



## Spotlight on Global Jihad

(October 9-15, 2015)



### Main events of the week

- The main event of the week was the Syrian Army's ground attack with Iranian involvement, with the participation of Hezbollah operatives and with Russian air support. In the ITIC's assessment, **the preliminary attack is concentrated in the areas of Hama, Idlib and Aleppo**, and it is directed against the Al-Nusra Front and its allies. Its purpose is to ease the pressure on the Syrian regime's strongholds in Latakia and to establish the regime's control in northern Syria. In the ITIC's assessment, ISIS and its "capital city" of Al-Raqqah are not (at least at this stage) the target of the ground offensive.
- The situation of control on the ground is still unclear. According to initial information, the Syrian Army enjoyed local successes in the rural area north of Hama. On the other hand, it seems that in the area of Aleppo and in Idlib as well, the Syrian Army apparently encountered difficulties due to resistance from the rebel organizations. During the incidents, Brigadier General Hossein Hamedani, a senior Iranian Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps Commander, was killed in Aleppo, and a senior Hezbollah operative was killed in Idlib.
- The Syrian Army attack was accompanied by intensive activity on the part of the Russian Air Force (more than 200 airstrikes). In the ITIC's assessment, most of the airstrikes were directed against the rebel organizations operating in northwestern Syria (led by the Al-Nusra Front). On the other hand, the airstrikes against ISIS targets continued to take second place, although the Russians continue to emphasize Russia's activity against ISIS.
- The US Department of Defense announced the termination of the training program for the rebel organizations in Syria, which failed dismally (at a cost of around half a billion dollars). The Americans found an operational alternative by airlifting dozens of tons of weapons and ammunition intended for the Kurdish forces and the various rebel organizations, without examining them too closely. Some of these rebel organizations are those that absorb most of the pressure of the Syrian Army's ground offensive, with Russian air support.

## The international campaign against ISIS

### US and coalition airstrikes

■ During the past week, US and coalition airstrikes against ISIS targets continued. During the week, many dozens of airstrikes were carried out in Syria and Iraq by means of fighter planes, attack aircraft and UAVs.

■ Following are the main attacks (according to the US Department of Defense website):

- **Syria** - the airstrikes were concentrated in the areas of Al-Hasakah, Palmyra, Al-Raqqah, Manbij (northeast of Aleppo) and Marea (north of Aleppo). The airstrikes damaged ISIS tactical units, a training camp, mortars, a crude oil collection site, buildings and vehicles, among other things (US Department of Defense website, October 8-10, 2015).

- **Iraq** - the airstrikes were concentrated in the areas of Baiji, Kirkuk, Mosul, Fallujah, Sultan Abdullah (southeast of Mosul), Habbaniyah, Ramadi, Hit, Sinjar, Kisik (west of Mosul) and Hawija (west of Kirkuk). The airstrikes damaged ISIS tactical units, weapons, battle positions, vehicles, a workshop for manufacturing car bombs, facilities for manufacturing explosives, IED storage sites, buildings and tunnels, among other things (US Department of Defense website, October 10, 2015).

■ The coalition forces spokesman said that up to October 6, 2015, the US-led coalition forces had carried out **7,323 airstrikes** against ISIS targets in Syria and Iraq. Of these, **4701 were carried out in Iraq and 2,622 in Syria** (US Department of Defense website, October 10, 2015).

■ On October 9, 2015, the US Department of Defense announced the **termination of the training program for the rebels in Syria**, which has cost about half a billion dollars so far. The decision was made after the US government concluded that the program had failed to produce a military ground force capable of defeating ISIS and bringing about the downfall of President Assad (The New York Times, October 9, 2015).

■ On the other hand, the US is apparently looking for other ways to help the various organizations fighting against ISIS, without examining them too closely. In this context, a “senior American official” said that the US had airlifted ammunition to the

Kurdish forces (YPG) in the area of Al-Hasakah (Al-Arabiya TV, October 12, 2015). According to a CNN report (October 12, 2015), American cargo planes dropped around 50 tons of ammunition intended for rebel organizations in northern Syria. According to reports by Western news agencies that rely on American sources, the Syrian rebel organizations supported by the United States recently increased the use of TOW anti-tank missiles.

## Russian involvement in the civil war in Syria

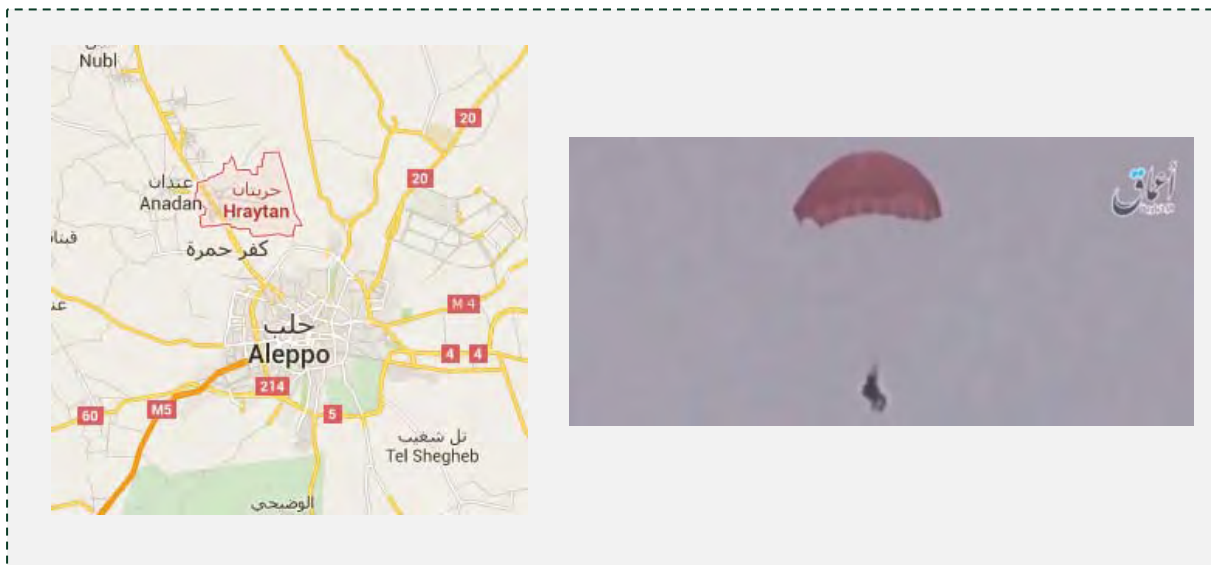
■ **This week, the Russian Air Force stepped up its attacks on the rebel organizations in Syria.** The airstrikes were carried out mainly **against the Al-Nusra Front and its allies** in areas where the Syrian Army operated and, to a lesser extent, against ISIS targets (although the Russian announcements stress the airstrikes carried out against ISIS). The Russian airstrikes were carried out throughout **Homs, Hama, Idlib and Aleppo** (RT.com website, October 9, 2015).

■ According to the Russian Defense Ministry, the Russian Air Force has carried out **more than two hundred airstrikes** to date. Between October 8 and 9, 2015, 60 targets were attacked by the Russians. These airstrikes allegedly killed two senior ISIS commanders. Around 300 rebel operatives were reportedly wounded. Of the 300, 200 were killed in a pinpoint bombing of the headquarters of an Islamic rebel organization by the name of *Liwa al-Haqq* (the “Justice Brigade”). Another 100 operatives were killed in an air raid on a base and a weapons storage room at a former prison near Aleppo. These airstrikes destroyed six communications centers, six weapons storage sites, 17 training camps and 17 vehicles (RT.com website, October 9, 2015).

■ **This week, Russian officials commented on the Russian activity in Syria:** in an interview with the Russia 1 channel, **Russian President Vladimir Putin said that Russia would not put boots on the ground in Syria.** According to Putin, Russia is fighting in order to stabilize the legitimate regime in Syria and create conditions for a political solution (Russia Today). **Russian Defense Minister Lavrov** said that Russia would be willing to work together with the international coalition and the Arab countries in the fight against terrorism but, he said, the international coalition was not ready to do so at the moment (Sputnik News Agency, October 12, 2015). **Andrei Kartapolov, operations director of the Russian Armed Forces general staff,** said that Russia had asked the defense ministries and departments of defense of the international coalition against ISIS to provide **Russia with intelligence on ISIS and on terrorist operatives in Syria** (Sputnik News Agency, October 7, 2015).

## Interception of a Russian aircraft

■ On October 11, 2015, one of ISIS's media arms released a video showing a man parachuting out of a plane. The video claims that the man is a Russian pilot who bailed out and that ISIS operatives shot him as he parachuted. The sound of many shots being fired can be heard in the video (Amaq, October 11, 2015). Conversely, according to a report in the British newspaper The Mirror, the Turkish Army shot down a Russian fighter plane after it had entered Turkish airspace. The incident occurred near the town of Hraytan, about 9.5 km northwest of Aleppo (Mirror.co.uk website, October 10, 2015).



**Left: The town of Hraytan (Google Maps). Right: Photo from the ISIS video showing a pilot who bailed out of his aircraft in the area of Haritan, northwest of Aleppo (Amaq, October 11, 2015).**

## Main developments in Syria



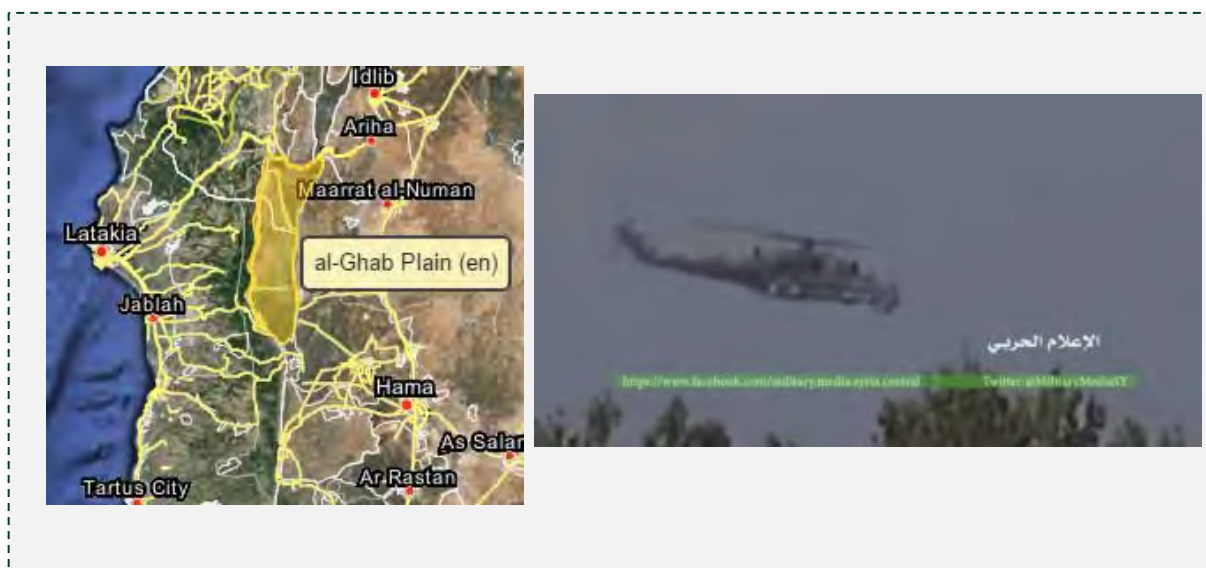
Map of Syria ([www.nationsonline.org](http://www.nationsonline.org))

### The Syrian Army's ground offensive in northern Syria - update (updated as at October 13, 2015)

- On October 7, 2015, the Syrian Army began preliminary steps for a ground offensive in the areas of Hama, Idlib and Aleppo. In the ITIC's assessment, the aim of the attack is to release the strategic pressure exerted by the Al-Nusra Front and its allies (Jaysh al-Fatah) on the essential strongholds of the regime in Latakia and the coastal plain. The attack is also intended to consolidate the control of the Syrian regime throughout the cities of Homs, Hama and Aleppo.
- In concrete terms, the purpose of the attack is to **reclaim the Idlib area, which fell in the hands of the rebels, and to expand the Syrian regime's control from Aleppo to the Syrian-Turkish border.** On the other hand, in the ITIC's assessment, "ISIS's capital" Al-Raqqa and the areas under ISIS's control east of the Euphrates and in the Syrian Desert are not the target of the Syrian Army's ground operation at this stage.

■ The military force bearing the brunt of the ground operation is **the Syrian Army**, which receives Russian air support and limited ground support from Iranian fighters and Hezbollah operatives. The Russian support of the Syrian Army is reflected in the intensive attacks against rebel targets in the Syrian Army war zones or in areas where the Syrian Army is planning to carry out its ground operation. As a result of the ground operation and airstrikes, **the civilian population is reportedly fleeing** from the areas of Idlib and Hama towards the Turkish-Syrian border (Al-Jazeera TV, October 12, 2015).

■ During the fighting, **Syrian helicopters provided close support to the Syrian Army**. On October 8, 2015, the military media branch of the Syrian Army issued a video stating that Russian MI-35 combat helicopters are assisting the Syrian Army in the fighting on the Al-Ghab plain southwest of Idlib (see below). The video shows four helicopters flying very low, one after the other, at intervals of six to twenty seconds (YouTube, October 8, 2015).



Left: Al-Ghab plain (Wikimapia). Right: Russian MI-35 combat helicopter supporting the Syrian Army in Al-Ghab plain, southwest of Idlib (YouTube, October 8, 2015)

## Report in a Lebanese newspaper with access to Hezbollah on the ground operation and its goals

■ The Lebanese newspaper **Al-Akhbar**, which is affiliated with Hezbollah, published an article about the plans for the Syrian regime to regain control in northern Syria. Following are the main points of the report (October 13, 2015):

- On October 12, 2015, Iran sent the first group of Revolutionary Guard forces to join the Syrian Army and Hezbollah forces.

- The intention is to carry out an extensive operation **to restore the Syrian regime's control in the northwest of the country**. To this end, the planned first stage of the ground operation will be **to take over the rural area of Hama, Idlib and Homs**.
- Subsequently, the aim of the ground operation will be to reach the Turkish-Syrian border, where the Syrian Army will join up with several Kurdish units (the YPG).
- The newspaper Al-Akhbar has found out that **Qods Force Commander Qassem Soleimani arrived in northwestern Syria about two days ago** (i.e., on October 11, 2015). He is reportedly commanding the preparations for the offensive by the Syrian Army and the Iraqi Army (according to Al-Akhbar, Iraq is planning an operation to take over the city of Baiji).

## Hama province

- According to media reports, **the Syrian Army has advanced in the rural area north of Hama, with Russian air support**. On October 10, 2015, it took over the towns of **Atshan** and **Umm Hartayn** at the hands of the rebel organizations, including the Al-Nusra Front. The Syrian Army also occupied a strategic location by the name of Tall Sakik (see map), in order to advance toward the international highway between Damascus and Aleppo, which has been under the control of Islamist organizations since May 2014 (AFP, October 11, 2015). According to Syrian and Arab media reports, the Syrian security forces killed dozens of rebel operatives and hit 20 vehicles carrying ammunition belonging to rebel organizations.
- On the other hand, Jaysh al-Fatah, led by the Al-Nusra Front, announced the opening of a new campaign, which aims **to take over the city of Hama**. Jaysh al-Fatah called on its operatives inside the city and those fighting on the road leading to Hama to commence military operations on the various fronts in order to bring about the liberation of the city (Al-Durar al-Shamiya, October 13, 2015).



The village of Atshan, about 35 km north of Hama (Google Maps)



Syrian Army tank and soldiers in the village of Atshan (SANA News Agency, October 11, 2015)



Syrian Army forces in the village of Atshan (SANA News Agency, October 11, 2015)



## Aleppo province

### Overview

■ While the Syrian Army reported local achievements in the rural area of Hama, **the Syrian Army's ground operation in the area of Aleppo appears to have met with difficulties. ISIS operatives reportedly took over a number of strategic locations in the rural area north and northeast of Aleppo and the Syrian Army's progress was apparently halted east of Aleppo.**

■ On October 9, 2015, one of ISIS's media arms reported that its operatives had managed to take over several villages and strategic control locations in the rural area northeast and north of Aleppo. The villages that were taken over are: **Tall Sha'ir**, located 17.5 km northeast of Aleppo; **Fafeen**, located approximately 17 km northeast of Aleppo; **Tall Susayn**, located approximately 17 km north of Aleppo; **Kafr Qares**, located approximately 18 km northeast of Aleppo, and **Tall Qarah**, located approximately 19 km north of Aleppo. On the other hand, the Syrian security forces reportedly managed to take control over the area northeast of Aleppo and to repel the ISIS forces (Al-Jazeera, October 12, 2015).



The area northeast and north of Aleppo, which was taken over by ISIS operatives (Google Maps)



ISIS operative in the rural area northeast of Aleppo (archive.org file-sharing website, October 10, 2015)

### ISIS halted the Syrian Army's attempts to advance in the rural area near the Kuweyres military airbase

■ On October 10, 2015, one of ISIS's media arms reported that it had managed to halt the progress of the Syrian Army in the area northeast of the town of Al-Safirah, approximately 25 km southeast of Aleppo. This was the Syrian Army's third attempt in less than a month to advance in this area in order to lift the siege imposed by ISIS operatives on the Kuweyres military airbase (a3maqagency.wordpress.com, October 10, 2015).



The area of Al-Safirah, near the Kuweyres military airbase (Wikimapia, Google Maps)

## The death of a Senior Iranian Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps Commander

- On October 9, 2015, official Iranian sources announced that a senior commander of Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guards, **Brigadier General Hossein Hamedani**, was killed on October 8, 2015, on the outskirts of the city of Aleppo. There are various conflicting reports regarding the circumstances of his death: according to one report, he was killed in a car accident, and according to another, he was killed in an ISIS ambush. According to sources in the Revolutionary Guards, Hamedani served as a consultant to the Syrian Army.
- Hamedani fought in the Iran-Iraq War and was a veteran member of the Revolutionary Guards. News agencies reported that he had overseen the Iranian forces that were sent recently to Syria to aid the Syrian regime (Reuters and the Turkish Anadolu Agency, October 9, 2015).<sup>1</sup> According to a report by Human Rights Watch, Hamedani was killed by ISIS during an operation to break the siege on the Kuweyres military airbase east of Aleppo (BBC in Farsi, October 9, 2015).



**Brigadier General Hossein Hamedani, Senior Iranian Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps Commander, who was killed in Aleppo (Twitter, October 9, 2015)**

- On October 11, 2015, a Twitter account posted a page with the photos of fourteen senior members of the Iranian Revolutionary Guards who it claimed had been killed in Iraq and Syria. The fifteenth is Brigadier General Hossein Hamedani, as reported above (Twitter, October 11, 2015).

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<sup>1</sup> For further details see the ITIC's Information Bulletin from October 13, 2015: "Brigadier General Hossein Hamedani, Senior Iranian Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps Commander, Killed Near Aleppo, Syria."



Fourteen senior members of the Iranian Revolutionary Guards who were reportedly killed in Iraq and Syria (Twitter, October 11, 2015)

## Idlib province

- This week, there were battles between the Syrian Army and the Al-Nusra Front and its allies **in the area southwest of Idlib**. The Syrian Army is apparently conducting a ground operation with the aid of Hezbollah and with Russian air support, with the goal of recapturing the areas that it lost in recent months and **removing the threat of the rebel organizations on the city of Latakia, a stronghold of the Syrian regime**.
- On October 11, 2015, the Twitter account of the media center of Jaysh al-Fatah (led by the Al-Nusra Front) reported that ten Syrian Army soldiers were killed when an attempt was made to prevent them from advancing in the village of Fawru. Fawru is a village on the Al-Ghab plain, approximately 13.5 km **south of Jisr al-Shughur**, a town located on the **highway from Idlib to Latakia** (Jaysh al-Fatah's Twitter account, October 11, 2015). The Syrian Army's goal is apparently to **recapture the area between Jisr al-Shughur and Idlib in order to control the main highway (M4) leading to Latakia**.



The village of Fawru, east of Jisr al-Shughur (Google Maps)

- On October 10, 2015, an Al-Jazeera reporter in Lebanon reported that a senior Hezbollah field commander, **Mahdi Hassan Obeid** (aka **Al-Hajj Abu Rida** or **Hassan Hussein al-Hajj**), had been killed in the fighting in the Idlib area (Al-Jazeera TV channel website and Al-Mayadeen channel, October 10, 2015; Lebanon Files, October 12, 2015). His funeral was held on October 12, 2015, in the town of Loueizeh, in South Lebanon (South Lebanon website). According to another Twitter account, ten other Hezbollah operatives were killed in the Idlib area.



Senior Hezbollah field commander Hassan Hussein al-Hajj, aka Al-Hajj Abu Rida, who died in the fighting in the Idlib area (Al-Mayadeen channel website, October 11, 2015)

## Deir al-Zor province

■ ISIS continues to exert pressure on the military airbase in Deir al-Zor. ISIS operatives reportedly activated a car bomb at the airbase (Aks al-Sir, October 11, 2015). On the other hand, ISIS reportedly suffered dozens of losses in its attempt to advance to the airbase.

## Main developments in Iraq



Map of Iraq ([www.nationsonline.org](http://www.nationsonline.org))

## Attempted assassination of ISIS's leader

■ According to a report by Iraqi military sources on October 11, 2015, Iraqi Air Force planes attacked a convoy supposedly containing ISIS leader Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi. The convoy was allegedly attacked in the Al-Anbar province while Al-Baghdadi was on his way to a meeting of senior ISIS operatives. According to Arab media reports, **Al-Baghdadi was not killed in the airstrike** but "Iraqi military sources" claimed that a

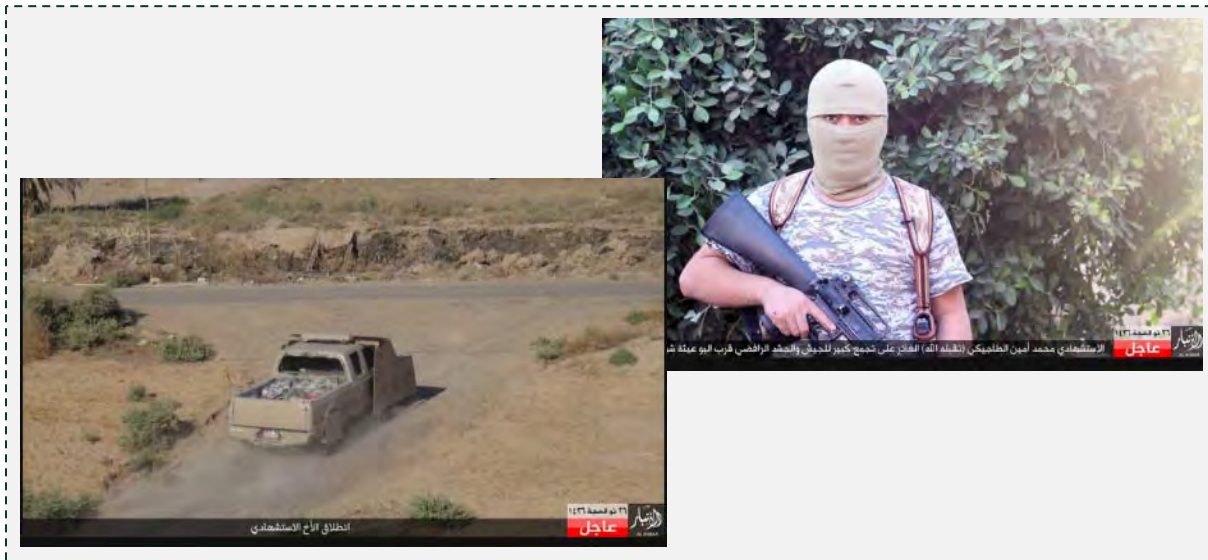
number of senior ISIS operatives were killed in the airstrike (Al-Mayadeen channel and Al-Baghdadia channel, October 11, 2015).



Photo from the airstrike on the convoy in which Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi was supposedly riding, according to the Iraqi Army (Al-Baghdadia channel, October 11, 2015)

## Al-Anbar province

■ On October 10, 2015, ISIS's Al-Anbar province claimed responsibility for a suicide bombing attack in the **northern part of the city of Ramadi**. The attack was carried out by means of a truck bomb at a base of the Iraqi Army and the Shiite militias that support it. The suicide bombing attack was carried out by a suicide bomber codenamed **Muhammad Amin al-Tajiki**, a name indicating that he was probably from Tajikistan. It is unknown whether there were any casualties (Akhbar Dawlat al-Islam, October 10, 2015). Iraqi sources continue to report that the Iraqi Army and the local forces that support it are expected to make an attempt to take over the city of Ramadi (Al-Sabah al-Jadid, October 11, 2015).



Right: Suicide bomber codenamed Muhammad Amin al-Tajiki. Left: The truck bomb driven by the suicide bomber (Akhbar Dawlat al-Islam, October 10, 2015).

## Salah al-Din province

- According to a senior Iraqi security source, the operation to liberate the city of Baiji from the hands of ISIS is expected to begin within a few days (Al-Bawaba, October 12, 2015). A day earlier, an Iraqi security source said that two ISIS operatives of Tunisian and Moroccan origin had been killed in an ambush set by Iraqi Army Special Forces in the area of the refinery in Baiji (Akhbarna, October 11, 2015).

## Nineveh province

- On October 10, 2015, ISIS in the Nineveh province issued a video documenting a renewed pledge of allegiance to the leader of ISIS by the Al-Kalaj tribe, one of the Jabour tribes (one of the largest Sunni tribes in in the area of Mosul) (archive.org file-sharing website, October 10, 2015).





Renewing the pledge of allegiance to ISIS leader Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi (archive.org file-sharing website, October 10, 2015)

## The global jihad in other countries

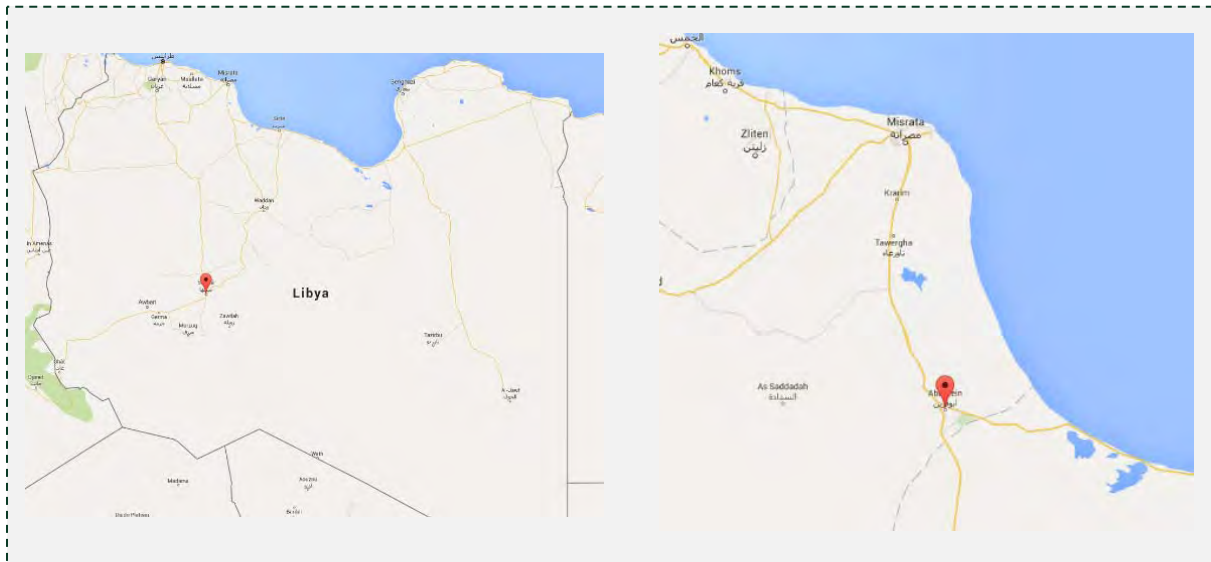
### Libya

#### Two senior ISIS operatives killed in the city of Derna

■ **Violent clashes continue between ISIS and jihadi organizations in the city of Derna in eastern Libya.** Sources in Derna reported the death of two ISIS commanders: on October 10, 2015, the body of ISIS commander **Hamza Salem Atiya Habil** was found. He was killed by operatives of the Abu Salim Martyrs Brigade, a local Islamic organization that is gaining strength (Akhbar Libya, October 11, 2015). On October 9, 2015, ISIS commander **Mohammad Mahmoud al-Araj** was killed by the Shura Council of the Jihad Fighters of Derna, a jihadi organization affiliated with Al-Qaeda (Bawabat Ifriqya al-Ikhbariya, October 9, 2015).

#### ISIS activity south of Misrata

■ According to eyewitness accounts, on October 8, 2015, ISIS operatives attacked three tanker trucks **in the area of Abu Qarin**, south of Misrata. The tanker trucks had left Misrata and were on their way to the city of Sabha, deep in the Libyan Desert (see map). It was also reported that the attack included an exchange of fire between ISIS operatives and operatives of Libyan Dawn, which supports the Tripoli government. The incident ended with the destruction of Libyan Dawn's vehicles and the takeover of the tanker trucks (Akhbar Libya, October 8, 2015).



Left: The city of Sabha, deep in the Libyan Desert. Right: Abu Qarin, approximately 100 km south Misrata (Google Maps)

## ISIS's attempts to recruit operatives in Libya

■ According to reports by Libyan sources, **ISIS's branch in Libya is utilizing the funds that it accumulates from drug smuggling, arms trading and the theft of public property and banks to recruit fighters to its ranks.** A Libyan researcher by the name of **Abdel Aziz Aghniwah** believes that ISIS stole large sums of money from Libya, mainly from a bank in the city of Sirte, and that it receives considerable support from entities in Libya and elsewhere. It also enjoys the profits of drug smuggling and oil trading. According to the researcher, ISIS forces the population to pay taxes and imposes fines. He says many of those recruited by ISIS are poor unemployed young people. According to Aghniwah, ISIS is working to create a large army that will enable it to expand its control over Libya (Akhbar Libya, October 8, 2015).

## Turkey

### ISIS accused of responsibility for mass casualty suicide bombing attack

■ On the morning of October 10, 2015, a mass casualty suicide bombing attack was carried out in Ankara during a demonstration of left-wing parties, Turkish labor unions and the Kurdish HDP party. The demonstration was intended to promote peace in Turkey and to protest the ongoing conflict between the Turkish security forces and the PKK. **The attack killed 98 participants in the demonstration and injured over 200.** It was the **worst terror attack in the history of Turkey.** No organization has claimed responsibility for the attack. After meeting with the heads of the security services, Turkish Prime Minister **Recep Tayyip Erdoğan** said that there was

compelling evidence that the explosions were carried out by two suicide bombers. He pointed a finger at ISIS, the PKK or extreme left-wing organizations.

■ A Turkish-language Twitter account reported that **ISIS congratulated the perpetrators of the mass killing**. The account said: “We congratulate the perpetrators. Praise be to Allah that the attack at the communist demonstration in Ankara succeeded. We pray to Allah that the number of demonstrators will increase [...]” (milliyet.com.tr, October 10, 2015). It was also reported that a group presenting itself as ISIS’s Turkish province had released a video calling on Turks to join it (milliyet.com.tr, October 13, 2015).

■ Turkish security sources in Ankara told the Anadolu Agency that the attack method and the quantity of TNT used were similar to the attack that was carried out in the town of Suruç in July 2015. According to them, this indicates that the attack was carried out by ISIS, since ISIS - according to Turkish government officials - was responsible for the attack in Suruç, which killed 27 people (Anadolu Agency, October 10, 2015; Al-Jazeera website, October 11, 2015; Reuters, October 11, 2015).

■ **At this stage, the ITIC cannot verify the Turkish reports about ISIS’s responsibility for the attack.** If it turns out that ISIS was indeed responsible, this could spur Turkey to **intensify its activity against ISIS**, including the implementation of more effective action against the passage of ISIS operatives into Syria (Turkey is still ISIS’s main logistical pipeline).

## Egypt and the Sinai Peninsula

■ Egyptian security forces continued their increased activity against ISIS’s branch in the Sinai Peninsula. Concurrently with the Egyptian counter-terrorism and preventive activity, ISIS’s Sinai province operatives continued to carry out attacks, mainly in the area of Sheikh Zuweid. Following are a number of incidents:

- **On October 11, 2015**, three Egyptian policemen were wounded in an attack on an armored vehicle by means of a large IED, near the police headquarters in Al-Arish (Anadolu Agency website, October 11, 2015).
- **On October 9, 2015**, operatives of ISIS’s Sinai province attacked and destroyed an APC by means of an IED. The attack was carried out near the Al-Jura checkpoint, south of Sheikh Zuweid (ISIS-affiliated Twitter account, October 10, 2015).

- **On October 9, 2015**, operatives of ISIS's Sinai province detonated an IED against a vehicle carrying ammunition to the Egyptian Army on the road to Sheikh Zuweid (ISIS-affiliated Twitter account, October 9, 2015).



**Detonation of an IED against a vehicle carrying ammunition to the Egyptian Army in the area of Sheikh Zuweid (ISIS-affiliated Twitter account, October 9, 2015)**

- **On October 8, 2015**, an attempted attack at a checkpoint west of Sheikh Zuweid by masked men on four motorcycles was foiled. Snipers of the Egyptian security forces shot at them from a great distance, causing them to flee (Alwatannews.com website, October 8, 2015).

## Counterterrorism and preventive activity

### Turkish police seized equipment for minting ISIS coins in the city of Gaziantep, southern Turkey

- According to a report in the newspaper Cumhuriyet on October 7, 2015, police in the city of Gaziantep, southern Turkey, **seized equipment for minting coins for ISIS's "Islamic State"**. Six suspects, all foreign nationals, were detained in the raid. Twelve dies for minting coins, four circular cutting templates and 20 tin sheets were seized in a search in the detainees' homes and cars. The six foreign suspects were taken in for questioning (Cumhuriyet newspaper website, October 7, 2015).



Left: ISIS's five dinar coin. One side says: the Islamic State - five dinars - the Caliphate according to prophetic way [i.e., the way of the Prophet Muhammad]". On the other side of the coin there is a map of the world, reflecting ISIS's global perception (Al-Arabiya TV, June 24, 2015). Right: Dies for minting ISIS's five dinar coins found in Gaziantep (Cumhuriyet newspaper website, October 7, 2015).



The city of Gaziantep, southern Turkey, not far from the border between Turkey and Syria (source: Google Maps)

## Terrorist attack in Moscow foiled

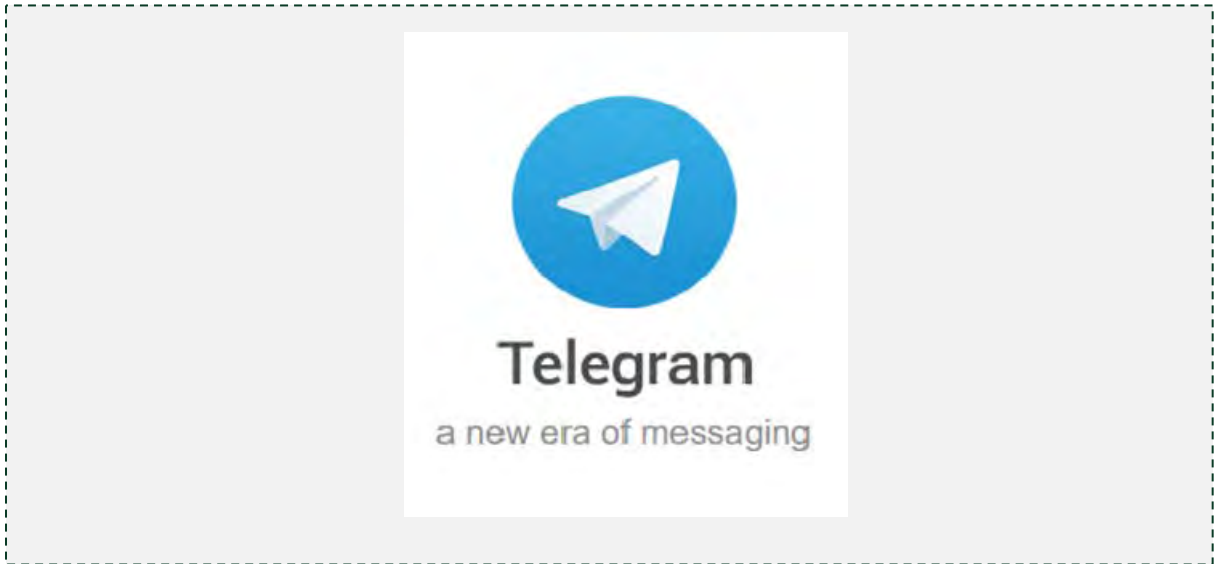
■ According to Western and Russian media reports, **the Russian police announced on October 11, 2015, that it had detained several suspects who planned to carry out a terrorist attack in Moscow.** The Russian Federal Security Service announced that **two of the detainees were trained by ISIS Syria.** The Security Service also reported that the detainees arrived in Moscow even before the start of the Russian airstrikes in Syria. According to the Russian news agency TASS, around 4 kg of explosives were found in the suspects' apartments. The tenants of the building were reportedly evacuated and the explosives were neutralized (Israeli daily

Haaretz, based on Reuters and AP, October 13, 2015). According to **Alexander Bortnikov**, head of the FSB, 12 ISIS supporters who came from Syria are being held in Russia on suspicion of involvement in terrorist activities (TASS, October 13, 2015).

## ISIS's battle for hearts and minds

### ISIS and Al-Qaeda have begun to disseminate messages using an encrypted messaging application in light of the closure of many Twitter accounts affiliated with them

- **According to a report** on the BBC (October 7, 2015), ISIS has begun to disseminate its propaganda by means of **Telegram, an encrypted messaging app for smartphones**. This activity, according to the report, began in the past month due to the deletion of many ISIS-affiliated Twitter accounts. The Telegram app makes it possible to send messages to an unlimited number of friends. On September 26, 2015, four days after the app was launched, ISIS's media arm **began to use it to disseminate messages by means of a channel called Nasher**. As of the date of publication of the article, this channel has 4,500 subscribers. **ISIS uses this app to disseminate propaganda a few minutes before it does so on Twitter**.
- The company that created the Telegram app is based in **Berlin**. The app enables the **secure** sending of messages, including chats, because it heavily encrypts the messages that are sent. On two occasions, the company offered a USD 300,000 prize to the first person who cracked its encryption. In addition to ISIS, Al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP) and other organizations affiliated with ISIS and Al-Qaeda have started using the Telegram app (bbc.com website, October 7, 2015).



Logo of the Telegram app (Telegram.org website, October 10, 2015)