



Weekly Conflict Summary

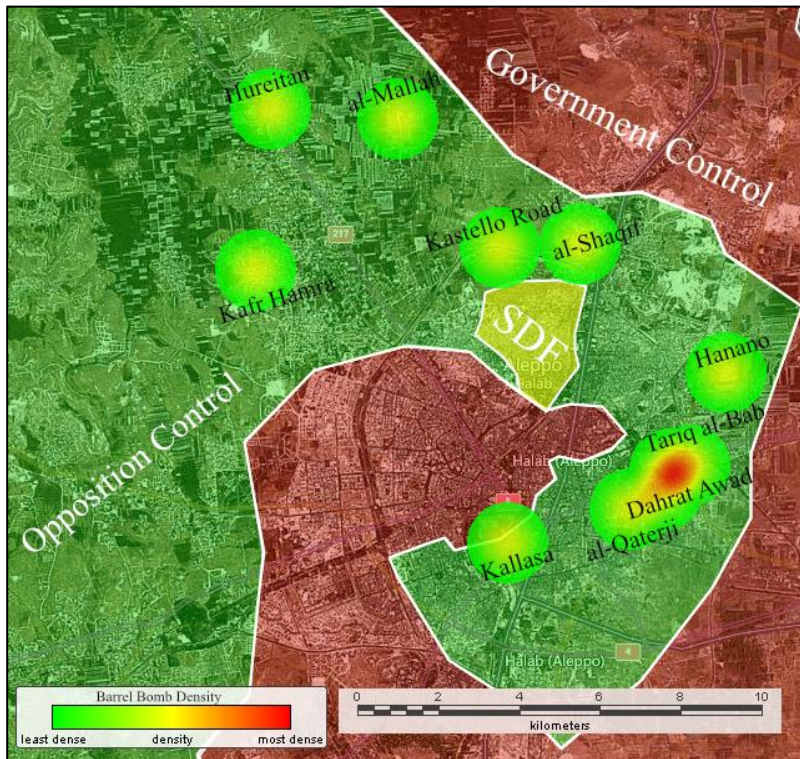
June 16-22, 2016

Conflict events from June 16-22, 2016 were once again focused primarily in the governorate of Aleppo, as nearly 50% of all recorded incidents took place within the territory. Aerial bombardments made up about half of recorded conflict events, continuing a trend of high rates of air raids throughout Syria.

A counterattack on Menbij by the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria (ISIS) has led to significant human losses among Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF). Attacks of the sort have been fairly constant since the SDF encircled ISIS forces the city two weeks ago. SDF fighters were able to repel the majority of the counterattacks but suffered minor territorial losses. Several villages around Menbij have changed hands in the past week, but the SDF has maintained a steady grasp overall.

If captured, Menbij will be the most populous city captured by the SDF from ISIS to date.ⁱ As the SDF and the International Coalition plan to siege the city, concerns mount over the safety of the up to 65,000 remaining citizens.ⁱⁱ Casualties from aerial and mortar bombardment as well as death from lack of food and medical supplies may become an issue in the coming weeks.

All recorded barrel bombings from the past week occurred in Aleppo and Damascus/Rural Damascus. The overwhelming majority of these bombings happened in the city of Aleppo and the city of Darayya in Rural Damascus. Figure 1 (below) shows that the highest concentration of barrel bombing in Aleppo occurred in the neighborhoods between Kallasa and Hanano in eastern Aleppo city, though the bulk of all recorded events is still concentrated in northern Aleppo and along Castello Road, which serves as the last opposition-controlled route into the city.



The continued use of cluster and incendiary munitions remains a worrying trend in Syria. On June 20 multiple areas were hit by sorties around Hureitan including the towns of Anadan, Hureitan, Kafr Hamra, Kallasa, Castello Road, Khan Touman, Leiramoun, Rashidein, Ma'aret al-Artiq, Tal Msebin, and Yaqid Adas. These targets were hit in close succession, and many target areas among these eleven indicate the use of cluster munitions.

Battles for villages south of Aleppo city continue between opposition fighters (including Jabhat al-Nusra) against government forces, pro-government militiamen, and Hezbollah fighters, with heavy casualties reported.

Figure 1: Heat map showing frequency of recorded barrel bombs in Aleppo from June 16-22, 2016.

Additionally Fars news has reported that Iranian Revolution Guards Corps General Qassem Suleymani is headed to southern Aleppo to lead an offensive in the area.ⁱⁱⁱ

About 90km to the southeast of Menbij, ISIS forces recaptured about 30km of recently lost territory along the road to Tabqa city. Earlier this week, pro-government forces advanced to just 7km from al-Tabqa Military Airport but have now retreated to about 40km from the target.

Earlier this week, pro-government forces made significant advancement in the northern part of Latakia governorate. They succeeded in capturing Jabal al-Hejar, Nawara, Sallor, and Shahrora from opposition forces around Jabal al-Turkman near the border with Hama early in the week, controlling nearly all of the mountain with these new advances.

Conclusion

Last week's mention of a unilateral ceasefire has been all but abandoned as conflict in Aleppo city has continued at a steady pace. The spate of Russian airstrikes in the nearby countryside of the city indicates that even Russian forces, who proposed the ceasefire, have abandoned a current round of peace-seeking. Every effort should still be maintained to approach and support a ceasefire to slow the rise of violence in northern Syria and stem civilian casualties due to aerial bombardment, particularly in Aleppo and Rural Damascus.

ⁱ Abdulrahman, Raja, 8 June 2016. Arab, Kurdish forces near Islamic State-held town in Syria. *Wall Street Journal*. <http://www.wsj.com/articles/arab-kurdish-forces-near-islamic-state-held-town-in-syria-1465397193>.

ⁱⁱ UN OCHA, 16 June 2016. Turkey | Syria: Flash Update Developments in Eastern Aleppo, Menbij. <https://www.humanitarianresponse.info/en/operations/stima/document/flash-update-developments-eastern-aleppo-menbij-16-june-2016>.

ⁱⁱⁱ Fars News Agency, 20 June 2016. IRGC Quds Force Commander in Syria to Help Aleppo Operations. <http://en.farsnews.com/newstext.aspx?nn=13950331001125>.