

SYRIA/IRAQ: WEEKLY SITREP 10 JAN 2018

- (1) IDLIB**
70,000 civilians flee Idlib as Regime forces advance. 08 Jan 18.
- (2) IDLIB**
23 killed during attack on a rebel base in Idlib. 08 Jan 18.
- (3) DAMASCUS**
Israel conducted a number of airstrikes against a military base near Qutayfeh. 09 Jan 18.
- (4) EASTERN GHOUTA**
Regime strikes killed 17 civilians and damaged medical facilities. 08 Jan 18.



- (5) US AID**
US announces \$75million in additional funding to help stabilize Iraq. 08 Jan 18.
- (6) TUZ KHUMATU**
The Iraqi Parliament voted to set up a committee to investigate war crimes in Tuz Khumatu. 08 Jan 18.
- (7) OIL**
Iraq will begin exporting oil from Kirkuk to Iran by the end of Jan. 09 Jan 18.
- (8) US FATALITY**
A soldier from Fort Mill died in Anbar Province 08 Jan 18.

ASSESSMENT: (1) Humanitarian groups warn of a crisis as tens of thousands are displaced due to violence. The Regime reportedly targeted 8 hospitals since Dec 17 likely to create a worsening humanitarian crisis akin to Eastern Ghouta. It is likely the Regime will prioritise control of Abu al-Duhour Airbase to establish a foothold before an aerial offensive further into Idlib Province. The violence may derail future peace talks between opposition and Regime forces. (2) The source of the explosion is unconfirmed but reportedly killed 23 members of opposition faction, al-Qawqaz. (3) The strikes, launched from within Lebanese airspace, targeted a weapons depot used by the Regime at Qutayfeh, North of Damascus. The Regime claims to have retaliated, damaged one Israeli aircraft. Israel claimed it would continue to target weapons destined for Lebanese Hezbollah. (4) The White Helmets volunteer group claim 17 fatalities and 40 wounded during Regime strikes which damaged at least 10 medical facilities in the besieged rebel held area. The loss of medical facilities will exacerbate the humanitarian crisis. (5) The US will provide a total of \$150million in 2018, providing \$265.3million since 2015. Increasingly attention is turning to restructuring of both Iraq and Syria as the threat from ISIS nears an irreducible minimum. Restructuring will bring economic benefit to the nations surrounding Iraq and Syria and relieve pressure caused by millions of refugees and internally displaced persons. (6) Tuz Khumatu was retaken by Iraqi Security Forces (ISF) from Kurdish Peshmerga on 16 Oct 17. The Kurdish Government accuses ISF and associated Shia militias of committing war crimes, supported by UN observations from the time. (7) Iraqi Oil Minister Jabar al-Luaibi announced that 30,000bpd will be trucked to Kermanshah refinery beginning at the end of Jan 18 as part of a larger deal to supply 60,000bpd from Kirkuk in the future. Iraq plans to construct a pipeline from Kirkuk to Kermanshah in the future, as well as carry out essential repairs to the Kirkuk-Ceyhan pipeline. Output from Kirkuk ceased on 16 Oct during the take over by ISF of the area. The overall increase in output is likely to result in a reduction in output from the Southern terminals, which had averaged 350 million bpd by Nov 17, or Iraq will risk backlash from OPEC who have sought to rebalance the oil market with production caps on member states. (8) The soldier's death is non-combat related and will be subject to an investigation.

SYRIA/IRAQ CONTROL MAP: 10 JAN 2018

RECONSTRUCTING SYRIA POST-CONFLICT

The war in Syria rages on but increasingly strategic attention turns to the reconstruction of the country, likely under the Government of Bashar al-Assad. As rebels desperately battle for survival in Eastern Ghouta and Idlib against Regime forces, 2018 may be the year the war ends. The World Bank estimates that the cost of rebuilding Syria is \$200bn, with other estimates as high as \$900bn emerging.

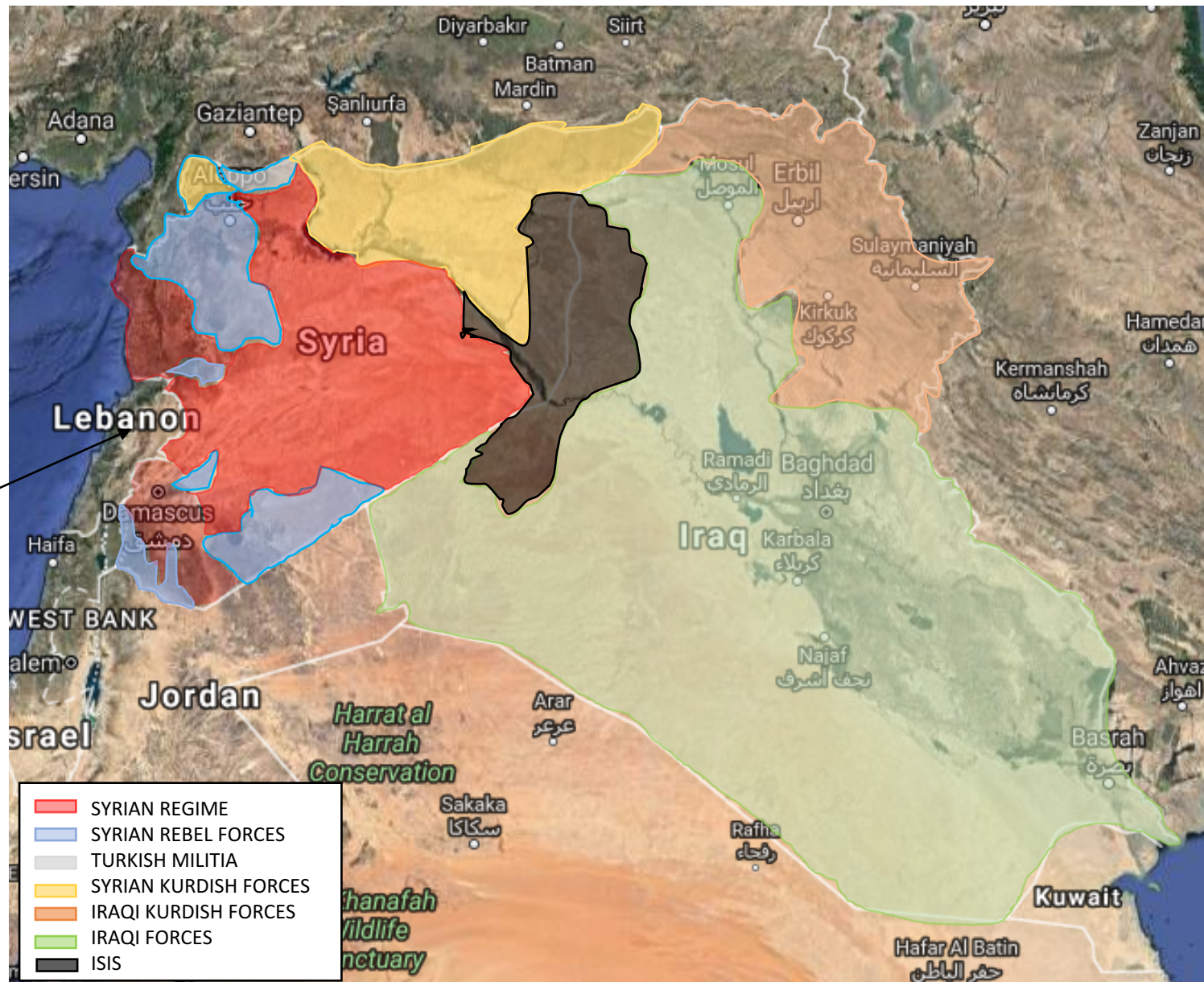
Lebanon has been maneuvering towards the reconstruction opportunity, recognizing the economic potential in its neighbor. Lebanon could prove an attractive financial and logistics hub for international aid into Syria, having a shared language and established economic links as well as a financial footprint through banks such as Audi. Senior leaders in the financial sector are keen to capitalize on project financing and loan opportunities as the international community attempts to stabilize and rebuild the war-torn nation, minimizing their direct interaction with the Regime.

The President of Lebanon's International Chamber of Commerce comments that countries such as China, South Africa and Egypt have expressed interest in participation in reconstruction. Lebanon presents itself as a logistics node by sea, air and road for any international efforts but will likely share such a role with Turkey and Iraqi Kurdistan.

Egypt's Ministry of Trade has issued calls for participation from Egyptian companies, particularly focused on the demand for building materials such as iron, steel and copper.

Similarly, Turkey reopened the al-Rai border crossing point 29 Dec 17, likely to boost commercial and humanitarian links in 2018. The crossing is already being used by Turkey to move reconstruction materials across the border.

Syria advertised opportunities to take part in reconstruction through events such as the "Rebuild Syria 2017" exhibition in Damascus and the Damascus International Fair and will likely continue to do so in 2018. Russia has urged the EU and the West to foot the bill for rebuilding Syria.



NORTH AFRICA: WEEKLY SITREP 10 JAN 2018

(1) KHALIFA HAFTAR
The OPERATION DIGNITY chief warned Libya may not be ready for elections. 08 Jan 18.

(2) POLITICAL ASSASSINATIONS
Political activist within the Educational Services Bureau of El Biar, Salah al-Qatrani, was assassinated on 04 Jan 18.

(3) LIBYA/TUNISIA
Clashes closed the Ras Ajdair border crossing point. Violence erupted in Zuwara as clashes took place between security forces. 04 Jan 18.



(4) MIGRANTS
The Libyan Coastguard rescued 300 migrants from 3 boats off the Libyan coast. 09 Jan 18.

(5) TRIPOLI
The Ministry of Interior confirmed two members of ISIS have been arrested during a plot to place a car bomb in the capital. 09 Jan 18.

(6) OIL
Libya's National Oil Company (NOC) has won a legal battle against the owners of Ras Lanuf and calls for its reopening. 09 Jan 18.

ASSESSMENT: (1) Controversial Libyan strongman Khalifa Haftar warned that Libya may not be ready for UN brokered democracy in 2018. Haftar controls almost half of Libya, commanding up to 75,000 men, wields control of a loyal population and is supported by Russia, the United Arab Emirates and Egypt. Haftar has warned that if the elections do not produce a peaceful outcome his forces will take action to cease control, likely to plunge the nation into war if Haftar fails to gain a powerful position within the future of Libya through elections. (2) The assassination of al-Qatrani marks the 201st political assassination to take place in Libya in the wake of the scheduled 2018 general elections. Assassinations have been reported on both sides of the political divide, including key members of Haftar's army and the Mayor of Misrata. It is likely assassination attempts will increase in the run up to the election, particularly given the conditional support offered by Haftar. (3) One death was reported as a result of fighting between Government forces and local armed fighters in Abu Kammash. The area is a lucrative smuggling site that has been under the control of locals since the revolution. The Government has made attempts to retake control of the crossing point but has been met with staunch resistance and has been forced to back down. Without Government control of the Port of Zuwara it will continue to be used as a node for smuggling migrants and criminal activity. (4) Of the three boats intercepted near Zawiya West of Tripoli, one was sinking with 64 reportedly killed. The Libyan coastguard rescued 300 from the boats, including 16 clinging to the sinking dinghy. 2,832 migrants died making the journey to Europe from Libya last year, while significantly down from 4,581 in 2016 it is likely the number will remain in the thousands moving into 2018. (5) The Ministry of Interior made the announcement on its social media platforms, including a video reportedly showing the men confessing to the plot. Despite defeat in Sirte and Benghazi, ISIS continues to pose a threat to stability in Libya as they conduct attacks in population centers such as the Oct 17 attack on a Misratan Court which killed 3 security personnel. (6) NOC won the arbitration battle with Libyan Emirati Refining Company following the case hearing in Paris, in which NOC was awarded US\$116million. It is likely NOC will seek to reopen Ras Lanuf in the second half of the year. The refinery ceased output in 2011 during the revolution but reopened in 2013. Reopening the refinery is a positive step towards stabilization for the rudderless nation, but will be a target for militants as headlines focus on the reopening.

AF/PAK: WEEKLY SITREP 10 JAN 2018

(1) Op FREEDOM'S SENTINEL & RESOLUTE SUPPORT MISSION

Afghan forces, supported by US troops, successfully repelled an Islamic State attack. 08 Jan 18.

(2) KABUL

A Suicide attack targeting a security operation countering narcotics killed 11 and wounded 25. 09 Jan 18.

(3) KABUL

The US has appointed a new Ambassador to Afghanistan, John Bass. 10 Jan 18.



(4) ISLAMABAD

Pakistan issued a one month ultimatum for Afghan refugees living in Pakistan. 09 Jan 18.

(5) ISLAMABAD

Armed men attempted to kidnap a prominent Pakistani journalist. 10 Jan 18.

(6) BALUCHISTAN

The Chief Minister of Baluchistan resigned amid calls for a vote of no confidence. 09 Jan 18.

(7) QUETTA

A suicide attack killed 6 and wounded 17 near Quetta 09 Jan 18.

COMMENT: (1) Operations against Islamic State in Kunar Province had reduced freedom of movement and reduced the operational tempo of the militant group. Operations such as these are crucial to improving security in the locality but also the capital Kabul as IS small numbers will be fixed to holding their territory in rural areas. (2) Islamic State have claimed responsibility for the attack through its news outlet Amaq, which claimed the group of security individuals were intelligence personnel. The attack demonstrates the ability of militants to conduct opportunistic attacks against security personnel as the gathering was not planned and had been stationary for a short time. Islamic State was responsible for a string of deadly attacks against Shia sites in Kabul in Dec 17 killing 40 civilians. (3) Ambassador John Bass was formerly the US Ambassador to Turkey. (4) The warning from Pakistan to withdraw residency for the 2.4 million Afghan refugees residing in Pakistan is likely a response to the suspension of US aid. (5) Taha Siddiqui claimed up to 12 armed men attempted to kidnap him, forcing him into a taxi bound for the airport. Siddiqui rose to prominence in a BBC news report regarding press freedom in Pakistan which remains one of the most dangerous countries in the world for journalists. Siddiqui has also criticized Pakistan's military and raised the profile of several social media activists who have gone missing in recent years. It is unclear who was responsible for the attack given the presence of militants, criminals and the possibility the action was state ordered. US Secretary of State Rex Tillerson placed Pakistan on a watch list for severe violations of religious freedom. (6) Nawab Sanaullah Zehri, a member of the ruling Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz Party, resigned before opposition law makers issued a vote of no confidence due to lack of security. The Province is plagued by sectarian violence, a low level insurgency and increasingly the host of Islamist extremist attacks. Pakistani Prime Minister Shahid Khaqan Abbasi visited the Provincial capital Quetta on 08 Jan 18 to address the political tensions in the wake of Pakistan's senate elections scheduled for Mar 18. (7) The attack targeted a police patrol in Quetta, where numerous attacks have taken place in the past 14 days. The Pakistani Taliban claimed the attack, which followed a vote of no confidence in the local police leadership. The Province has long been home to criminality and a insurgency by Baluch separatists. The porous border with Afghanistan makes Quetta a hotbed of facilitation and has allowed Islamic militants to establish a foothold to project attacks.