRY'S GOVERNMENT HAS INVITED RUSSIA TO DO SO. FOR THAT PURPOSE A COORDINATING CENTER IN BAGHDAD, INTENDED TO OVERSEE COUNTER-TERROR OPERATIONS BY IRAQ, SYRIA, IRAN, AND RUSSIA HAS ALREADY BEEN ESTABLISHED.

"THE FOUR COUNTRY SECURITY PACT HAS TAKEN US OFFICIALS BY SURPRISE, WHO ADMITTED THEY BARELY UNDERSTAND RUSSIA'S LONG-TERM STRATEGY IN THE REGION."

THIS IS A SLAP TO OBAMA'S CHEEK, WHOSE CLUMSY COALITION CONSISTING OF 62 MEMBER STATES HAS BEEN OPERATING OVER THE SKIES OF IRAQ FOR OVER A YEAR WITHOUT MUCH SUCCESS. WHICH PARTLY EXPLAINS ITS PREDICTIONS OF RUSSIAN FAILURE IN SYRIA, ALTHOUGH PUTIN'S STATEMENTS CONCERNING THE US AND OBAMA HIMSELF HAVE BEEN MORE RESTRAINED. GRANTED A GROUND COMPONENT IN THE SHAPE OF THE SYRIAN ARMY, KURD AND DRUZE FORMATIONS, SHIA DETACHMENTS AND THE IRANIANS, LOCAL KURDS AND SHIA, THE RUSSIAN AIR FORCE IS MORE EFFECTIVE THAN THE USAF AND ITS ALLIES BY TWO ORDERS OF MAGNITUDE. BUT NOBODY HAS PREVENTED THE US FROM ESTABLISHING SIMILAR CONTACTS IN ORDER TO PREVENT SUCH LEVEL OF CONFUSION CONCERNING AIMS, TASKS, AND ALLIES.

NOW THE COMMUNICATION LINE BETWEEN THE PENTAGON AND THE RUSSIAN MOD, WHICH HAVE NOT MAINTAINED CONTACTS FOR A LONG TIME ON US INITIATIVE, HAS OPENED AND IS OPERATING WITH SUCCESS. A SIMILAR LINE BETWEEN RUSSIA AND ISRAEL IS ALSO IN OPERATION. THEY DON'T HAVE A PROBLEM MAINTAINING CONTACTS WITH THE RUSSIANS TO AVOID CLASHES OVER SYRIA. BOTH THE MILITARY AND THE POLITICIANS ACKNOWLEDGE THIS. NATURALLY, ISRAEL IS CONCERNED HEZBOLLAH MIGHT GET ACCESS TO MODERN WEAPONS, AND THE ISLAMIC REVOLUTION GUARD CORPS WHICH SUPPORTS THE HEZBOLLAH REMAINS ISRAEL'S ENEMY NUMBER ONE. BUT THE ISLAMIC STATE, AL-NUSRA, MUSLIM BROTHERHOOD, AND OTHER RADICAL SUNNI ISLAMIST FORMATIONS ARE NO LESS DANGEROUS, IF ONE CONSIDERS THE EXPERIENCE OF ISRAEL'S CONFLICT WITH HAMAS. THE VERY FACT OF RUSSIAN OPERATIONS IN SYRIA IN ITS CHOSEN STYLE FOLLOWING ERDOGAN'S RECENT VISIT TO MOSCOW TO OPEN A MOSQUE TURNED OUT TO BE A SURPRISE FOR TURKEY. THE SAUDIS WERE SERIOUSLY PUT OFF BY THE FACT THAT RUSSIAN MFA'S DIALOGUE WITH THEM ON THE SYRIA SITUATION AND ITS "GENEROUS" PROPOSALS TURNED OUT TO BE NOTHING MORE THAN THE PRELUDE TO THE RUSSIAN MILITARY ASSAULT ON ISLAMIST FORMATIONS SUPPORTED BY SAUDI ARABIA. IT'S HARD TO SAY WHAT THEY ARE THINKING IN QATAR, SINCE ANTI-RUSSIAN RHETORIC IS A CONSTANT IN DOHA-CONTROLLED MEDIA. UNLIKE SAUDI ARABIA, QATAR, WHICH FINANCED IMARAT KAVKAZ, SO FAR HAS NOT ORGANIZED ANY MAJOR TERROR ACTS IN RUSSIA, POSSIBLY INTRODUCING THAT LIMITATION AFTER THE ELIMINATION OF YANDARBIYEV ON QATAR'S OWN SOIL.

THE "STATEMENT BY SEVEN", WHICH APPEARED ON THE TURKISH MFA WEB SITE DEMANDING RUSSIA LEAVE SYRIA, IS QUITE REVEALING. FIRST, THE LIST OF SIGNERS. SECOND, THE VERY FACT THAT IT WAS THE TURKS WHO PUBLISHED THAT DOCUMENT EVEN THOUGH EVERY COUNTRY WHICH IS MENTIONED IN THE DOCUMENT HAS ITS OWN MFA WHICH IN TURN HAS ITS OWN WEB SITE. IT WOULD BE ODD TO ASSUME THAT THE US, UK, GERMANY, FRANCE, QATAR, AND SAUDI ARABIA SUDDENLY DECIDED TO ENTRUST TURKEY WITH THEIR FOREIGN POLICIES, SO WE ARE MOST LIKELY DEALING WITH A SANCTIONED "LEAK" OF THE DOCUMENT, POSSIBLY IN ITS STILL-RAW FORM. WHICH BY ITSELF MIGHT NOT MEAN ANYTHING, APART FROM TURKEY'S DESIRE TO STEER EVENTS IN A DESIRABLE DIRECTION.

AS TO THE LIST OF COUNTRIES MENTIONED AS THE AUTHORS, THE THREE "REGIONAL" ONES ARE THE PROMOTERS OF THE CIVIL WAR IN SYRIA AND OF ASSAD'S OVERTHROW. THE THREE WESTERN "HIT-MEN" ARE STATES WHOSE POLITICAL ELITES HAVE BEEN BOUGHT AND PAID FOR BY THE SALAFI TANDEM, WHOSE AIRPOWER (BECAUSE OF THEIR DISLIKE OF USING ARMED FORCES IN THEIR ENTIRETY AFTER IRAQ AND AFGHANISTAN) IS BEING USED TO RESHAPE THE MIDDLE EAST AND TO PUNISH THEIR RIVALS: AUTHORITARIAN SECULAR LEADERS SUCH AS KHADDAFI, SADDAM HUSSEIN, OR BASHAR AL-ASSAD (THOUGH WITHOUT PARTICULAR SUCCESS IN THE LAST CASE). THE APPEARANCE OF GERMANY, WHICH HAS BEEN TRADITIONALLY NEUTRAL IN MIDDLE EASTERN "ARAB SPRING" PLOTS, MIGHT BE DUE TO THE EXISTENCE OF AN AGREEMENT ON STEMMING THE FLOW OF REFUGEES BEING DIRECTED TOWARD THAT COUNTRY BY TURKEY WITH THE FINANCIAL SUPPORT OF SAUDI AND QATARI FOUNDATIONS, OR PERHAPS YET ANOTHER INDICATION OF OBAMA'S REMARKABLE INFLUENCE OVER MERKEL.

RUSSIA MADE IT

LET'S EXAMINE A FEW ASPECTS OF RUSSIA'S SYRIA POLICY, AND THE POSSIBLE CONSEQUENCES OF THAT POLICY, BY REVIEWING MATERIALS PREPARED BY YU.B. SHCHEGLOVIN FOR THE MIDDLE EAST INSTITUTE. WESTERN MEDIA REACTIONS TO THE RESULTS OF THE FIRST RUSSIAN AIRSTRIKES AGAINST THE IS AND OTHER TERROR GROUPS IN SYRIA ARE WHOLLY TYPICAL. IT'S CLEAR THAT THE STRIKES LAUNCHED ANOTHER PHASE OF THE DIPLOMATIC STRUGGLE BETWEEN RUSSIA AND THE WEST. THE FIRST ROUND TOOK PLACE AT THE UNGC SESSION AND DURING THE NEGOTIATIONS BETWEEN RUSSIAN AND US PRESIDENTS. MOSCOW WON THAT ROUND. IT'S OBVIOUS TO THE NAKED EYE THAT THE SECOND ROUND WILL BE HARDER. ALTHOUGH IT'S NOT EXACTLY CLEAR HOW THE US AND ITS ALLIES ARE GOING TO TRANSFORM THE MULTI-YEAR, BLOODY "CRUSADE AGAINST INTERNATIONAL TERRORISM" INTO A GEOPOLITICAL CONFRONTATION WITH THE NEW REINCARNATION OF THE "EVIL EMPIRE", WHICH IS WHAT THEY HAVE BEEN TO TRANSFORM RUSSIA INTO SINCE THE START OF UKRAINE CRISIS.

THE MAIN MOTIF OF ALL WESTERN PUBLICATIONS IS THAT RUSSIAN AVIATION IS BOMBING NON-ISIL TARGETS. IT'S PARTLY CORRECT—THE HOMS STRIKES WERE DIRECTED AGAINST PRO-SAUDI AND PRO-TURKISH GROUPS. THEY WENT BACK FROM THE IDLIB SALIENT TO THAT CITY AFTER REALIZING THAT AFTER RUSSIAN ARRIVAL AT LATAKIA THAT AXIS OF ADVANCE HAS BEEN BLOCKED. BUT IT DOESN'T MEAN THERE ARE NO IS SUPPORTERS IN THE AREA: THEY TRIED TO ADVANCE TOWARD HOMS FROM PALMYRA SEVERAL TIMES, CONDUCTING DIVERSIONARY STRIKES IN ORDER TO STOP DAMASCUS FORCES FROM ADVANCING ON THE CITY. THE LOSSES FROM THE FIRST RUSSIAN AIR RAIDS WERE MORE THAN PERCEPTIBLE, HENCE KERRY'S "CONCERN" AND SAUDI LEADERSHIP'S HYSTERIA, FROM MFA TO THE UN PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE ON DOWN. IT'S A REVEALING REACTION: RUSSIA IS DESTROYING THE ISLAMIST CONGLOMERATE CREATED WITH GREAT EFFORT BY RIYADH. UNLIKE THE SYRIANS, RUSSIAN PILOTS AREN'T CHASING GROUPS OF 20-30 MILITANTS, BUT ARE HITTING UNDERGROUND TUNNELS, HQS, ARSENALS, AND VEHICULAR BOMB WORKSHOPS. BETWEEN SEPTEMBER 30 AND OCTOBER 1, RUSSIAN AIRCRAFT HIT ISLAMIST HQS AND FORTIFICATIONS IN IDLIB, ON THE TERRITORY CONTROLLED BY PRO-SAUDI JAISH AL-FATH. SYRIAN ARMY'S RESILIENCE WAS DUE TO ITS AIR SUPERIORITY. IT ALLOWED GOVERNMENT FORCES TO RESIST ISLAMIST GROUPS WHILE BEING SHORT OF PERSONNEL. HENCE THE ENDLESS DEMANDS BY THE "FRIENDS OF SYRIA" SUCH AS TURKEY AND THE ARAB MONARCHIES TO DECLARE A NO-FLY ZONE OVER TURKEY. ONCE SEVERAL KEY AIRBASES WERE CAPTURED AND MOST AIRCRAFT BECAME NON-OPERATIONAL, ASSAD'S ENEMIES WERE ABLE TO SEIZE THE INITIATIVE, BUT NOT FOR LONG. SINCE, UNLIKE THE COALITION, RUSSIAN AIRCRAFT OPERATE IN CONCERT WITH THE SYRIAN ARMY, THEY HAVE TIMELY INTELLIGENCE AND THE ABILITY TO PLACE AIRCRAFT DIRECTION OFFICERS ON THE FRONT LINES.

AS FAR AS THE USE OF AVIATION AGAINST NON-IS TARGETS IS CONCERNED, IT IS BEING USED WHERE IT'S NECESSARY TO RESTORE THE FRONT LINE, IRRESPECTIVE OF WHAT THE ISLAMISTS CALL THEMSELVES. THE OBJECTIVE IS TO STABILIZE THE SITUATION ON CRITICAL SECTORS AND LAUNCH A COUNTEROFFENSIVE. THIS EFFORT WILL BE DECRIED AND RIDICULED IN THE WEST, BUT MAINLY BY THE MEDIA. IT'S COMICAL TO PUBLICLY EXPRESS CONCERN THAT THE "WRONG" ISLAMISTS ARE BEING BOMBED. NOBODY HAS REMOVED DJABHAT AL-NUSRA FROM THE US STATE DEPARTMENT TERROR WATCH LIST. THE US IS CONCERNED ABOUT THE BOMBING OF THOSE ISLAMIST GROUPS WHICH THEY ARE QUIETLY USING FOR THEIR OWN PURPOSES. THESE ARE MAINLY AHRAR ASH-SHAM AND DJUNUD ASH-SHAM. THAT'S WHY THE THEME OF "SUFFERING CIVILIANS" IS BEING PURSUED, EVEN THOUGH NOBODY CAN PROVIDE ANY EVIDENCE. WE SHOULD NOTE THAT THE CURRENT MAXIMUM TASK IN SYRIA IS THE STABILIZATION OF THE FRONT AND CREATING CONDITIONS FOR ASSAD ARMY AND KURDISH OFFENSIVE TOWARD RAQQAH. THE CAPTURE OF THE IS SYRIAN CAPITAL WHICH FUNNELS ILLEGAL OIL TO TURKEY WILL CAUSE IS MILITARY ACTIVITY TO DIE DOWN IN BOTH SYRIA AND IRAQ. THAT'S MORE IMPORTANT THAN PUSHING MILITANTS OUT OF THE YARMUK PALESTINIAN REFUGEE CAMP OR CLEARING ALEPPO.

THE ANTI-ASSAD PROJECT IS FINISHED

THE US BELIEVES THAT RUSSIAN ACTIONS ARE MOTIVATED BY THE DESIRE TO POSITION ITSELF AS A GLOBAL PLAYER, ESCAPE THE SANCTIONS REGIME, AND EITHER DISCOUNT OR FREEZE THE UKRAINIAN THEME. IN ACTUALITY, OTHER THAN THE DEFENSE OF NATIONAL INTERESTS, THIS MOVE WAS MOTIVATED BY THE PLAINLY VISIBLE DEMONSTRATION OF THE BEGINNING OF THE END OF THE UNIPOLAR WORLD WHICH TOOK SHAPE AFTER USSR'S COLLAPSE. MOREOVER, RUSSIA HAS MADE A SIGNIFICANT STEP TOWARD IRAN IN THE IRAN-SAUDI CONFLICT. THE ARAB MONARCHY LOBBYIST DREAMS OF BRING THEM CLOSER TO RUSSIA WILL MOST LIKELY REMAIN JUST THAT. MOREOVER, MOSCOW HAS ALSO MADE HEADWAY IN WINNING THE SYMPATHIES OF THE WESTERN PUBLIC WHICH PREFERS POLITICIANS CAPABLE OF ACTING EFFECTIVELY, NOT POLITICALLY CORRECTLY. THAT PUBLIC UNDERSTANDS RUSSIA'S ACTIONS IN SYRIA. WHAT IS MORE, THE OFFICIAL REACTION BY WASHINGTON AND BRUSSELS WILL BE ALL THE MORE HARSH, SINCE THE ISSUE IS NO LONGER SYRIA, BUT RATHER A NEW MODEL OF GLOBAL DECISIONMAKING.

RUSSIA'S ESCALATION OF THE FIGHT AGAINST THE IS LED MANY POLITICIANS TO WORRY ABOUT IS EXPANSION INTO RUSSIA. ALONG THE FOLLOWING LINES: IN RETALIATION FOR RUSSIA'S POSITION ON SYRIA, IS LAUNCHES A TERROR WAR IN RUSSIA. IT'S OBVIOUS THAT RUSSIA'S SYRIA STANCE HAS CAUSED CONCERN IN SAUDI ARABIA, QATAR, AND TURKEY WHICH ARE THE SPONSORS OF "SYRIAN RESISTANCE," OF ITS RADICALIZATION AND ISLAMIZATION. IT HAPPENED BECAUSE EUROPEANS AND AMERICANS TURNED A BLIND EYE AND TOOK A NEUTRAL POSITION. RIYADH AND DOHA PLANTED JIHADISM IN SYRIA, USING UNLIMITED FINANCIAL SUPPORT AND MATERIAL AID. THIS ALLOWED THEM TO SATURATE THE ANTI-ASSAD FORCES WITH FOREIGN "VOLUNTEERS" AND CREATE A COUNTERWEIGHT TO GOVERNMENT FORCES TO MINIMIZE IRAN'S INFLUENCE IN SYRIA AND LEBANON. IF IT WEREN'T FOR THEIR SPONSORSHIP OF ISLAMISTS, THE SYRIA CONFLICT WOULD HAVE LONG PASSED ITS PEAK, ALTHOUGH THE IED WAR AND THE NEGATIVE SUNNI ATTITUDES TOWARD THE GOVERNMENT WOULD HAVE REMAINED.

AS FAR AS ONE CAN TELL, THE PROJECT WHICH PUTIN OUTLINED AT THE UN CONSIST OF PRESERVING THE OFFICIAL DAMASCUS IN SYRIA'S POLITICS AS THE ONLY GUARANTEE IT WON'T TURN INTO A "FAILED STATE." ONCE ASSAD'S OPPONENTS AND THEIR SPONSORS THE SITUATION IS UNWINNABLE, ONE CAN TRANSITION TO INCORPORATING THE SUNNI ELITE INTO SYRIA'S POLITICS AND ECONOMY, JUST AS SOMETHING SIMILAR HAPPENED WITH THE CHECHEN ELITE IN RUSSIA. OF COURSE, CHECHNYA DID NOT SUFFER FROM A SECTARIAN CONFLICT. SYRIA DOES, BUT THAT SUNNI INCORPORATION IS POSSIBLE IS SUGGESTED BY ASSAD THE ELDER'S ACTIONS WHO CREATED A VIABLE SYSTEM OF POLITICAL POWER AND REWARDS. IT'S NOT IMPORTANT WHETHER ASSAD THE YOUNGER WILL HEAD UP THIS INCORPORATION. HIS OWN WORDS SAY AS MUCH.

SAUDI ARABIA DOES NOT WANT TO TAKE THIS INTO ACCOUNT. THEY WANT ASSAD'S IMMEDIATE DEPARTURE. AFTER THE FAILURE TO UNDERMINE THE IRANIAN NUCLEAR DEAL AND UNSUCCESSFUL YEMEN OPERATIONS, ONLY A SUCCESS IN SYRIA CAN PRESERVE SAUDI ARABIA'S STATUS AS A REGIONAL POWER. BUT THE KINGDOM CAN'T FINANCE MILITANTS FOR THE YEMEN, SYRIA, AND IRAQ WARS ENDLESSLY.

IT'S BUDGET IS EXPERIENCING PROBLEMS DUE TO THE OIL PRICE CRISIS. IF THE CURRENT TRENDS CONTINUE, THE KINGDOM HAS ENOUGH GOLD/CURRENCY RESERVES FOR TWO-THREE YEARS. RIYADH WILL START FEELING PRESSURE FROM IRAN IN ABOUT A YEAR, DUE TO THE GROWTH OF TEHRAN'S FINANCIAL RESOURCES AS THE SANCTIONS WEAKEN. THEREFORE SAUDI ARABIA AND QATAR IN THE MEDIUM TERM WILL NOT HAVE THE RESOURCES TO LAUNCH LARGE-SCALE JIHADISM IN NORTHERN CAUCASUS. THEY MIGHT BE ABLE TO PAY FOR HIGH-PROFILE TERROR STRIKES, BUT NOT THE ANARCHY ON THE SCALE OF THE 1990s. THE SITUATION IN THE REPUBLICS OF NORTHERN CAUCASUS IS NOT THE SAME, EITHER. CHECHYA, IN PARTICULAR, HAS EXPERIENCE OF A WAR ON ITS TERRITORY, WHICH NOBODY WANTS TO REPEAT. SO THAT IS OR AL-NUSRA EXPANSION INTO NORTHERN CAUCASUS IS ONLY A THEORETICAL PROBLEM.

MOREOVER, RUSSIAN MILITARY PRESENCE IN SYRIA TIES DOWN JIHADI FORCES ON ITS TERRITORY. IF COMBAT OPERATIONS CONTINUE AND THE SYRIAN REGIME PRESERVES ITS RESILIENCE, THE LIKELIHOOD OF JIHADI HOT-SPOTS IN NORTHERN CAUCASUS IS VERY LOW. THE MAIN REQUIREMENT, MONEY, IS ALSO LACKING, SINCE ARAB MONARCHIES ARE ALSO FINANCING CONFLICTS IN SYRIA, IRAQ, AND YEMEN, WHILE QATARI IN SYRIA AND IN THE SINAI. THE DWINDLING FLOW OF VOLUNTEERS IS HEADING IN THAT DIRECTION AS WELL. ATTEMPTS TO MAKE IS SELF-FINANCING IN THE EVENT FUNDING IS CUT OFF BY RELYING ON THE SMUGGLING OF OIL, GRAIN, AND FLOUR, OF ARCHAEOLOGICAL ARTIFACTS, AND ON HOSTAGE-TAKING, ARE DOOMED TO FAILURE. THE REALIZATION THAT THERE IS NO WAR WITHOUT MONEY RECENTLY FORCED THE US TO OFFER AN AWARD FOR INFORMATION ABOUT IS FUNDING CHANNELS. ALTHOUGH THAT'S MAINLY A PROPAGANDA MOVE. FIRST OF ALL, THEY ALREADY KNOW EVERYTHING (THE ABSENCE OF SANCTIONS AGAINST TURKISH BANKS AND FIRMS COOPERATING WITH THE IS IS A SEPARATE TOPIC), AND SECONDLY, SPECIAL SERVICES ARE PAYING AGENTS, NOT STRANGERS.

A COALITION OF COALITIONS

IT IS INTERESTING TO FOLLOW THE REACTIONS TO RUSSIA, SYRIA, IRAN, AND IRAQ A JOINT INFORMATION CENTER IN BAGHDAD TO COORDINATE THE FIGHT AGAINST THE IS. THE US IS OF THE OPINION THIS DECISION CREATED A "NEW REALITY", AND FORCED THEM TO TRY TO UNDERSTAND RUSSIA'S PLANS. THE WALL STREET JOURNAL WRITES: "THE FOUR-COUNTRY SECURITY PACT...SURPRISED US OFFICIALS WHO ADMITTED THEY BARELY UNDERSTAND RUSSIA'S LONG-TERM STRATEGY IN THE REGION." IT NOTES KERRY LEFT OPEN THE POSSIBILITY OF COORDINATION, IF NOT COOPERATION, BETWEEN THE WHITE HOUSE AND THE KREMLIN, IN THE FIGHT AGAINST THE IS. IN PRACTICAL TERMS THE CENTER, WHICH WAS DUBBED BY THE WESTERN PRESS A JOINT GENERAL STAFF OF THE FOUR COUNTRIES, MEANS THERE ARE LIAISON OFFICERS IN BAGHDAD WHO MONITOR THE SITUATION AND SEND JOINT RECOMMENDATIONS TO THEIR RESPECTIVE CAPITALS. THE CENTER'S OBJECTIVE IS, IN ADDITION TO THE EXCHANGE OF INFORMATION, POLITICAL IN NATURE. NOT FOR NOTHING WAS ITS CREATION OFFICIALLY ANNOUNCED ON THE EVE OF RUSSIAN PRESIDENT'S PROGRAM SPEECH AT THE UN GENERAL ASSEMBLY.

AT THE UN, THE RUSSIAN PRESIDENT SKETCHED OUT THE POSSIBILITY OF CREATING AN ALTERNATIVE ANTI-IS COALITION ON THE EVE OF HIS MEETING WITH THE US PRESIDENT, GUARANTEEING THE PARTICIPATION OF EVERYONE WHO EARLIER WAS FORBIDDEN BY THE US, MAINLY IRAN AND SYRIA. AT THE SAME TIME THE US IS COOPERATING WITH IRAN, FOR EXAMPLE DURING IRANIAN ARMS DELIVERIES BY US TRANSPORT AIRCRAFT FROM ERBIL TO THE KOBANI ENCLAVE. MOSCOW OFFERED TO LEGALIZE THIS PROCESS AND FORMALIZE IT USING OFFICIAL DOCUMENTS, BUT WASHINGTON COULDN'T TAKE THAT STEP. IN PART BECAUSE IT WOULD HAVE DAMAGED US RELATIONS WITH THE ARAB MONARCHIES, AND RIYADH ESPECIALLY. THE MOST OPTIMISTIC OUTCOME OF THE RUSSIAN-US CONSULTATIONS COULD HAVE BEEN A DELINEATION OF COALITION SPHERES OF RESPONSIBILITY AND ESTABLISHING CONTACTS IN ORDER TO PREVENT ACCIDENTAL MUTUAL STRIKES AND TO COORDINATE OPERATIONS. A MORE REALISTIC OUTCOME IS THAT EACH COALITION WILL DO WHAT IT PLEASES, PUTTING OUT "RED FLAGS" AND COORDINATING AFTER THE FACT.

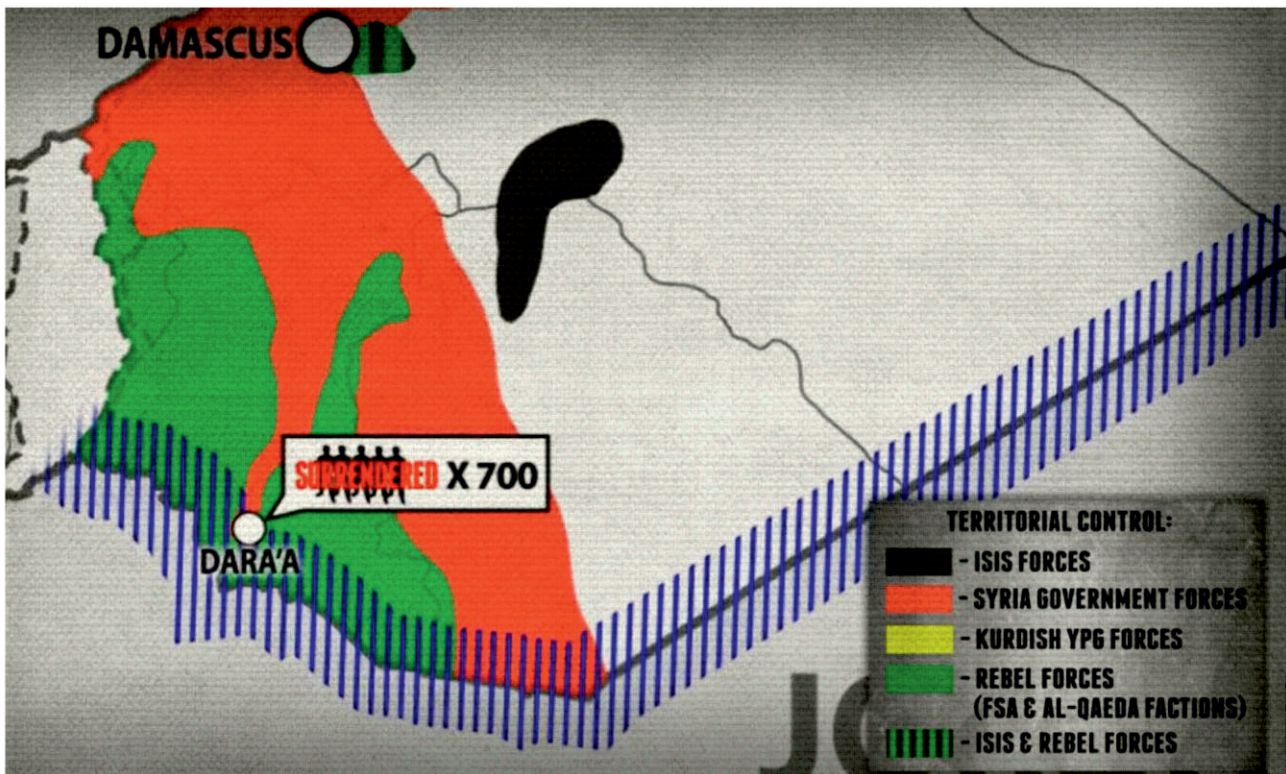
IN CONCLUSION WE NOTE THAT RUSSIA'S AIR OPERATIONS IN SYRIA AND THE DIPLOMATIC BREAKTHROUGH IN IRAQ ALLOWED RUSSIA TO RESTORE THE IMAGE IT LOST IN THE POST-SOVIET TIMES. ONLY THE STRONG AND SELF-SUFFICIENT ARE RESPECTED IN THE MIDDLE EAST. TO BE SURE, MOSCOW IS MUCH MORE CAREFUL THAN IN THE OLD TIMES, WHICH EXPLAINS THE OFFERED LEVEL OF COORDINATION WITH THE US AND ISRAEL AND ITS ABIDING BY THE ACCEPTED RULES OF THE GAME TO AN EXTENT GREATER THAN WASHINGTON'S. WHICH UNDOUBTEDLY IS A BIG PLUS. ARE THERE RISKS FOR RUSSIA? NATURALLY. BUT WITHOUT ITS INTERVENTION IN SYRIA AT A CRITICAL TIME AT THE MINIMAL LEVEL WHICH WE ARE OBSERVING THESE RISKS WOULD HAVE BEEN GREATER. WHICH IS CLEARLY NOT TAKEN INTO ACCOUNT BY THE CRITICS OF RUSSIA'S GOVERNMENT, ESPECIALLY INTERNAL ONES...



OCTOBER 12, 2015

MYTH ABOUT MODERATE REBELS





WASHINGTON HAS BEEN CONTINUING TO DEVELOP MEASURES AGAINST THE RUSSIAN STRATEGY IN SYRIA. FIRST OF ALL, THE US HAS TO DEMONSTRATE THE EXISTENCE OF THE SO-CALLED "MODERATE REBELS". FOR THAT REASON THE TOPIC OF THE "FREE SYRIAN ARMY" (FSA) BECAME POPULAR IN THE US AND EUROPEAN MEDIA. BUT WHAT IS THE FSA?

FSA UNITS WERE CREATED ABOUT HALF A YEAR AFTER THE START OF THE SYRIAN WAR. TURKEY SUPPORTED THIS IDEA. HOWEVER, IT ALWAYS WAS A PR MYTH AND NEVER WAS A REAL POWER ON THE BATTLEFIELD. THE FIRST FSA ACTIVITY WAS NOTED IN 2011 WHEN ITS LEADER, A FORMER COLONEL OF THE SYRIAN ARAB ARMY (SAA), RIAD AL-ASAAD MADE A STATEMENT ABOUT THE CREATION OF THE FSA. SUNNI DESERTERS FROM THE SAA BECAME THE CORE OF THE GROUP. TURKEY STARTED SUPPLIES OF ARMS AND EQUIPMENT, BUT THERE WEREN'T ANY CONFIRMED REPORTS OF FSA OPERATIONS.

IN 2012, RIAD AL-ASAAD WAS INJURED IN A CAR INCIDENT AND LOST A LEG. AFTER THIS EVENT FSA'S LEVEL OF ACTIVITY DROPPED EVEN LOWER. MOREOVER, THE LOCAL FSA UNITS DIDN'T COMPLY WITH ANKARA'S ORDERS. THERE WAS NO CENTRAL COMMANDER OR A CHAIN OF COMMAND. IN 2012, TURKEY ABANDONED ITS ATTEMPTS TO TURN THE FSA INTO A REAL POWER IN SYRIA. SEPARATELY, WASHINGTON DIDN'T SUPPORT THE FSA BECAUSE OF ITS MINOR ROLE IN SYRIA.

IN THE END OF 2012, THE FSA WENT INTO LIQUIDATION. NONETHELESS, SEPARATE UNITS STILL EXIST ON THE BATTLEFIELD. TURKISH INTELLIGENCE SERVICES USE THEM FOR THEIR OWN PURPOSES. IN GENERAL, THESE UNITS ARE BASED IN HOMS, ALEPPO AND IN SOUTHERN SYRIA. ANOTHER PART OF THE FSA JOINED TERRORIST GROUPS SUCH AS AL NUSRA.

THE SO-CALLED "SOUTHERN FRONT OF THE FREE SYRIAN ARMY", INDEED, ISN'T PART OF THE FSA. IT CONSISTS OF TRIBAL PEOPLE LIVING AT THE BORDER OF SYRIA AND JORDAN. THEY FIGHT ONLY TO DEFEND THEIR SETTLEMENT ZONE. THE 700 MILITANTS WHO SURRENDERED TO THE SYRIAN GOVERNMENT IN DARAA WERE MEMBERS OF THIS TRIBAL MILITIA.

INDEED, THE US HAS NEVER SUPPLIED ARMS AND EQUIPMENT TO THE FSA. THE FSA UNITS DIDN'T INCLUDE QATARI OR SAUDI MERCENARIES. IT HAS ALWAYS BEEN A FAILED SYRIAN PROJECT.

INSTEAD, SAUDI MERCENARIES AND MEMBERS OF THE SAUDI SPECIAL FORCES HAVE BEEN ACTIVELY PARTICIPATING IN THE AL NUSRA TERRORIST GROUP AND SIMILAR ENTITIES.

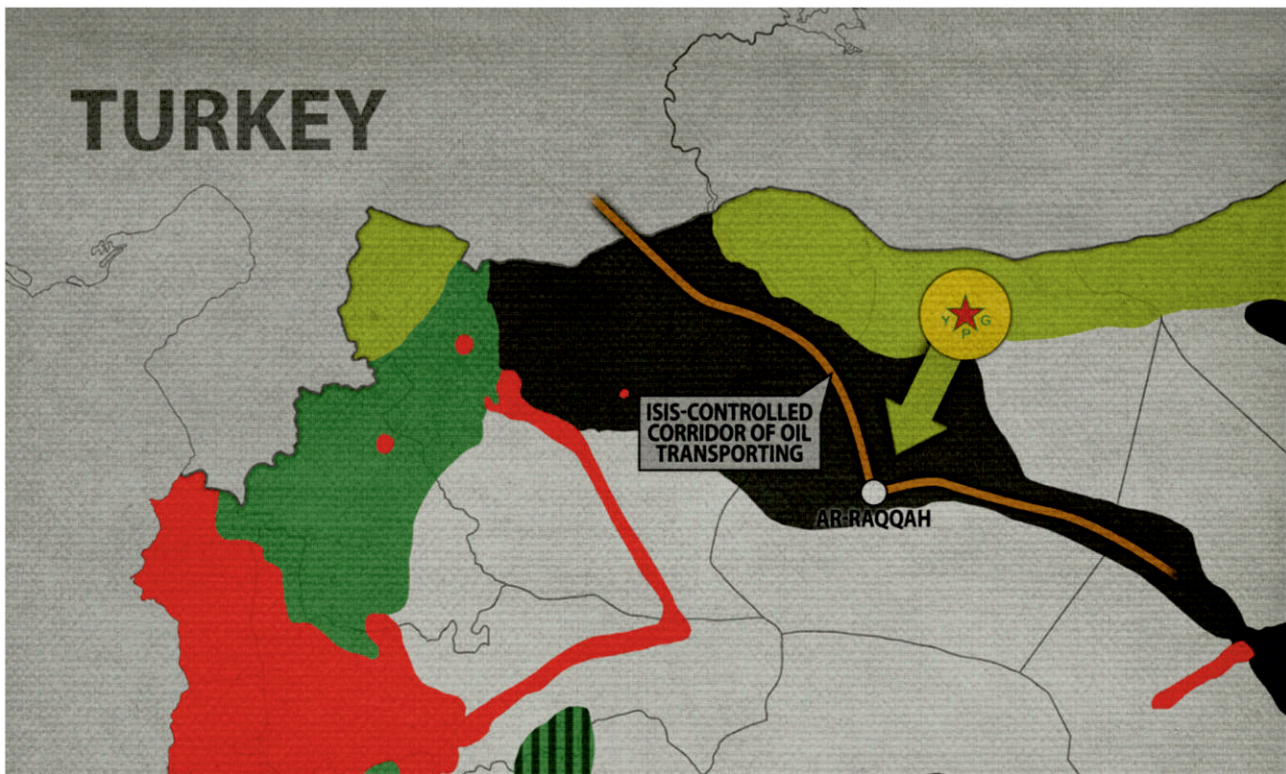
THUS, 90% OF THE SO-CALLED "SYRIAN REBELS" ARE CLEARLY TERRORISTS SUPPORTED BY QATAR, SAUDI ARABIA AND OTHER FOREIGN PLAYERS. THE MODERATE OPPOSITION DOESN'T EXIST, OR AT MOST IT CONTROLS MINOR AREAS IN SOME PARTS OF SYRIA. SO IF THE WHITE HOUSE WANTS TO PROVE THAT RUSSIA BOMBS THE WRONG TERRORISTS, IT SHOULD SHOW LEADERS OF THESE SO-CALLED "MODERATE REBELS", THEIR HISTORY OF REBELLION AND DISTINCT AREAS OF THEIR CONTROL. OTHERWISE THE COMPLAINTS ABOUT HITTING WRONG TARGETS ARE PURE AND SIMPLE LIES.



OCTOBER 13, 2015

THE US STRATEGY





MOSCOW'S SUCCESS IN SYRIA DEFINES A SERIOUS PROBLEM FOR THE WHITE HOUSE. THE IDEA OF BLAMING RUSSIA FOR BOMBING MODERATE REBELS DOESN'T WORK. IF MODERATE REBELS WERE IN SYRIA, WHY DID THE US NEED TO LAUNCH AN EXPENSIVE CAMPAIGN TO TRAIN MODERATE REBELS? MOREOVER, MOST PARTS OF THE US-TRAINED "MODERATE REBELS" WITH FULL EQUIPMENT JOINED "AL NUSRA" A DECLARED TERRORIST GROUP, EVEN BY THE US.

DESPITE THE FACT THAT THE PENTAGON'S PROGRAM AIMED TO TRAIN MODERATE REBELS WAS A TOTAL FAILURE AND, INDEED, SUPPORTED TERRORISM IN SYRIA, THE PENTAGON OFFICIALS WEREN'T HELD ACCOUNTABLE. THUS, WE COULD SUGGEST THAT THE REAL PURPOSE WAS TO COVER ORIGINAL TARGET WHICH WAS TO SUPPORT THE TERRORIST GROUPS LIKE "AL NUSRA" AND "AHRAR ASH-SHAM". THEY ARE THE ONLY POWER THAT IS READY TO HELP THE US TO ACHIEVE ITS MAIN GOAL, TO OVERTHROW BASHAR AL-ASSAD. KURDISH ACTIVITY IS CONCENTRATED TO NORTHERN SYRIA. THEY COULD ADVANCE ON AL-RAQQA BUT THEY WON'T FIGHT AGAINST THE SYRIAN GOVERNMENT.

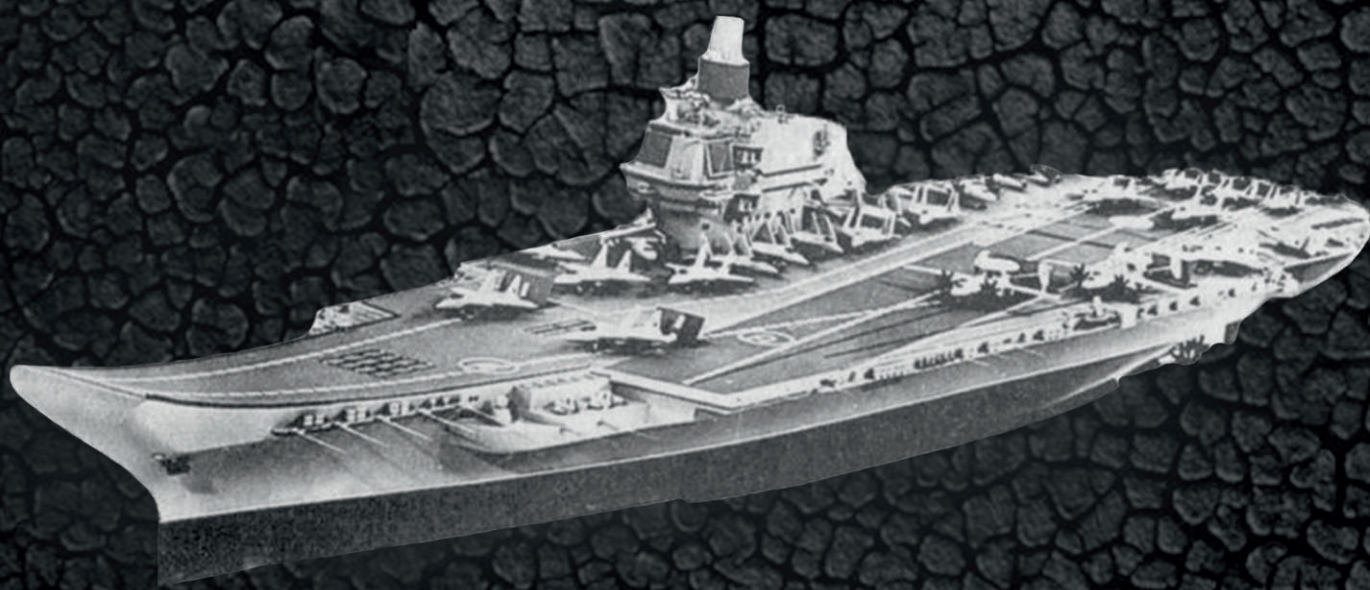
IF THE WHITE HOUSE DECIDED TO SUPPORT TERRORISTS, IT HAD TO COORDINATE ITS POLICY WITH SAUDI ARABIA, FOUNDER AND SUPPORTER OF AL NUSRA AND A NUMBER OF SMALL TERRORIST GROUPS IN SYRIA. THE FACT THAT US-LED COALITION AIR FORCES DIDN'T BOMB "AL NUSRA" DURING THE LAST MONTHS PROVES THIS ASSUMPTION. MOREOVER, BOTH WASHINGTON AND RIYADH ARE INTERESTED IN CHAOS IN SYRIA IN ORDER TO WEAKEN IRAN IN THIS REGION. THUS, THEY HOPE TO RESTORE THE REGIONAL BALANCE OF POWER STRONGLY AFFECTED BY THE RUSSIAN MILITARY OPERATION.

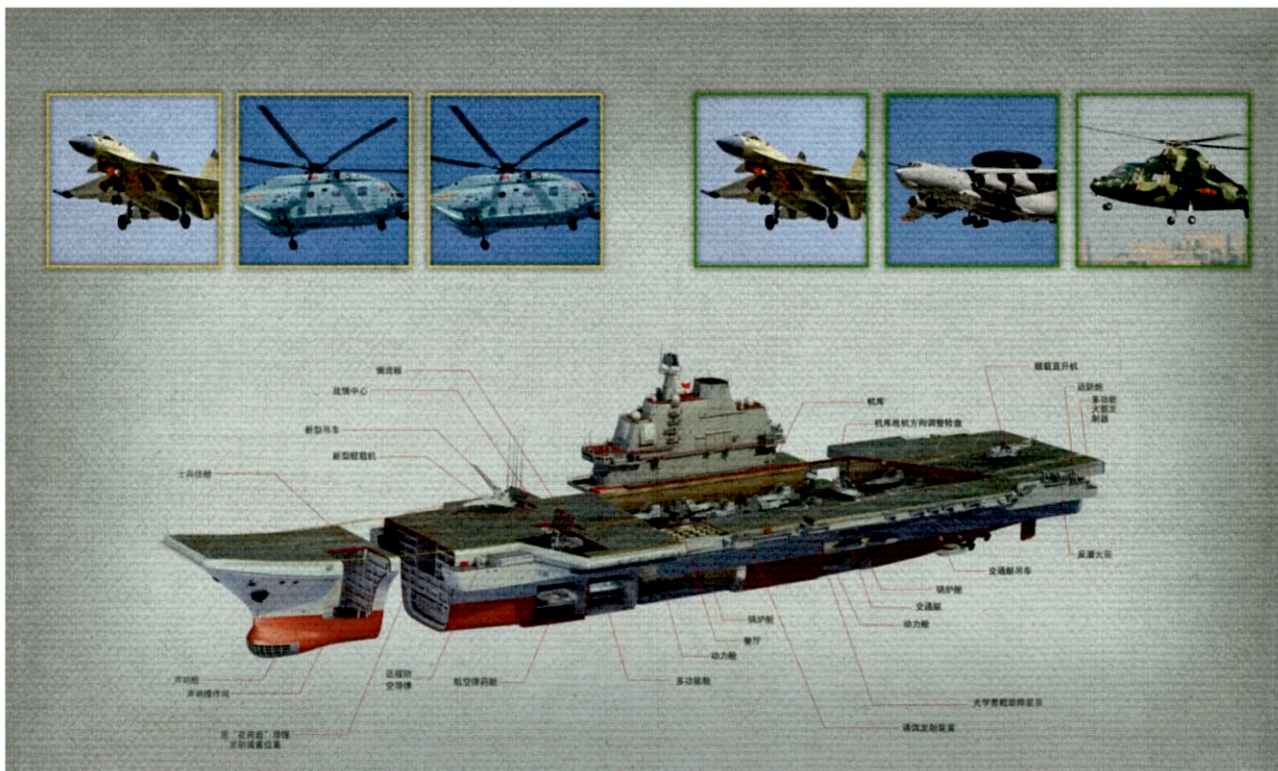
ON OCTOBER 12, A GROUP OF US CARGO AIRCRAFT ALREADY AIRDROPPED SOME 50 TONS OF SMALL FIRE AMMUNITION AND EXPLOSIVES TO TERRORISTS IN NORTHERN SYRIA'S HASAKAH GOVERNORATE. ALSO, THERE ARE NUMEROUS REPORTS THAT SAUDI ARABIA, QATAR AND TURKEY ARE READY TO STRENGTHEN THEIR SUPPORT TO TERRORIST GROUPS WITH ARMS, AMMUNITIONS AND EVEN MAN-PORTABLE AIR DEFENSE SYSTEMS.

THE VERY SAME TIME, US COMBINED JOINT SPECIAL OPERATIONS TASK FORCE-SYRIA (CJSOTF-S) MOVED TO THE AL UDEID AIR BASE IN QATAR. ACCORDING TO REPORTS, CJSOTF-S WILL COORDINATE WEAPONS' SUPPLIES TO SYRIAN GROUPS FIGHTING THE ASSAD GOVERNMENT AND AIR-GROUND COOPERATION BETWEEN TERRORIST AND THE US AIR FORCE LOCATED AT INCIRLIK AIR BASE IN TURKEY. FURTHERMORE, CJSOTF-S IS UNDER COMMAND OF US SPECIAL OPERATIONS COMMAND (USSOCOM), WHICH HAS COORDINATED THE \$500 MILLION PROGRAM TO TRAIN SO-CALLED "MODERATE REBELS". THUS, THE US AND ITS ALLIES TOOK A HARD LINE TO FUEL TERRORIST ACTIVITY IN SYRIA.

OCTOBER 14, 2015

THE CHINESE APPROACH





IT'S CLEAR THAT MAJOR WORLD POWERS CLOSELY MONITOR THE RUSSIAN AEROSPACE DEFENCE FORCES' (VKO) ACTIVITY IN SYRIA. ONE OF THESE MAJOR POWERS IS CHINA. FOLLOWING CHINESE DIPLOMATIC ACTIONS AND MEDIA COVERAGE OVER THE TOPIC WE COULD CONCLUDE THAT CHINA NOTED THAT THE US-LED ANTI-ISIS COALITION HADN'T ACHIEVED ANY SUBSTANTIAL PROGRESS, MOST OF THE ANTI-ASSAD FORCES HAD BEEN ALREADY MERGED, MAINLY BY ISIS AND AL NUSRA. THUS, CHINA PROVIDES DELIBERATE DIPLOMATIC SUPPORT AND DEEPLY ANALYZES THE RUSSIAN MILITARY ACTIONS IN THE REGION. THERE ARE CRUCIAL CONCLUSIONS MADE BY CHINESE EXPERTS AND MEDIA:

FIRST IS THE RUSSIAN AIR GROUPING IN THE HMEYMIM AIRBASE INCLUDES BOTH OLD AND NEW TYPES OF THE AIRCRAFTS AND HELICOPTERS. THEIR ACTUAL NUMBER AND CAPABILITIES WON'T ALLOW SUCCESSFUL OPERATIONS AGAINST TERRORISTS IN IRAQ.

SECOND IS UPGRADED SOVIET WEAPONS AND MILITARY EQUIPMENT COULD BE VERY EFFECTIVE IN TODAY'S MILITARY CONFLICTS. MOREOVER, THE RUSSIAN SPACE-BASED SATELLITE NAVIGATION SYSTEM GLONASS HAS SHOWN ITS EFFECTIVENESS IN DIRECTING WARPLANES TO THEIR TARGETS.

THIRD IS RUSSIA MAINTAINS ADVANCE IN SOME TYPES OF AVIATION. FOR INSTANCE, THE SUKHOI SU-30SM MULTI-ROLE FIGHTER AIRCRAFT IS AN IMPROVED VERSION OF THE THRUST-VECTORING SU-30MKI AND MKM VARIANTS FOR THE RUSSIAN MILITARY, PRODUCED BY THE IRKUT CORPORATION. INDEED, THE SU-30M FIGHTERS ENSURE RUSSIA'S AIR SUPREMACY IN SYRIA.

FOURTH IS ISIS, AL NUSRA AND OTHER TERRORIST GROUPS HAVE COLLECTED A HIGH NUMBER OF SOVIET, US AND CHINESE-MADE MAN-PORTABLE AIR DEFENSE SYSTEMS. THIS POSES A THREAT FOR RUSSIAN WARPLANES IF THEY IGNORE RULES OF SECURITY.

FIFTH IS RUSSIA IS REPORTEDLY SENDING ABOUT 36 YAKOVLEV YAK-130 LIGHT FIGHTERS IN THE NEAREST FUTURE. IT WILL PROVIDE ADDITIONAL EXPERIENCE TO RUSSIAN AVIATORS AND ALLOWS TO IMPROVE TACTICS OF THE WARPLANES' USAGE AGAINST GROUND TARGETS.

BEIJING IS CONSIDERING A POSSIBILITY TO PARTICIPATE IN THE RUSSIAN-LED COALITION AGAINST ISIS. CHINA CAN SEND A CARRIER STRIKE GROUP INCLUDING AIRCRAFT CARRIER LIAONING, TWO "TYPE 052D" DESTROYERS, ABOUT FOUR "TYPE 054" ESCORT VESSELS, TWO "TYPE 39" SUBMARINES AND SOME SERVICE SHIPS. ALSO, CHINA HAS ALL CHANCES TO MAKE AN AGREEMENT WITH LEBANON TO USE ITS AIR SPACE OR EVEN GET ACCESS TO IRANIAN AIR BASES.

THE PROBLEM IS LIAONING HAS ONLY ONE EMBARKED SQUADRON OF SHENYANG J-15 AND TWO HELICOPTER CARRIER SQUADRONS OF Z-18. THIS WON'T SUFFICE FOR FULL READINESS CONDITION AND OPERABILITY. LIAONING NEEDS ONE MORE EMBARKED SQUADRON OF FIGHTERS, A LONG-RANGE RADAR DETECTION AIRCRAFT SQUADRON AND A UNIT OF HELICOPTERS FOR THE SEARCH AND RESCUE OF PILOTS.

IN ANY CASE, THE FULL-SCALE GROUND OFFENSIVE OF THE SYRIAN FORCES SUPPORTED BY THE RUSSIAN AIR FORCE AND IRANIAN MILITARY ADVISERS WILL PUSH ISIS MILITANTS IN DIRECTION OF IRAQ. THIS POSES A REAL THREAT TO THE OIL PRODUCTION IN IRAQ, WHICH ACTIVELY INVOLVES CHINESE COMPANIES.

THUS, CHINA ACTIVELY PREPARES FOR THE PARTICIPATION IN THE RUSSIAN ANTI-ISIS OPERATIONS AT LEAST ON THE TERRITORIES OF IRAQ. THE PARTICULAR DECISION WILL DEPEND ON THE SUCCESS OF THE GROUND OPERATION IN SYRIA AND IRAQ'S DECISION TO REQUEST CHINESE MILITARY ASSISTANCE.



STINGERS ALREADY IN SYRIA



THREATENING LOSSES, DEMANDING JIHAD, THE OUTRAGE CAUSED BY THE OVERFLIGHT OF RUSSIAN CRUISE MISSILES ONLY A FEW MILES FROM A US DRONE, THE THREAT TO STOP BUYING GAS AND REFUSE TO BUILD RUSSIAN NUCLEAR POWER PLANTS—NONE OF THESE SOUND VERY CREDIBLE, NO MATTER WHETHER THESE STATEMENTS ARE ISSUED BY THE AMERICANS, THE SAUDIS, OR THE TURKS. AND THEY CAN'T WIN OVER THE PUBLIC'S SYMPATHY FOR THOSE WHO ARE MAKING THESE CLAIMS, OR FOR THOSE WHO ARE ORDERING SUCH STATEMENTS TO BE MADE.

INCONVENIENT

THE REFUGEES, HUNDREDS OF THOUSANDS OF WHOM SUDDENLY FLOODED EUROPE, ARE CAUSING GREAT CONCERN AMONG ITS INHABITANTS. BUT RUSSIA IS NOT PERMITTING ANYONE TO BOMB ASSAD TO PIECES UNDER THE PRETEXT OF STOPPING THE FLOW OF REFUGEES. THEREFORE THE LARGE-SCALE PROVOCATION IN THE FORM OF MASS MIGRATION HAS NOT BROUGHT THE DESIRED RESULTS.

A TERRORIST ACT IS A DIFFERENT STORY. IT'S A WIN-WIN PROPOSITION. THE VICTIMS ARE PROVOKING SYMPATHY, WHILE THE TERRORISTS ARE PROVOKING OUTRAGE BECAUSE IT WAS A PEACE RALLY. THE PUBLISHED LIST OF ORGANIZATIONS WHICH, ACCORDING TO THE TURKISH AUTHORITIES, MIGHT BE BEHIND THE TERRORIST ATTACK, INCLUDES ALL THE USUAL SUSPECTS ON THE PRINCIPLE "KILL THEM ALL AND SORT THEM OUT LATER". NOBODY IS EVEN ASKING WHY THEY NEEDED TO LAUNCH THE ATTACK WHOSE ONLY BENEFICIARY IS THE GOVERNMENT OF TURKEY ON THE EVE OF THE UPCOMING PARLIAMENTARY ELECTIONS. IT NOW HAS A BLANK CHECK TO DO WHATEVER IT WANTS TO AGAINST ANYONE ACCUSED OF SUPPORTING THE RADICALS. NATURALLY, TURKEY'S MIT INTELLIGENCE SERVICE IS NOT ON THE SUSPECTS' LIST, EVEN THOUGH THE EVENT IS EERILY SIMILAR IN ITS LACK OF MOTIVES TO THE RECENT TERROR ACT IN SURUSH WHICH LAUNCHED THE LATEST ROUND OF ERDOGAN'S WAR AGAINST THE KURDS.

AS DEPENDENT AS RUSSIA'S STRATEGY IN SYRIA IS DEPENDENT ON THE US AND FRANCO-BRITISH FACTORS, THEY ARE SECONDARY IN IMPORTANCE. THE REAL THREATS ARE ASSOCIATED WITH QATAR'S, SAUDI ARABIA'S, AND TURKEY'S ACTIVITIES ON SYRIA'S TERRITORY. ESPECIALLY THE LATTER, SINCE ERDOGAN HAS NOWHERE TO RETREAT TO.

SISYPHUS' LABORS

THE LEVEL OF BILATERAL TRADE BETWEEN RUSSIA AND TURKEY IS HIGHER BY TWO ORDERS OF MAGNITUDE THAN BETWEEN RUSSIA AND QATAR OR SAUDI ARABIA. CONSIDERING THE HISTORY OF BILATERAL RELATIONS, TURKEY'S NATO MEMBERSHIP, THE FIGHTING POWER AND EXPERIENCE OF THE TURKISH MILITARY, OFFICIAL ANKARA'S POSITION CONCERNING CRIMEA, THE STRAITS FACTOR, AND ERDOGAN'S PERSONAL CHARACTERISTICS MEANS THAT THE ANALYSIS OF THE TURKISH COMPONENT OF THE SYRIA WAR IS OF PARTICULAR IMPORTANCE WHEN ATTEMPTING TO ASSESS FUTURE DEVELOPMENTS. WE'LL PERFORM THAT ANALYSIS USING DATA FROM IBV EXPERTS YU. B. SHCHEGLOVIN AND V.I. KOVALYOV, WHICH SUGGEST THE FOLLOWING: RUSSIA'S MILITARY OPERATION IN SYRIA HAS HAD A MOST NEGATIVE IMPACT ON TURKEY'S STRATEGY AND TACTICS IN SYRIA.

FOR THE US, IT'S A CHALLENGE TO ITS GLOBAL DOMINANCE, BUT FOR ANKARA THE PROBLEMS ARE CONSIDERABLY MORE DOWN TO EARTH. THE RECENT US-TURKISH AGREEMENT ON LEASING THE INCIRLIK AIRBASE WAS DIFFICULT TO ANKARA. THE US LITERALLY HAD TO STEP ON ERDOGAN'S THROAT TO GET HIM TO CONDUCT CONSTRUCTIVE NEGOTIATIONS. BUT DELAYING FURTHER MEANT LOSING STRATEGIC INITIATIVE. ANKARA, DOHA, AND RIYADH SPENT THE WHOLE SPRING COORDINATING THE SPHERES OF INFLUENCE OF FORMATIONS UNDER THEIR RESPECTIVE CONTROL. THEY WERE DISCUSSING A GENERAL OFFENSIVE AGAINST DAMASCUS AND THE END OF ASSAD'S RULE. TO ACHIEVE THAT COMPROMISE, SAUDI ARABIA ACCEDED TO QATAR'S AND TURKEY'S DEMAND TO ALLOW MUSLIM BROTHERHOOD TO PARTICIPATE IN SYRIA'S POLITICAL LIFE. WHICH IN TURN LED TO PRO-SAUDI FORCES TAKING IDLIB, AND PRO-QATAR AND PRO-TURKISH FORCES (INCLUDING THE IS) TO REACH NORTHERN ALEPPO. THE KURDS LAUNCHED A LATE SUMMER OFFENSIVE AGAINST RAQQAH. THIS FORCED THE TURKS AND QATARIS TO CHANGE TACTICS WHICH CONTRIBUTED TO ERDOGAN'S PARTY'S FAILURE AT THE PARLIAMENTARY ELECTIONS.

IT WAS PLANNED THAT, HAVING BEGUN OPERATIONS AGAINST THE PKK, ERDOGAN WILL SPARK A WAVE OF TURKISH NATIONALISM AND REDUCE THE TURNOUT IN FAVOR OF THE PRO-KURDISH PARTY OF THE DEMOCRACY OF NATIONS. MOREOVER, PKK FIGHTERS WHO PLAY A CRUCIAL ROLE IN THE KURDISH REGIONS OF SYRIA HAD TO BE DIVERTED TO THE "TURKISH FRONT". HOWEVER, THE KURDS' TENACIOUS RESISTANCE PUT PAID TO ERDOGAN'S HOPES FOR RAPID VICTORY. THAT WAS HIS FIRST MISTAKE. THE SECOND ONE WAS THAT HE DECIDED THAT AFTER THE "GIFT" TO THE US IN THE FORM OF INCIRLIK THEY WILL SUPPORT HIS "BUFFER ZONE" IDEA ON THE BORDER WITH SYRIA AND EVENTUALLY A NO-FLY ZONE AS WELL. THE BUFFER ZONE DE-FACTO EXISTS, BUT THE SECOND INITIATIVE WAS TURNED DOWN.

THE US AT THE MOMENT ARE ENGAGED IN A PROPAGANDA WAR AGAINST RUSSIA BUT ARE READY TO SUPPORT THE KURDS' OFFENSIVE AGAINST RAQQAH. THAT'S A LETHAL SCENARIO FOR ERDOGAN. HIS UNDERSTANDING WITH QATAR WAS BUILT ON THE ASSUMPTION THAT THE BUFFER ZONE WILL ENSURE A STEADY FLOW OF SUPPLIES TO THE IS AND PRO-TURKISH FORCES IN SYRIA. TAKING RAQQAH WOULD DEMOLISH THAT SCHEME. KEEP IN MIND THAT AFTER THE SURUSH TERROR ACT WHICH TOOK PLACE AT A KURDISH REFUGEE CAMP AND WHICH WAS BLAMED ON THE IS, TURKISH AIR FORCE DID NOT BOMB THE IS BUT ONLY THE PKK. LIKewise THE IS HAD NO REACTION TO TURKEY'S "CAMPAIGN OF VENGEANCE" ALLEGEDLY AIMED AT IT. MOREOVER, US AIRCRAFT BOMBED NEITHER TARGET, ON ANKARA'S REQUEST.

ERDOGAN'S THIRD MISTAKE IS THAT HE CAME TO BELIEVE MOSCOW WAS READY TO GIVE UP ASSAD. ALL HIS REMAINING MISCALCULATIONS FLOWED FROM THAT MISTAKE, INCLUDING HIS ALLIANCE WITH QATAR WHICH AROSE ON THE BASIS OF UNITY OF INTERESTS IN LIBYA AND SYRIA. IF RAQQAH FALLS, THE POSITIONS OF THE PRO-QATARI IS IN SYRIA AND ULTIMATELY IN IRAQ WILL WEAKEN DRAMATICALLY. TURKEY REFUSED TO PARTICIPATE IN THE JOINT PROJECT WITH THE US TO TRAIN "NEW SYRIAN OPPOSITION", INSTEAD BLOCKING IT AND LAUNCHING ITS OWN TRAINING PROGRAM USING QATAR'S MONEY. NOW ANKARA WILL HAVE TO START OVER, PREPARING ITS OWN FIGHTERS WHICH MAY BE PRESENTED TO THE WORLD AS "MODERATE OPPOSITION."

ERDOGAN IN OCTOBER

FOR THAT TO HAPPEN ERDOGAN HAD TO START NEGOTIATING WITH THE EU. THE OFFICIAL PURPOSE OF HIS VISIT WAS TO ENSURE EU SUPPORT ON MINIMIZING THE NEGATIVE ASPECTS OF THE MIGRATION CRISIS, ALTHOUGH ERDOGAN HIMSELF PROVOKED IT BY ATTEMPTING TO REDUCE THE ELECTORATE'S DISPLEASURE WITH THE PRESENCE OF THE HUGE NUMBER OF REFUGEES FROM SYRIA AND OTHER PLACES. THE BLACKMAIL WORKED, EU AGREED TO FINANCE NEW REFUGEE CAMPS IN TURKEY. WHICH ALLOW NEW RECRUITS TO BE TRAINED FOR ISLAMIST FORMATIONS SINCE REFUGEE CAMPS ARE AN IDEAL RECRUITING GROUND. ANKARA'S LEVEL OF ACTIVITY IN THIS AREA WILL INCREASE ONLY IF ERDOGAN'S PARTY HAS "SATISFACTORY" RESULTS IN THE ELECTIONS ON NOVEMBER 1.

ERDOGAN'S VISIT TO BRUSSELS ON OCTOBER 5-6 HAD DUAL CONSEQUENCES. EU AGREED TO GIVE HIM TWO BILLION EURO FOR REFUGEE NEEDS AND COMPELLED HIM TO ACCEPT MIGRANTS FROM SHIPS INTERCEPTED BY EU NAVAL FORCES. MOREOVER, EU POLITICIANS ARE DISCUSSING DEPORTING UP TO 400 THOUSAND MIGRANTS. TURKEY DID NOT PROMISE TO TAKE THEM ALL BACK, AND ONE CAN'T PROVE THEY CAME FROM TURKEY IN THE FIRST PLACE. MOREOVER, DEPORTATION IMPLIES SERIOUS JUDICIAL CHALLENGES AND WOULD REQUIRE THE EU TO ADOPT NEW LAWS. HAVING PROVOKED A MASSIVE REFUGEE OUTFLOW, ERDOGAN WEAKENED ASSAD'S ISLAMIST FOES AND SERIOUSLY REDUCED THE RECRUITING BASE FOR NEW VOLUNTEERS IN THE CAMPS. WHAT'S MORE, MANY OF THOSE WHO FOUGHT IN SYRIA DECIDED TO BECOME "FORCED REFUGEES" TO EUROPE.

BUT ERDOGAN ALSO CAME TO BRUSSELS TO DISCUSS THE MATTER OF A "SECURITY BUFFER ZONE" BETWEEN THE TURKISH BORDER AND ALEPPO, INCLUDING A "NO-FLY ZONE." THE OBJECTIVE HERE IS TO ESTABLISH BASES FOR PRO-TURKISH FORCES IN NORTHERN SYRIA, BUT ALSO TO UNDERMINE EFFORTS TO CREATE A KURDISH AUTONOMY ON ITS BORDER. EUROPEANS PROMISED TO "DISCUSS" THE PROJECT. ONE DAY LATER MERKEL SAID SHE "DOESN'T SEE TURKEY IN THE EU." THE US OFFICIALLY SAID THAT "TECHNICAL AND LOGISTICA FACTORS DON'T SUPPORT" ESTABLISHING A SECURITY ZONE, OR A NO-FLY ZONE. THAT DECISION WAS CLEARLY MADE AFTER RUSSIAN CRUISE MISSILE STRIKES FROM THE CASPIAN AGAINST TERRORIST TARGETS IN SYRIA.

THUS THE ONLY FORCE WHICH THE US CAN RELY ON TO LAUNCH A RAQQA OFFENSIVE ARE THE KURDS. AND THEY WILL IGNORE ERDOGAN'S OPINION ON THAT SCORE.

ERDOGAN PROVOKES SUSPICION AND IRRITATION IN BOTH BRUSSELS AND WASHINGTON. ANKARA'S INITIATIVE FAILED. EU AND US ARE NOT READY TO QUARREL WITH RUSSIA IN SYRIA TO SATISFY TURKEY'S AMBITIONS, AND THEREFORE TURKEY WILL REMAIN IN ISOLATION, ESPECIALLY IF QATAR DECIDES TO PHASE OUT ITS IS PROJECT IN SYRIA (IS MILITANTS ARE BEING RAPIDLY TRANSFERRED TO THE PRO-QATARI FORCES IN LIBYA). TURKEY'S MIT WILL CONTINUE INCREASING ITS SUBVERSIVE ACTIVITIES IN SYRIA, INCLUDING AGAINST RUSSIAN MILITARY PERSONNEL. BUT IF RAQQA IS TAKEN AND THE KURDS ESTABLISH CONTROL OVER SYRIA'S NORTHERN PROVINCES, THEY WILL BECOME A BUFFER ZONE AGAINST TURKEY'S OPERATIONS. MOREOVER, ERDOGAN MAY BE SERIOUSLY WEAKENED AFTER THE PARLIAMENTARY ELECTIONS WHERE HIS PARTY MIGHT NOT GET THE ABSOLUTE MAJORITY.

ANATOLIAN BALANCE OF FORCES

THE PARTY OF JUSTICE AND DEVELOPMENT (PJD) CHAIRMAN AKHMET DAVUTOGLU PRESENTED THE UPDATED ELECTION PLATFORM ONLY ON OCTOBER 4. THE PLATFORMS WILL BE OF SECONDARY IMPORTANCE DURING THE NOVEMBER 1 ELECTIONS, SINCE THE LAST ELECTION WAS VERY RECENTLY, ON JUNE 7. PJD'S PLATFORM—"THE ROAD MAP TOWARD PEACE AND STABILITY IN TURKEY" IS THE SAME AS BEFORE, EXCEPT THEN IT WAS CALLED "THEY TALK, PJD ACTS." THE WEAKNESSES OF TURKEY'S PARLIAMENTARY SYSTEM WHICH HAS EXISTED FOR ALMOST 100 YEARS ARE BECOMING MORE PLAINLY VISIBLE, THERE IS A NEED FOR A NEW CONSTITUTION AND A TRANSITION TO A PRESIDENTIAL SYSTEM. KURDISH CRISIS RESOLUTION PLANS ARE STILL ON THE AGENDA AND HAVE NOT BEEN MODIFIED, IN SPITE OF THE INCREASE IN TENSIONS. THE ONLY THING TO UNDERGO REVISIONS WAS THE ECONOMY TO ACCOUNT FOR THE FALL IN THE NATIONAL CURRENCY AND INFLATION.

WHAT OBJECTIVE IS PSR, WHICH CHANGED 70% OF ITS CANDIDATE LIST, PURSUING? WE CAN FORGET ABOUT 400 SEATS IN THE PARLIAMENT WHICH IT HOPED TO OBTAIN IN THE LAST ELECTION. IT'S GOAL IS TO ADD 18 SEATS TO OBTAIN A SIMPLE MAJORITY IN THE PARLIAMENT—MEJLIS OF 276 SEATS. IT WANTS TO OBTAIN THESE SEATS AT THE EXPENSE OF THE PRO-KURDISH PARTY OF THE DEMOCRACY OF NATIONS WHICH OVERCAME THE 10% ELECTORAL THRESHOLD. HOWEVER, SURVEYS DO NOT INDICATE THAT PARTY IS DROPPING IN POPULARITY IN SPITE OF ATTACKS FROM OFFICIAL MEDIA, AND THE PJD'S POPULARITY REMAINS AT AROUND 40% WHICH IS THE SAME AS DURING THE JUNE 7 ELECTION. THEREFORE THE AGGRESSIVE RHETORIC TOWARD THE KURDS WILL INCREASE AS ELECTION APPROACHES. MOREOVER, THE EMERGENCY LAW IN EASTERN AND SOUTH-EASTERN PROVINCES GIVES THE AUTHORITIES EXCUSE TO UNITE AND SPLINTER ELECTORAL DISTRICTS IN THOSE PARTS OF THE COUNTRY SO AS TO INCREASE PJD'S CHANCES OF SUCCESS. AS A RESULT, PJD STARTED GOING AFTER OTHER OPPOSITION MOVEMENTS, PARTICULARLY THE NATIONAL-REPUBLICAN PARTY (NRP) AND ITS LEADER KEMAL KYLYCHDAROGU.

THE RAQQA KNOT

BUT NO MATTER WHAT, THE ELECTIONS ARE APPROACHING AND ITS RESULTS WILL HEAVILY INFLUENCE ERDOGAN'S STRATEGY IN SYRIA. FOR THE MOMENT, JUDGING BY INTELLIGENCE INFORMATION, FIELD COMMANDERS WHO FIGHT IN SYRIA AGAINST ASSAD RECEIVED PERMISSION FROM THEIR MASTERS IN RIYADH AND DOHA TO OBTAIN LATEST-GENERATION MAN-PORTABLE SAMs. THE MAIN RECIPIENTS ARE AL-NUSRA, AHRAR ASH-SHAM, AND THE REMNANTS OF THE FREE SYRIAN ARMY BASED IN THE SOUTH, NEAR HAMA AND HOMS. THE SAMs WILL BE PROCURED BY THE OPERATIONS BRANCH OF SAUDI GENERAL INTELLIGENCE DIRECTORATE, AND TRANSPORTED TO THE NORTH OF SYRIA BY TURKEY'S MIT. THEY WILL ALSO HANDLE THE TECHNICAL AND LOGISTICAL ASPECTS OF THE OPERATION.

JORDAN'S POSITION IS AN OPEN QUESTION. THE SAUDIS' INITIAL CONSULTATIONS IN AMMAN DID NOT LEAD TO A SATISFACTORY OUTCOME. AMMAN IS CAUTIOUS ABOUT ALLOWING JORDAN BECOMING A BASE FOR DELIVERING SAMs TO SYRIA, FEARING IT MIGHT LEAD TO THE SPREAD OF VIOLENCE TO THE KINGDOM. ESPECIALLY SINCE THE LOCAL POPULATION IS NONE TOO PLEASED WITH JORDANIAN AUTHORITIES AND IS SYMPATHETIC TO THE IS. EXPERTS BELIEVE THAT SAM DELIVERIES, SHOULD THE US BURN A BLIND EYE ON THEM, WILL RESTORE THE BALANCE OF FORCES AT THE FRONT.

WESTERN ANALYSTS ALSO NOTE THAT RUSSIAN AIRSTRIKES IN SYRIA ARE A PREPARATION FOR A GROUND OPERATION BY SYRIAN, IRANIAN, IRAQI, AND LEBANESE SHIA MILITIA FORCES. THE FIGHT WILL INVOLVE UNITS OF AFGHANI KHAZARA, WHO WILL DEFEND THE LIBERATED REGIONS AND MAN GARRISONS AND CHECKPOINTS. THERE ARE THREE POSSIBLE AXES OF ADVANCE: NORTH OF HOMS, THE AL-GAB REGION, AND THE MOUNTAINOUS REGIONS NORTH-WEST OF HOMS, AND THE QUEIRIS AIRBASE WHICH IS BLOCKED BY THE ISLAMISTS. SURROUNDING THE MILITANTS IN THE HOMS POCKET WOULD ELIMINATE THE THREAT OF THEIR OFFENSIVE ON HOMS AND HAMA. ADVANCING THOROUGH THE AL-GAB REGION WOULD ENABLE THE SYRIAN ARMY TO TAKE THE CITY OF JISR AL-SHUGUR, WHICH IS THE GATE TO LATAKIA, THUS REMOVING THE THREAT OF ISLAMIST OFFENSIVE FROM IDLIB. THE BATTLE FOR THE QUEIRIS AIRBASE WOULD LIFT THE MORALE OF ASSAD'S FORCES.

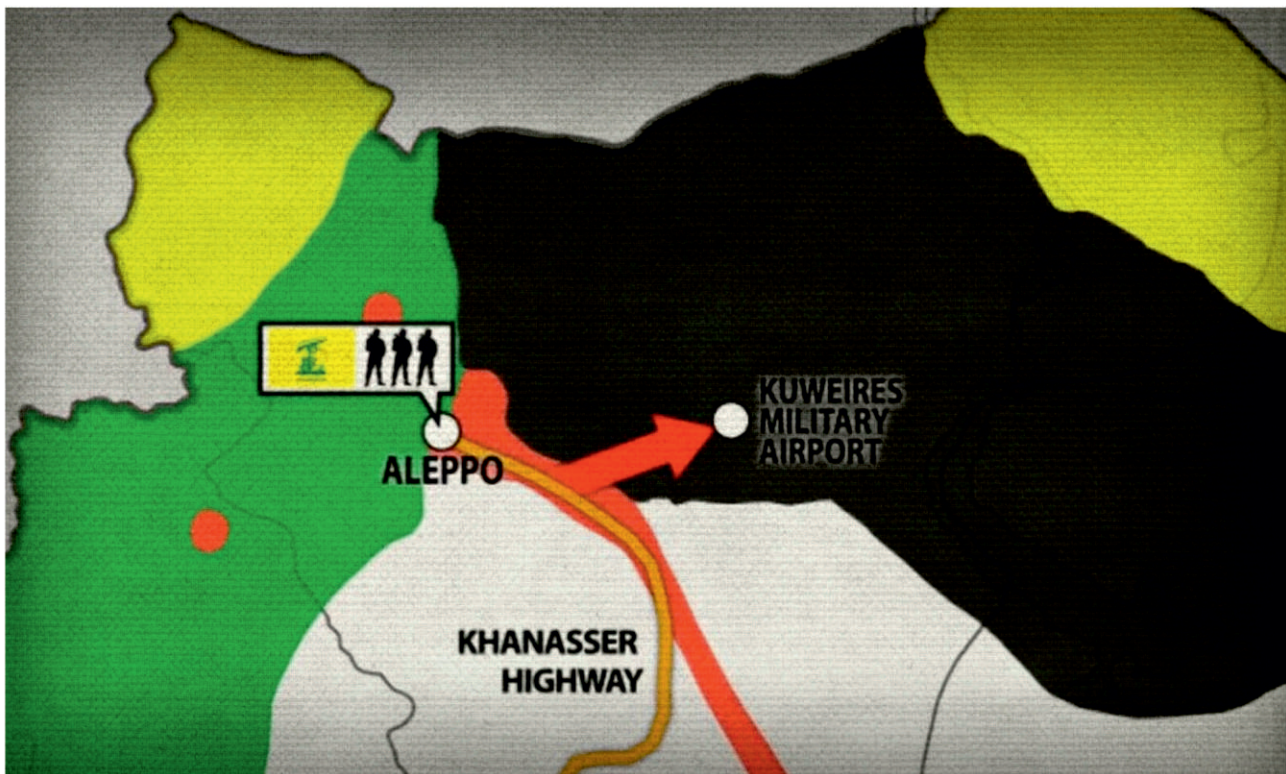
THE CONSULTATIONS IN DAMASCUS WITH THE KURDISH MILITIA COMMANDERS ON SUPPORTING THEIR OPERATIONS AGAINST THE IS BY RUSSIA AVIATION ARE ALSO PROMPTING THE US TO ORGANIZE AN OFFENSIVE AGAINST RAQQAH USING 20 THOUSAND KURDISH FIGHTERS AND 5 THOUSAND TURKOMAN MILITIAMEN. THIS WOULD ALLOW RUSSIA TO USE THE US TO WEAKEN THE IS IN SYRIA AND COMPLICATING WASHINGTON'S RELATIONS WITH ANKARA. IF THE US TURNS A BLIND EYE ON THE SAM DELIVERIES THROUGH TURKEY AND THE REPORTS OF US COLLUSION OR PASSIVITY SEEPS INTO THE MEDIA, THE DAMAGE TO THE DEMOCRATIC PARTY AND ITS CANDIDATES ON THE EVE OF THE ELECTION CAMPAIGN WOULD BE ENORMOUS. WHICH IS OF GREAT IMPORTANCE TO OBAMA.

NOW LET'S TURN OUR ATTENTION TO THE RELOCATION OF THE COMBINED JOINT SPECIAL OPERATIONS TASK FORCE-SYRIA (CJSOTF-S) TO THE AL-UDEID BASE IN QATAR. IT IS OFFICIALLY UNDER THE USSOCOM, WHICH IS RESPONSIBLE FOR TRAINING AND EQUIPPING SYRIAN OPPOSITION FIGHTERS. IT'S ALSO KNOWN THAT CJSOTF-S WILL COORDINATE THE DELIVERIES OF WEAPONS FROM US BASES TO ASSAD'S OPPONENTS. RIYADH UNDERTOOK TO FINANCE THESE OPERATIONS. THE HEADQUARTERS WILL ALSO SYNCHRONIZE OPPOSITION'S OPERATIONS WITH THE USAF 39TH WING BASED AT INCIRLIK. IN OTHER WORDS, TURKEY, SAUDI ARABIA, AND THE US ARE PLANNING TO GREATLY INCREASE SUBVERSIVE ACTIVITIES IN SYRIA, WHILE AT THE SAME TIME SUPPORTING THE KURDISH OFFENSIVE AGAINST RAQQAH. AFTER ALL, IT'S NOT CLEAR WHAT BECOMES OF THE PLAN TO OVERTHROW ASSAD FOLLOWING THE APPEARANCE OF THE RUSSIAN AEROSPACE FORCES, BUT ONE HAS TO SHOW CONGRESS THAT ONE IS FIGHTING THE ISLAMISTS...

OCTOBER 15, 2015

IRAN'S ATTITUDE





IRAN AND RUSSIA CONSIDER THEIR COOPERATION REGARDING MIDDLE EAST REGIONAL STABILITY AND SECURITY AS A STRATEGIC GOAL. THE COUNTRIES HAVE BEEN CONDUCTING MUTUAL CONSULTATIONS OVER THE TOPIC SINCE 2011. BOTH IRAN AND RUSSIA SUPPORT THE SYRIAN PRESIDENT BASHAR AL-ASSAD BECAUSE THEY BELIEVE THAT HE CAN PREVENT THE COUNTRY'S DISSOLUTION.

SINCE THE START OF THE SYRIAN WAR, IRAN HAS BEEN DIRECTLY INVOLVED IN IT. IT PROVIDES FINANCIAL, MEDIA AND HUMANITARIAN SUPPORT TO THE ASSAD GOVERNMENT, SUPPLIES ARMS AND EQUIPMENT. IT'S WIDELY KNOWN THAT SPECIAL TEAMS OF THE IRANIAN ARMY'S REVOLUTIONARY GUARD COMMAND (IRGC) HAVE BEEN FIGHTING AGAINST TERRORISTS IN SYRIA.

ON OCTOBER 10, IRANIAN ARMY'S REVOLUTIONARY GUARD COMMAND BRIGADIER GENERAL HOSSEIN HAMADANI WAS KILLED ALONG THE KHANASSER HIGHWAY IN SOUTHERN ALEPPO. HAMADANI WAS REPORTEDLY RESPONSIBLE FOR RECRUITING AND ORGANIZING FOR THE GOVERNMENTS OFFENSIVE TO LIFT THE ISIS SIEGE OF THE KUWEIRES MILITARY AIRPORT. ANOTHER ARMY OF THE GUARDIANS OF THE ISLAMIC REVOLUTION (IRGC) COMMANDER, COLONEL FARSHAD HASOUNIZADEH, PROVIDING MILITARY COUNSELING SERVICES TO THE SYRIAN GOVERNMENTS FORCES, WAS KILLED IN SYRIA ON OCTOBER 13. IRANIAN MEDIA STATED THAT FARSHAD HASOUNIZADEH WAS A FORMER COLONEL OF IRGC, BUT IT IS HIGHLY UNLIKELY THAT HE WAS NO LONGER IN SERVICE WITH THE IRGC.

ACCORDING TO THE SOUTHFRONT: ANALYSIS & INTELLIGENCE'S INFORMATION, OVER 3000 SERVICEMEN OF IRGC ARE TAKING PART IN THE SYRIAN OFFENSIVE IN THE HAMA-HOMS AXIS. ALSO, AN AT LEAST 1500-STRONG GROUPING OF HEZBOLLAH IS OPERATING THERE. THESE FORCES INCLUDE MODERN ARTILLERY AND MILITARY ROCKET LAUNCHER SYSTEMS. MOREOVER, AN IRANIAN AIR BASE HAS BEEN SET UP IN THE AREA AROUND THE CITY OF HAMA. IT HAS BEEN WORKING AS AN AIRLIFT, TRANSPORTING TROOPS AND MILITARY EQUIPMENT. IN THE FUTURE, THE AIR BASE COULD BE USED BY THE IRANIAN AIR FORCES TO CONDUCT AIR STRIKES AGAINST TERRORISTS IN SYRIA.

LAST TUESDAY FIGHTERS OF THE LEBANESE HEZBOLLAH ARRIVED IN ALEPPO TO JOIN THE SYRIAN ARMY TO TAKE PART IN A FULL-SCALE MILITARY OPERATION THERE. THE PRO-GOVERNMENT FORCES WILL START THE OFFENSIVE THERE IN THE COMING DAYS. THE RUSSIAN AIR FORCE WILL PROVIDE AIR SUPPORT FOR THE OPERATION. WE REMEMBER, HEZBOLLAH HAS A LONG-STANDING RELATION WITH IRAN, RECEIVES FUNDING AND SUPPORT FROM IT. TEHERAN DENIES THE FACT OF DIRECT MILITARY INVOLVEMENT, BUT IT CONFIRMS THAT IRGC MEMBERS FULFILL AT LEAST THE ROLE OF MILITARY ADVISERS IN THE SYRIAN FORCES.

RUSSIA AND IRAN HAVE ADVANCED MANY INITIATIVES TO SOLVE THE SYRIAN CONFLICT BY JOINT POLITICAL DECISIONS OF THE MAIN PARTICIPANTS INCLUDING BASHAR AL-ASSAD. THE MAIN GOALS ARE TO START JOINT OPERATION AGAINST ISIS AND TO MAINTAIN THE SYRIAN TERRITORIAL INTEGRITY. THE US, TURKEY, SAUDI ARABIA AND OTHER MEMBERS OF THE US-LED COALITION STAND AGAINST THIS GOAL. INDEED, RUSSIAN AND IRANIAN APPROACHES ARE VERY SIMILAR.

AT THE VERY SAME TIME, IRANIAN ELITES DON'T HAVE A JOINT ATTITUDE OVER THE RUSSIAN ROLE IN THE SYRIAN CRISIS. AYATOLLAH AKBAR HASHEMI RAFSANJANI IS CRITICIZING THE RUSSIAN MILITARY ACTIONS AS WELL AS THE US-LED COALITION'S APPROACH. HE BELIEVES THERE IS ONLY A POLITICAL SOLUTION TO THE CONFLICT. IRGC-LINKED MEDIA ARE ACTIVELY OPPOSING HIS ATTITUDE. IN GENERAL, IRAN SUPPORTS THE RUSSIAN ACTIVITY IN THE REGION, BUT IT'S READY TO PROTECT OWN INTERESTS IN CASE THEY WILL BE NEGATIVELY IMPACTED BY RUSSIA.

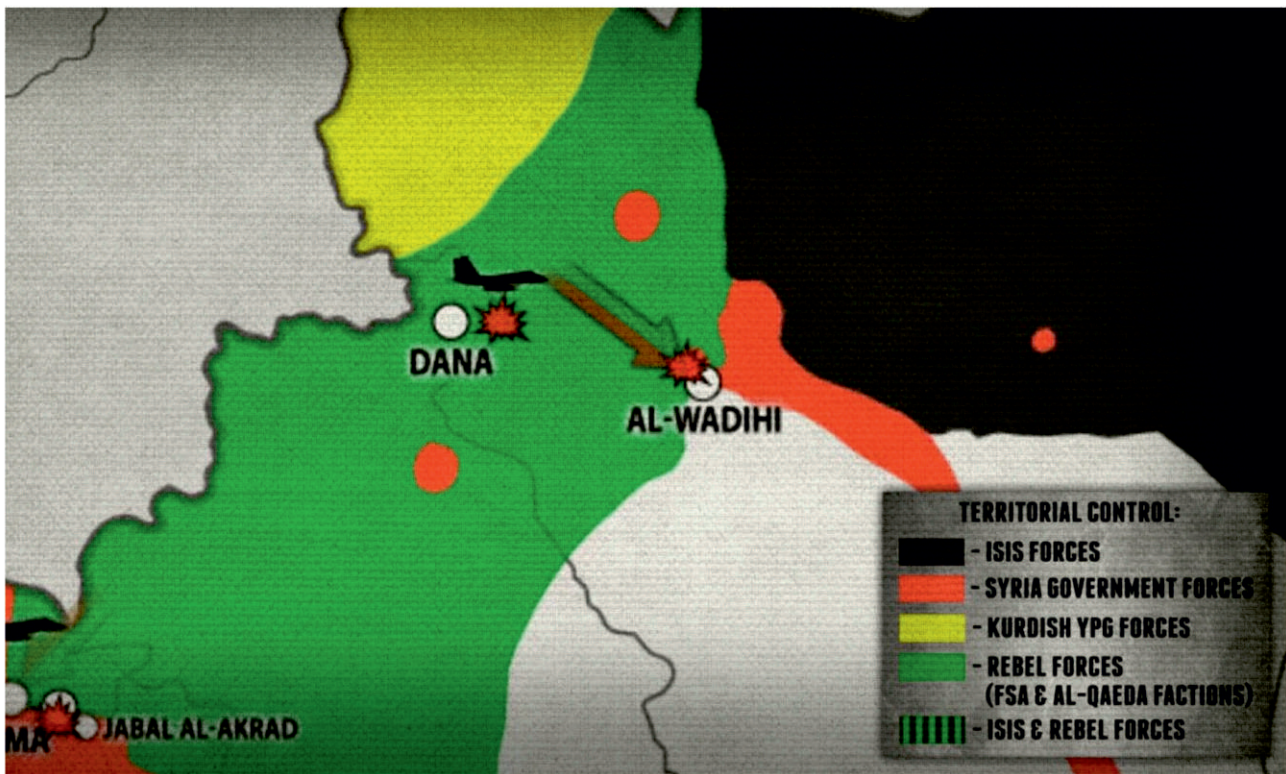
AT THE MOMENT IRAN'S ASSISTANCE HAS THE CHARACTER OF DIPLOMATIC ASSISTANCE AND CONSULTANCY SUPPORT. THERE ARE NO CONFIRMED REPORTS THAT MECHANISMS FOR MILITARY COLLABORATION BETWEEN RUSSIA AND IRAN ON THE SYRIAN BATTLEFIELD WERE MADE.



OCTOBER 18, 2015

MILITANTS ATTEMPT TO COUNTER-ATTACK





AL NUSRA SUPPORTED BY HARAKAT AHRAR AL-SHAM, LIWAA SUQOUR AL-SHAM AND THE FREE SYRIAN ARMY (FSA) STARTED A COUNTER-OFFENSIVE AGAINST THE SYRIAN ARAB ARMY (SAA), HEZBOLLAH AND THE NATIONAL DEFENSE FORCES (NDF) AT THE VILLAGE OF AL-WADIHI IN THE ALEPPO GOVERNORATE'S SOUTHERN COUNTRYSIDE. AT THE MOMENT THE SYRIAN FORCES ARE HOLDING FULL CONTROL OF THE VILLAGE BUT THE CLASHES ARE GOING ON IN THE NEIGHBORING AREA.

SEPARATELY, THE MILITANTS LAUNCHED A COUNTER-ATTACK AT THE STRATEGIC TOWN OF JUBB AL-AHMAR IN THE PROPHET JONAH (JABAL NABI YOUNIS) OF NORTHEASTERN LATAKIA, RESULTING IN A SERIES OF INTENSE FIREFIGHTS BETWEEN THEM AND THE CIVILIAN-LED (NDF) THIS MORNING. UNFORTUNATELY FOR THE MILITANTS, THE SAA WERE ABLE TO DEFEND THE TOWN AFTER A SERIES OF FIREFIGHTS AND AIRSTRIKES FROM THE RUSSIAN AIR FORCE. THIS RESULTED IN THE DEATH OF OVER 20 MILITANTS FROM HARAKAT AHRAR AL-SHAM, AL NUSRA, AND LIWAA SUQOUR AL-GHAAB.

ELSEWHERE, THE SYRIAN ARMED FORCES HAVE BEEN CONTINUING THEIR ADVANCE INSIDE THE TOWN OF SALMA, CAPTURING MORE BUILDING BLOCKS FROM AL NUSRA AT THE SOUTHERN DISTRICT. AS THE CLASHES ARE CONTINUING BETWEEN THE SAA AND AL NUSRA, BOTH PARTIES WILL STRIVE TO GAIN THE UPPER-HAND IN JABAL AL-AKRAD (KURDISH MOUNTAINS).

A RUSSIAN AIRSTRIKE KILLED A TOP AL-QAEDA COMMANDER, ABDUL MOHSEN ABDALLAH IBRAHIM AL-CHAREKH, A SAUDI BETTER KNOWN AS SANAFI AL-NASR, AND TWO OTHER FIGHTERS IN SYRIA, REPORTS SAID ON SATURDAY. HE WAS REPORTEDLY KILLED THURSDAY IN AN AIRSTRIKE NEAR THE NORTHERN SYRIAN TOWN OF DANA, ALONG WITH ANOTHER SAUDI AND A MOROCCAN MEMBER OF AL-QAEDA'S LOCAL AFFILIATE, KNOWN AS AL NUSRA.

VOLUNTARY SELF-DEFENSE GROUPS FIGHTING ON THE SIDE OF THE SYRIAN GOVERNMENT



LIVA AD-DIR AS-SAKHEL



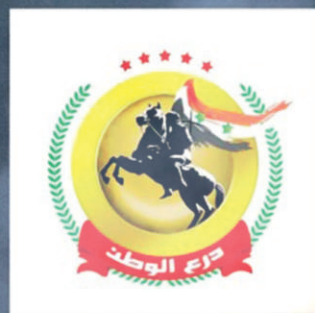
NUSUR AZ-ZAUBAA



LIVA AS-SUKUR
AL-KUNEYTRA



KUVVAT AR-RIDA



DIR AL-VATAN



LIVA AL-QUDS



المقاومة الإسلامية في سورية
LIVA AS-SAYIDA RUKAYA



RIDZHAL AL-KARAMA



DZHEYSH AT-TAHRIR
AL-FALYASTINI

THERE ARE MULTIPLE SYRIAN SELF-DEFENSE FORCES (I.E. SEPARATE FROM THE SYRIAN ARMY) FIGHTING AS VOLUNTEERS ON THE SIDE OF, BUT NOT PART OF, THE SYRIAN ARAB ARMY (SAA). IN FACT, THERE ARE MORE SUCH GROUPS THAN THERE WERE IN LEBANON DURING THE 1975-1990 CIVIL WAR, AND NUMBER PERHAPS 150,000 TROOPS.

THESE GROUPS ARE INCREASINGLY IMPORTANT DUE TO LOSSES SUSTAINED BY THE SYRIAN ARMY UNDER IMMENSE PRESSURE FROM TERRORIST GROUPS FINANCED AND SUPPORTED BY MULTIPLE FOREIGN GOVERNMENTS.

IN ORDER TO KEEP ARMY PERSONNEL AT THE FRONT AND AT THE SAME TIME NOT LOSE GROUND IN THE REAR, WHICH IS EXTREMELY DIFFICULT TO DO, SUCH GROUPS WERE ORIGINALLY INVOLVED WITH PROTECTING ROADS AND STRATEGICALLY IMPORTANT CENTERS, AND MAINTAINING GARRISONS IN RE-OCCUPIED TERRITORIES. LATER THEY WERE USED IN OPERATIONS.

HERE IS A LIST OF SOME OF THESE GROUPS:

AL-MUKAVVAMA AS-SURIYYA (THE SYRIAN RESISTANCE) IN THE LATAKIA REGION. HEADED BY TURKISH NATIVE ALI KAYALI, ON GOOD TERMS WITH KURDISH LEADER OF RPK ABDULLAH OCALAN. ACTIVE SINCE 2011, SELF-DEFINED AS A SECULAR GROUP THAT INCLUDES ALAWITES, SUNNIS, AND CHRISTIANS, AND HAS SHIITE SYMPATHIES.

LIVA AD-DIR AS-SAKHEL (SHIELD OF THE COAST BRIGADE) PROVIDES PROTECTION OF THE MEDITERRANEAN COAST OF THE COUNTRY, FIRST OF ALL, LATAKIA AND TARTUS. ANOTHER ALAWITE GROUP THAT COORDINATES ACTIONS WITH THE GOVERNMENT.

KUVVAT AR-RIDA (REZA FORCES) MILITARY ORGANIZATION, ORGANIZED FROM LOCALS IN HAMA, HOMS, AND THE CAPITAL REGION SINCE SUMMER 2013, WHEN HEZBOLLAH BEGAN ACTIVE OPERATIONS ON SYRIAN TERRITORY. MOSTLY SHIA AND SOME SUNNI. NAMED IN HONOR OF THE SHIITE IMAM ALI REZA. SHOULD BECOME THE BASE OF A FUTURE HEZBOLLAH-LIKE MILITIA IN SYRIA..

LIVA AS-SAYIDA RUKAYA (LADY RUKAYA'S BRIGADE) HAS PURELY SYRIAN SHIITE MEMBERSHIP AND IS NAMED IN HONOR OF THE DAUGHTER OF IMAM HUSSEIN; HER TOMB IN SYRIA IS A SHRINE FOR SHIITES FROM AROUND THE WORLD.. OTHER IRAQI SHIITE GROUPS LIKEWISE AFFILIATED ARE ABU FADLYA ABBAS BRIGADE, LIVA ZULFIKAR (ZULFIKAR BRIGADE), AND KATAIB IMAM ALI (BATTALION OF IMAM ALI).

NUSUR AZ-ZAUBAA (EAGLES OF THE HURRICANE) PARTICIPATED IN OPERATIONS IN HOMS AND PROTECTION THE VADI AN-NASAR VALLEY, OCCUPIED GENERALLY BY CHRISTIANS, AND ALSO HELPING LOCAL DRUZES IN SUVEYD REGION. SYRIAN CHRISTIAN MILITIA ASSOCIATED WITH THE SYRIAN SOCIAL AND NATIONAL PARTY (SSNP), FOUNDED IN 1932 BY THE LEBANESE ORTHODOX CHRISTIAN ANTUN SAAD WITH AN IDEOLOGICAL VIEW OF CREATING GREATER SYRIA FROM SYRIA, PALESTINE, LEBANON, IRAQ, JORDAN, AND CYPRUS. HAS COUNTERBALANCED PAN-ARABISM WITH THE IDEA OF SYRIAN NATIONALISM. IN ADDITION TO THE ORTHODOX CHRISTIANS, ALSO INCLUDES SHIITES, SUNNIS, AND GREEK CATHOLIC CHRISTIANS.

THERE ARE ALSO SEVERAL DRUZE GROUPS. THEIR GROWTH WAS ESPECIALLY ACCELERATED IN AUTUMN 2014 WHEN JABHAT AL NUSRA MILITANTS EXECUTED AND/OR FORCIBLY CONVERTED MANY IN THE DRUZE ENCLAVE AROUND IDLIB, WHICH CAUSED INDIGNATION

DZHEYSH AL-MUVAKHIDDIN (ARMY OF SUPPORTERS OF MONOTHEISM) IS ACTIVE IN THE PROVINCE OF SUVEYD OCCUPIED BY DRUZES. THIS GROUP IS COMPOSED OF DRUZES, ALLIED SINCE 2012 WITH THE GOVERNMENT OF SYRIA. IT HAS RECENTLY SUFFERED FRAGMENTATION.

DIR AL-VATAN (SHIELD OF THE HOMELAND), IN THE SAME AREA, IS THE LARGEST DRUZE GROUP.

RIDZHAL AL-KARAMA (MEN OF WORTHINESS) ALSO KNOWN AS KUVVAT AL-FAKHD (STRENGTH OF A LEOPARD) WAS STARTED IN EARLY 2014 UNDER SHEIK BALUS, WHO WAS LATER ASSASSINATED. THIS GROUP WAS SOMEWHAT TIED IN WITH PRO-GOVERNMENT GROUPS, HOPING FOR EVENTUAL AUTONOMY WITHIN SYRIA.

LIVA AS-SUKUR AL-KUNEYTRA (BRIGADE OF FALCONS OF KUNEYTRA) CONSISTING OF DRUZE AND SUNNITE NATIVES OF KUNEYTRA PROVINCE. HAD ORIGINALLY FOUGHT AGAINST BOTH ISLAMIST FORCES AND THE GOVERNMENT, BUT WENT OVER TO THE GOVERNMENT SIDE AFTER BEING INVADED BY JABHAT AN-NUSRA AND ISIS.

FINALLY, THERE ARE SEVERAL PALESTINIAN REFUGEE GROUPS.

LIVA AL-QUDS (BRIGADE OF JERUSALEM), FOUNDED 2013 AND CONSISTING OF PALESTINIANS NUMBERING 3-4,000 WHO ARE NATIVES OF THE NAYRAH REFUGEE CAMP NEAR ALEPPO, AND ENGAGE IN FIERCE BATTLES NEAR ALEPPO. NOT ASSOCIATED WITH HAMAS.

DZHEYSH AT-TAHRIR AL-FALYASTINI (LIBERATION ARMY OF PALESTINE), CONDUCTS OPERATIONS GENERALLY IN THE REGION OF DAMASCUS AND IS ASSOCIATED WITH THE POPULAR FRONT FOR LIBERATION OF PALESTINE.

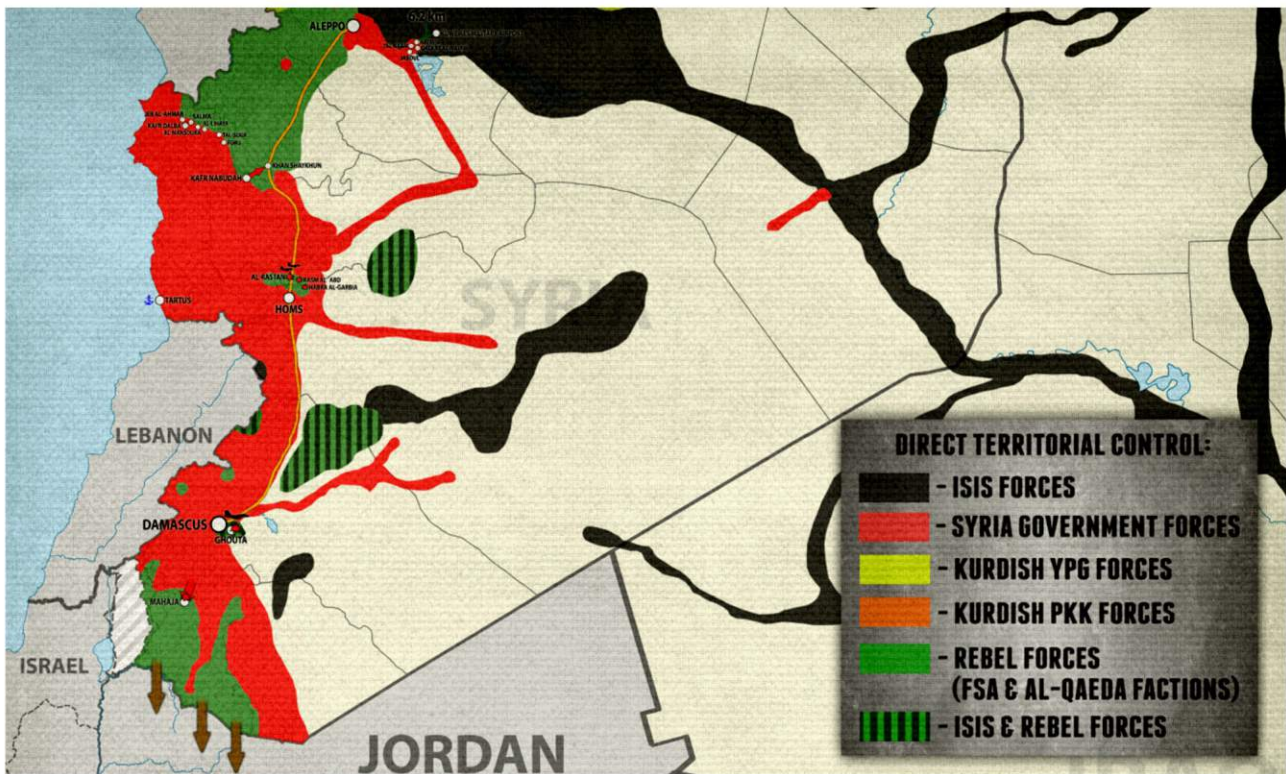
THE MILITIAS PROTECTING THE GOVERNMENT IN DAMASCUS HAVE ALREADY BECOME AN IMPORTANT FACTOR IN THE POLITICAL LIFE OF THE COUNTRY. UPON TERMINATION OF THE CONFLICT, THEY WILL DEMAND THEIR SHARE OF POWER IN THE TERRITORIES OCCUPIED WITH THEM OR ASPIRE POLITICAL INFLUENCE THROUGHOUT THE COUNTRY. THIS COULD MAKE THE PROCESS OF POLITICAL SETTLEMENT IN SYRIA MORE DIFFICULT.



OCTOBER 19, 2015

SYRIA-IRAQ BATTLESPACE





SINCE OCTOBER 10, RUSSIAN AIR GROUP IN SYRIA CONTINUED TO HIT TERRORISTS' TARGETS CONDUCTING 33 TO 88 SERIALS PER DAY. RUSSIAN AIR STRIKES WERE PERFORMED IN THE PROVINCES OF RAQQA, HAMA, DAMASCUS, ALEPPO, LATAKIA, IDLIB, HOMS, DEIR EZ-ZOR. SINCE THE START OF THE OPERATION, RUSSIAN AIR RAIDS HAVE DESTROYED MORE THAN 380 SITES OF ISIS.

THE LAST DAYS HAVE SHOWN THAT ISIS MILITANTS HAVE SERIOUS AIR DEFENSE ASSETS. ON OCTOBER 15, RUSSIAN WARPLANES DESTROYED THE AIR DEFENSE SYSTEM "Osa" AT THE VILLAGE OF EASTERN GUTA AROUND DAMASCUS.

IN NORTHERN SYRIA, THE PRO-GOVERNMENT FORCES CONSIST OF A 60 000-STRONG GROUPING OFFICIALLY STRENGTHENED BY RUSSIAN MILITARY EQUIPMENT AND WEAPONS. SOUTHFRONT: ANALYSIS & INTELLIGENCE HAS INFORMATION THAT UNITS OF THE SYRIAN ARAB ARMY (SAA) HAVE BEEN BOLSTERED BY RUSSIAN MILITARY ADVISERS, DOWN TO SQUAD LEVEL IN SOME ARTILLERY AND SPECIAL UNITS.

IN THE ALEPPO PROVINCE, THE SAA AND ITS ALLIES ARE SEEKING TO LIFT THE SIEGE FROM THE KUWEIRES MILITARY AIRPORT. ON OCTOBER 10 THE SAA "TIGER FORCES" TOOK CONTROL OF THE TOWN OF JABBOUL. ON OCTOBER 15, THE PRO-GOVERNMENT UNITS CAPTURED THE VILLAGE OF TAL NAAM. ON OCTOBER 16, THE VILLAGES OF QALA'AT AL-NAJAM, ABTAYN WERE CONTROLLED BY THE SAA. AT THE MOMENT THE SYRIAN FORCES ARE CLASHING WITH MILITANTS, APPROXIMATELY 6.2KM AWAY FROM THE AIRPORT.

AT LEAST, 235 JABHAT AL NUSRA MILITANTS HAVE BEEN KILLED SINCE THE START OF THE SYRIAN ADVANCE IN THE HAMA PROVINCE. THE STRATEGIC TOWNS OF AL-MANSOURA AND AL-LIHAYA CAME UNDER CONTROL OF THE SYRIAN GOVERNMENT. ALSO, THE SAA CAPTURED THE TOWNS OF TAL SEKIK AND FORU.

IT BECAME KNOWN THAT HEZBOLLAH COMMANDER, HASSAN HOSSEIN AL-HADJ, HAS DIED DURING THE CLASHES FOR THE CITY OF MANSURA IN THE IDLIB PROVINCE. THE SOUTHFRONT: ANALYSIS & INTELLIGENCE SOURCES REPORT, HEZBOLLAH UNITS FIGHTING AGAINST TERRORISTS IN SYRIA HAVE RECEIVED REINFORCEMENTS AND ADDITIONAL SUPPLIES OF ARMS AND EQUIPMENT. THIS IS A RESULT OF THE GROWING ROLE OF HEZBOLLAH AND IRAN-BACKED MILITIA GROUPS ON THE SYRIAN BATTLEFIELD. AS RESULT OF THE HEAVY CLASHES AGAINST JABHAT AL NUSRA, THE SYRIAN FORCES CAPTURED THE SOUTHERN PART OF THE CITY OF KAHR NABUDAH. THE PRO-GOVERNMENT FORCES' ADVANCE IS AIMED ON THE STRATEGIC TOWN OF KHAN SHAYKHUN LOCATED AT THE HIGHWAY LINKING DAMASCUS AND ALEPPO.

IN THE LATAKIA PROVINCE, THE SYRIAN FORCES SUPPORTED BY THE RUSSIAN WARPLANES PUSHED AL NUSRA MILITANTS FROM KAFR DALBA AND TOOK CONTROL OF THE SECTOR. THEN, SAA AND ITS ALLIES CAPTURED THE VILLAGES OF SALMA AND JEB AL-AHMAR. THE ISIS MILITANTS WERE LOCATED IN THESE AREAS. AT THE MOMENT, RUSSIAN WARPLANES AND THE SYRIAN ARMY UNITS ARE MOPPING UP THE AREA FROM VARIOUS MILITANT UNITS.

IN THE HOMS PROVINCE, THE SYRIAN FORCES ARE CONDUCTING MILITARY ACTIONS AGAINST JABHAT AL NUSRA AND ISIS. THE CENTER OF CLASHES IS THE AL-RASTAN AREA. RUSSIAN AND SYRIAN WARPLANES WORK ACTIVELY AGAINST TERRORIST THERE. ALSO, HEAVY CLASHES WERE OBSERVED AT RASM AL `ABD AND HABRA AL-GARBIA. THE JABHAT AL NUSRA MILITANTS ARE USING ANTI-TANK MISSILE SYSTEMS "TOW" SUPPLIED BY SAUDI ARABIA.

THE JABHAT AL NUSRA MILITANTS ARE MASSIVELY FLEEING FROM THE PROVINCE DARAA TO JORDAN. THE SYRIAN FORCES ARE ADVANCING IN THE SECTOR OF THE TOWN OF MAHAJA. JABHAT AL NUSRA HAS LOST DOZENS OF MILITANTS IN THE CLASHES THERE.

SEPARATELY, THE IRAQI FORCES STARTED A FULL-SCALE OFFENSIVE AGAINST ISIS IN THE PROVINCE OF ANBAR. IT BORDERS WITH SYRIA. ACCORDING TO THE SOUTHFRONT: ANALYSIS & INTELLIGENCE SOURCES THIS FACT IS DIRECTLY RELATED TO THE COOPERATION AMONG RUSSIA, IRAN, SYRIA AND IRAQ LAUNCHED TROUGH THE JOINT INFORMATION CENTER IN BAGHDAD.

ON OCTOBER 11, ABU BAKR AL-BAGHDADI WAS REPORTEDLY INJURED AS RESULT OF THE AIRSTRIKE IN THE ANBAR PROVINCE OF IRAQ. ON OCTOBER 14, IRANIAN MEDIA REPORTED THAT ABU BAKR AL-BAGHDADI WAS UNDER TREATMENT IN TURKEY. THE US CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE SERVICE AND TURKISH SPECIAL SERVICES ASSISTED HIM IN THIS.

RUSSIA HAS BEEN CONTINUING TO SUPPLY WEAPONS AND EQUIPMENT TO THE SYRIAN FORCES. ACCORDING TO REPORTS, THE RUSSIAN HEAVY FLAMETHROWER SYSTEMS TOS-1A "SOLNTSEPEK" ARE IN SYRIA. THEY WILL BE USED IN THE SYRIAN FORCES' OFFENSIVE ACTIONS ALL OVER THE COUNTRY.

THE SECURITY OF THE RUSSIAN NAVAL FACILITY IN TARTUS WAS STRENGTHENED. THE GUARD UNITS RECEIVED ADDITIONAL MILITARY EQUIPMENT AND A NUMBER OF REINFORCEMENTS. A MARINE INFANTRY BATTALION OF THE RUSSIAN BLACK SEA FLEET IS A MAIN FORCE THERE. RUSSIA IS EXERCISING PREPARATORY WORKS TO INCREASE LOGISTICAL CAPABILITIES OF THE NAVAL FACILITY. 10 ADDITIONAL CONTAINER SHIPS AND TANKERS WILL REPORTEDLY BE USED TO EXPAND SUPPLIES TO TARTUS.

THE MAIN RESULT OF THE RECENT SUCCESS OF THE SYIRAN FORCES HAS RAISED THE PRO-GOVERNMENT FORCES' MORALE. THE FUTURE DEVELOPMENTS WILL STRONGLY DEPEND ON THE SYRIAN FORCE'S CAPACITY TO HOLD GAINED MOMENTUM AND TO COORDINATE ITS ACTIONS WITH THE RUSSIAN AIR EFFORTS. IN ANY CASE, THE ACTIVE PHASE OF THE OFFENSIVE WILL END IN THE NEXT 1-2 WEEKS. THEN SYRIAN FORCES WILL NEED TO STRENGTHEN CAPTURED POSITIONS, GET ADDITIONAL SUPPLIES AND REST.

RUSSIA DRAMATICALLY
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THE START OF THE RUSSIAN MILITARY OPERATIONS IN SYRIA DRAMATICALLY CHANGED THE SITUATION IN THE REGION. MOSCOW, WORRIED BY THE CRISIS IN THE REGION, DECIDED TO SUPPORT ITS MIDDLE EASTERN ALLIES AND TO FACE THE RAISING THREATS WHILE THEY ARE LONG WAY FROM THE RUSSIAN BORDERS.

IT WOULD BE WRONG TO VIEW THE SYRIAN CRISIS AS SOMETHING THAT IS ISOLATED FROM THE OVERALL SITUATION IN THE MIDDLE EAST AND AROUND THE WORLD. THE SYRIAN CRISIS IS PART OF THE GLOBAL SECURITY AND STABILITY CHALLENGES CAUSED BY TERRORIST AND EXTREMIST ENTITIES. THEREFORE RUSSIA COULD NOT REMAIN IDLE.

THE RUSSIAN AEROSPACE DEFENSE FORCES BECAME AN EFFECTIVE STRIKING POWER ON THE SYRIAN BATTLEFIELD. ALSO, RUSSIA PROVIDES INTELLIGENCE SUPPORT AND COORDINATES EFFORTS OF THE SYRIAN ARMED FORCES. RUSSIAN SPECIAL FORCES, AS SHOULD BE COMMON SENSE, ARE ALSO DEPLOYED IN THE REGION. THE SYRIAN FORCES STRENGTHENED BY THE RUSSIAN ASSISTANCE STARTED FULL-SCALE MILITARY OPERATIONS ON A NUMBER OF IMPORTANT FRONTLINES.

IT SEEMS THAT NOVEMBER WILL BE A CRUCIAL MONTH WHEN THE REGIONAL BALANCE OF POWER IS DETERMINED. IT WILL THEN BE POSSIBLE TO FORECAST THE DIRECTION THE CONFLICT WILL TAKE. THIS MONTH, RUSSIA WILL CONTINUE TO CONDUCT MILITARY OPERATIONS IN SYRIA AND WILL LIKELY RAISE THE INTENSITY OF THE AIR RAIDS AND THE INTENSITY OF THE COORDINATION BETWEEN THE RUSSIAN AIR FORCES AND THE SYRIAN GROUND FORCES INCLUDING CONSTRUCTIVE OPPOSITION GROUPS. AT THE MOMENT, THERE IS NO EVIDENCE THAT MOSCOW IS GOING TO BUILD UP AN ADDITIONAL GROUND FORCE THERE.

MEANWHILE, WE CAN OBSERVE THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE CRISIS IN NORTH AND CENTRAL AFRICA AND CENTRAL ASIA. AN ESCALATION OF TENSIONS IS POSSIBLE ESPECIALLY IN SOUTH-EAST ASIA, EUROPE AND OTHER REGIONS OF THE WORLD.

ALL WORLD POWERS THAT ARE INTERESTED IN FINDING A SOLUTION RATHER THAN FURTHERING THEIR OWN AGENDA SHOULD UNITE THEIR EFFORTS TO SEEK PEACEFUL WAYS TO END THE MIDDLE EAST CRISIS.

SOUTHFRONT: ANALYSIS & INTELLIGENCE WILL CONTINUE TO MONITOR AND ANALYZE THE SITUATION.