

SYRIA/IRAQ: WEEKLY SITREP 06 DEC 2017

(1) UK AID

British media led investigations report that funding intended for humanitarian aid found its way to extremist groups in Syria. 05 Dec 17.

(2) HOMS

ISIS suicide vehicle borne IED killed 8 in Regime held area. 05 Dec 17.

(3) ISRAEL

Israeli conducted a series of strikes against a research facility North West of Damascus and a Regime military post . 05 Dec 17



(4) TREATMENT OF ISIS FIGHTERS

Iraqi Government and Kurdish Regional Government increase trials against ISIS fighters 05 Dec 17.

(5) IRAN/IRAQ OIL TALKS

Talks are underway to establish the start of oil exports from Kirkuk. 06 Dec 17.

(6) SAUDI ARABIA OIL TIES

Saudi Arabia's Oil Minister announced closer ties to Iraq as relations significantly thaw since the invasion of Kuwait in 1990. 05 Dec 17.

ASSESSMENT: (1) Adam Smith International is at the center of claims of misdirected aid funds during a project to support Free Syrian Police (FSP) under the wider UK Access to Justice and Community Security scheme. The FSP have reportedly been involved in summary executions and extremist activity. It is difficult to track the movement of cash (the only viable way of paying the FSP) in a hostile environment. UK aid in challenging areas where the cultural and religious norms may cause discomfort are always going to be controversial, the ground truth often requires tactical arrangements between extremist and opposition groups that will continue to present particular policy challenges for UK ministers accountable. ISIS may seek to exploit the intelligence gaps to gain funding as they lose major financial assets in both Syria and Iraq. (2) The city, formerly known as the capital of the revolution, is now under government control. ISIS claimed the attack targeted a bus carrying regime troops while media reports claim 8 civilians were killed. ISIS will increasingly project attacks into regime held areas without regard for civilian casualties as opposed to holding ground in Deir Azzor as the Caliphate dissipates. An insurgency is likely to result in IDP numbers remaining high presenting security and humanitarian challenges. (3) Israel has conducted two separate strikes into Syria as tensions escalate between the neighbors over the rising prominence of Lebanese Hezbollah (LH) in Syria and a breach of the 1974 no construction pact in the Golan Heights. The first strike targeted a Syrian military post near the capital causing material damage 02 Dec 17. The second targeted the Jamraya Research and Information Centre, a scientific research facility with warehouses suspected of housing LH weapons. Israeli strikes will increase in the short to medium term with Regime held sites with significant storage facilities the focus of Israeli targeting. (4) Human Rights Watch issued a 76 page dossier highlighting the flawed legal process that is failing to provide justice for ISIS human rights abuses. The broad sentencing fails to take into account the individual's role in the organisation or involvement in specific war crimes, undermining the legal process and potentially undermining reconciliation efforts as justice is failing to be administered. 7,374 suspected ISIS members have been sentenced since 2014, with little distinguishing those who worked as medics under the group and those conducting summary executions. (5)&(6) It is expected that Iraqi oil representatives will negotiate 30,000bpd of crude oil to be exported from Kirkuk's oil fields over land to Iran's Kermanshah Refinery. Saudi Arabia has expressed interest in increasing oil ties with Iraq in an ongoing effort to counter to growing influence of Iran in Iraq and Syria by drawing Iraq into the Arab fold.

SYRIA/IRAQ CONTROL MAP: 06 DEC 2017

LEBANESE HEZBOLLAH IN SYRIA

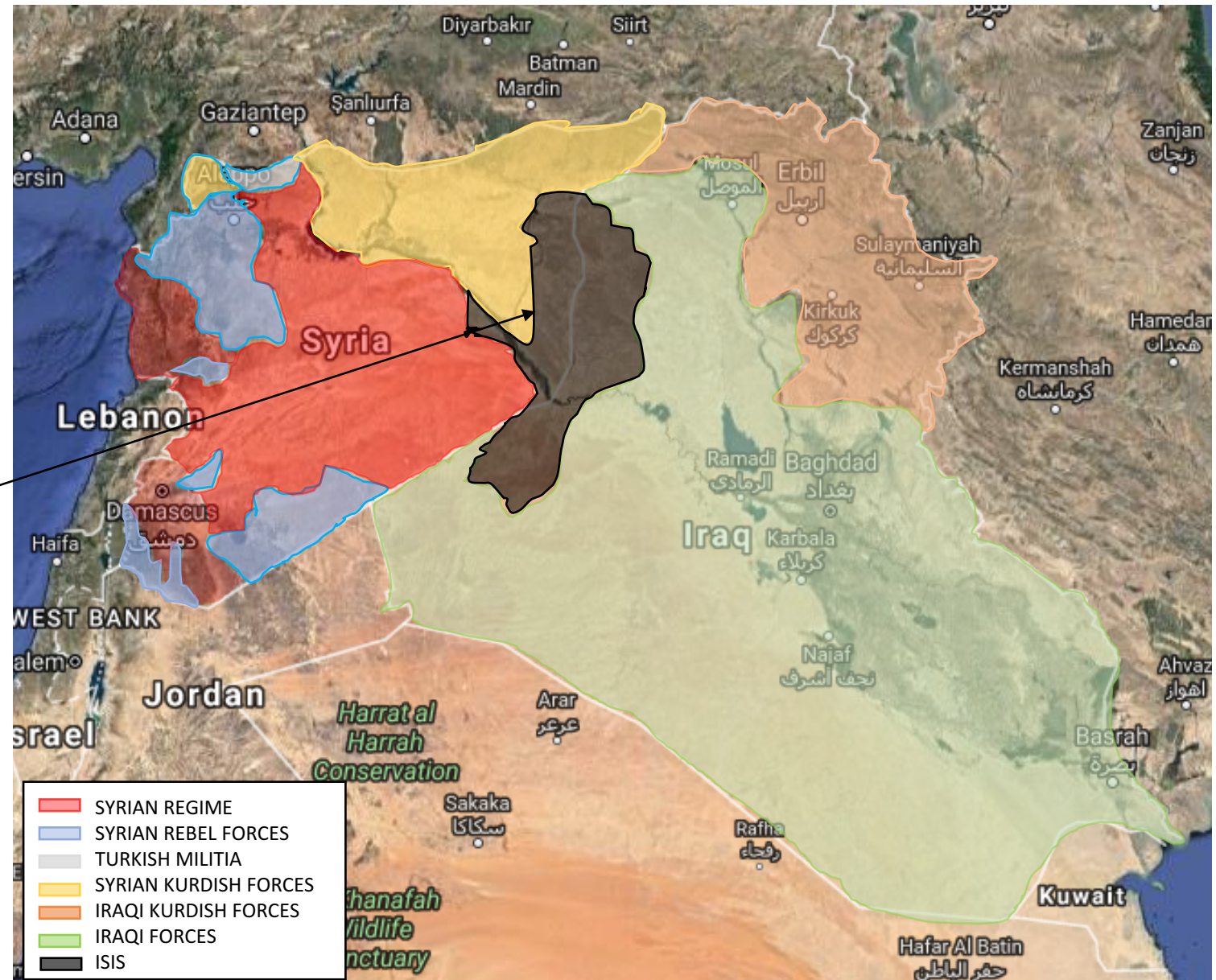
Since 2013, Lebanese Hezbollah (LH) transitioned from a covert advisory force in Syria to an overt, bold military force that has played a pivotal role in helping the Syrian Regime regain more than 60% of the country from opposition forces and ISIS.

LH characterizes its involvement in the Syrian war as a direct conflict against Israel, the West and Sunni extremism. LH must preserve the line of communication between Damascus and Lebanon to ensure stable Iranian financial and material assistance. LH must ensure the survival of the Assad Regime to avoid a Sunni dominant administration taking control its crucial logistics hub in the Levant.

For Iran, the Syrian and Iraqi conflicts have provided opportunity to expand their Axis of Resistance across the Levant designed to threaten Israel and limit the influence of the West. The Axis traditionally included LH and the Assad Regime but has expanded to encompass Iraqi Shi'ite militias.

Iran has capitalized on the war against ISIS to create a line of communication dissecting Iran. Baghdad and Syria to reach LH in Lebanon and irk regional rivals Israel and Saudi Arabia. Iran will likely use these routes for trade as well as material and financial assistance to proxies.

LH continues to benefit from hardened battle experience in Syria, increased material support from Iran and a recruitment and training drive in Lebanon that ensures it will remain prominent post-ISIS likely to spur Israeli aggression in the Golan Heights and Southern Syria. Once Syria stabilizes, it is likely LH will pose a serious threat to stability in Lebanon as fighters return, experienced and equipped.



NORTH AFRICA: WEEKLY SITREP 06 DEC 2017

(1) SAIF AL-ISLAM GADDAFI
The son of Muammar Gaddafi reportedly raising a militia to fight terror groups. 06 Dec 17.

(2) LIBYAN OIL
OPEC has agreed a cap of 2.8 million bpd for Libya. 05 Dec 17.

(3) UK/LIBYAN OIL
The UK may increase oil cooperation with Libya. 05 Dec 17.

(4) SIRTE
The GNA celebrated the anniversary of the victory over ISIS in Sirte. 05 Dec 17.



(5) WATER DISRUPTIONS CONTINUE
Tripoli's water supply was again cut off as militia attacks and overdue maintenance projects disrupt services. 05 Dec 17.

(6) US/LIBYA
The US and Libya have agreed to increase cooperation against terrorist funding streams. 04 Dec 17.

(7) LIBYA ELECTIONS
The High National Elections Commission has launched an advertising campaign to encourage Libyans to vote. 05 Dec 17.

ASSESSMENT: (1) Saif was freed in June following six years in militia detention in Zintan and was accused of crimes against humanity by the ICC and sentenced to death by courts in Tripoli. Saif claims he has raised a militia in Sabratha to fight against extremists in a bid to move towards Tripoli. It is more likely that Saif is claiming responsibility for the military operations of others who were already battling for territory in the area. It is unlikely Saif could raise the forces necessary from the Gaddafi loyalists who remain in Sabratha but the claim demonstrates his intent to rise in prominence likely to result in participation in future elections. (2) Libya reached oil output highs that spurred OPEC to reconsider Libya's exemption from the current output caps. While not subject to the caps, Libya has agreed to maintain output at current levels. (3) British Ambassador to Libya Peter Millet met with Chairman of the Libyan National Oil Corporation (NOC) Mustafa Sanalla to discuss increased UK and Libyan oil cooperation. It is likely UK companies will seek to increase maintenance, security and infrastructure projects in the country currently not subject to output limits. More clarity may be revealed during an oil industry meeting due to take place in Aberdeen in 2018 involving British oil companies and the NOC. (4) Peaceful celebrations were held in the city of Misrata to mark the victory over ISIS in 2016. The GNA continues to compensate families of victims likely to improve the public perception of the international recognised government. (5) Over 2 million people, including 600,000 children are often without water in Tripoli and coastal areas as a result of militia activity and failing infrastructure. It is likely people are forced to turn to unsafe water sources during water outages likely to lead to an increase in water borne diseases and diseases associated with poor sanitation. (6) Talks between Faiz Serraj and US Secretary Steven Mnuchin discussed the ongoing US support to Libya's financial policies during talks in Washington 04 Dec 17. Countering revenue streams of extremist groups remains a priority although no clarity has been offered in terms of how this could be achieved. Smuggling oil and migrants remain some of the most prominent sources of income for extremist groups, without a significant strengthening of border security and security projection into Central and Southern Libya it would be difficult to counter these issues. (7) UN Special Envoy Ghassan Salame and Khalifa Haftar have suggested General Elections could be held as early as September 2018. The Netherlands donated €1.65 France pledged €200,000 to the UN's Promoting Elections for the People of Libya campaign. The United Nations Development Programme will support elections by providing training, technical infrastructure and policy advice.

AF/PAK: WEEKLY SITREP 06 DEC 2017

(1) Op FREEDOM'S SENTINEL & RESOLUTE SUPPORT MISSION
OP RESOLUTE SUPPORT supports campaign to protect children in armed conflict.

(2) AQ COMMANDER KILLED
A senior AQ commander has reportedly been killed during a joint US/Afghan operation 05 Dec 17.

(3) MUSA QALA
US forces killed leader of Taliban's "Red Unit" in strikes near Musa Qala 01 Dec 17.



(4) US/PAKISTAN FUNDING FREEZE
Despite recent thaw in tensions the coalition funding freeze implemented in July remains in place. 05 Dec 17.

(5) AFGHAN BORDER
An IED mounted on a motorcycle detonated against Pakistan military targets killing 9. 05 Dec 17.

(6) PESHAWAR
Taliban militants wearing burqas stormed an Agricultural college killing 9. 01 Dec 17.

COMMENT: **(1)** Op RESOLUTE SUPPORT supported the Afghan Ministry of Defense to put into force a child protection policy in a bid to protect Afghanistan's children from the harms of armed conflict. The policy is the product of a year long initiative to codify measures including training, reporting and investigations into reported incidents of violence against children by Afghan National Security Forces (ANSF). According to the UN, children accounted for 30% of deaths and casualties in 2017 largely as a result of Taliban or ISIS attacks on schools and hospitals as well as deaths as a result of poverty. While positive, it is unlikely the measures will reduce child casualties of the conflict as they cannot impact on militant attacks or effects of poverty. **(2)** Omar Bin Khatab, second in command of Al Qaeda in the Indian Subcontinent, was the most senior AQ leader to be killed in Afghanistan since 2001. 80 AQ operatives were also reportedly killed during a series of operations in Ghazni, Paktia and Zabul Provinces. The loss of a high profile leader is a blow to AQ and Taliban morale. **(3)** Mullah Shah Wali and 3 commanders within the Taliban's Red Unit were killed during US led strikes. The Red Unit are responsible for suicide bombs and coordinated attacks against ANSF and Coalition forces. Wali was responsible for the supply of weapons to the Taliban in Helmand. It is likely his removal will disrupt attacks in Musa Qala and disrupt the supply of weapons in Helmand with effects likely to be limited to the short term. **(4)** In July, the US suspended the Coalition Support Fund to Pakistan. The payments are made to reimburse countries fighting against terrorism. The US continues to accuse Pakistan of failing to target terrorists sheltered within its borders. Pakistan has lost \$650 million during the freeze and will lose a further \$400 million if the freeze continues beyond 2017. Despite recent visits from US Defense Secretary Jim Mattis, the payments will not be resumed until Islamabad can demonstrate a concerted effort to counter militant activity. It is likely the US will not assess Pakistan's counter-terrorism measures until the summer fighting season of 2018 in a bid to spur a redoubled effort from the reluctant regional ally. **(5)** A suicide bomb targeted a Pakistani Army vehicle as it passed near the border with Afghanistan killing 9. The Waziristan region was a prominent Taliban and AQ area until the Pakistani Army staged major operations in 2014 to flush the militants across the border. Pakistan often cites incidents such as these to counter the US claims of inaction. **(6)** Three Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan militants wearing suicide vests stormed the building during the Birthday of the Prophet Mohammad, killing students and security guards on site. All three militants were killed before detonating. The site was likely targeted because it was a relatively soft target in an area of education and research facilities suspected to be used to train Pakistani Intelligence (ISI). The attack resembles the 2014 Taliban attack on a school in the same area killing 151.