US-backed alliance begins Raqqa assault

Simon Speakman Cordall

Tunis

A crisis with the RaqqaIx is being Shapiro, Inte
tly (RBSS) Facebook page told of the beleaguered “Bring the de fac
to capital of the Islamic State (ISIS) – being targeted. The average number of air strikes on Raqqa has soared in recent weeks by manned and unmanned military aircraft a day. Families and children who have also landed at neighbourhoods around the city.

Roads and messages to The Arab Weekly, also said more than 20,000 civilians were killed during fighting in May. Forcings belong to the US-sponsored and Kurdish-dominated militia alliance, the Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) were reportedly clashing with ISIS fighters on the outskirts of the city.

SDF and coalition forces, which had been steadily massed outside the city, began their assault on Raqqa last week in Operation Wrath of the Euphrates. Estimates of how many civilians may die vary, but reports of schools and hospitals as targets in the city have increased.

SDF spokesperson Talal Silo on June 6 described the battle for Raqqa as a battle to liberate the city of Raqqa, the alleged capital of the terror group's caliphate. Morale is high and military readiness to implement the military plan is complete, in coordination with the US-led coalition.”

For Hera, the battle for Raqqa is entrenched as that of ISIS. The jihadists sought to establish the Syrian city as a model for life in their caliphate, maintaining a sophisticated network of foreign fighters and a key strategic planning centre for terror attacks around the world. Coalition forces estimate the number of ISIS fighters in Raqqa at 3,000-4,000. But the SDF says the number is even higher. It is suspected that the battle-hardened core of the jihadis has retreated east, tanking along the Euphrates to established positions at Deir ez-Zor.

It is also difficult to know how many civilians remain in the city. In the course of the conflict, “rather than out of fear, the skies over Damascus, questions over how long the regime may continue to enjoy the support of a base with little personal loyalty to its leader are growing more pressing. In the course of the civil war, “Nicholas A. Heras, a Bacevich Fellow at the Institute estimated that ownership of lands in the city has declined by 90 percent.”

In 2011, the Middle East Research Group, Makhlouf, might indirectly control more than 200 individuals. The energy and construction industries, and electricity has been cut off in in
temperate conditions.

However, with the hawks circling the skies over Damascus, questions over how long the regime may continue to enjoy the support of a base with little personal loyalty to its leader are growing more pressing.

For Hera, any sudden attempt to topple the Damascus regime would be to risk opening even wider the Pandora’s box that has spilled so many evils onto Syria’s soil.

However, with the hawkish circling the skies over Damascus, questions over how long the regime may continue to enjoy the support of a base with little personal loyalty to its leader are growing more pressing. In the course of the civil war, “Nicholas A. Heras, a Bacevich Fellow at the Institute estimated that ownership of lands in the city has declined by 90 percent.”

In 2011, the Middle East Research Group, Makhlouf, might indirectly control more than 200 individuals. The energy and construction industries, and electricity has been cut off in in
temperate conditions.

However, with the hawks circling the skies over Damascus, questions over how long the regime may continue to enjoy the support of a base with little personal loyalty to its leader are growing more pressing.

For Hera, any sudden attempt to topple the Damascus regime would be to risk opening even wider the Pandora’s box that has spilled so many evils onto Syria’s soil.

Simon Speakman Cordall is a section editor with The Arab Weekly.

Assad maintains base of support despite international condemnation

Simon Speakman Cordall

Seven years into Syria’s civil war, the government of Bashar Assad remains steadfastly at the wheel of the Damascus political machine.

Throughout the conflict, AAssad has positioned himself as the moderate guardian of the country’s endangered minorities and the stalwart defender of the country’s newly liberated economic elite. It’s a public message that, given the civil war, the government civil service and industrial complex have been steadily massing outside the city. In March, several hundred US special operations troops supporting the estimated 55,000 SDF fighters were joined by units from the Middle Eastern Expeditionary Unit. Attack helicopters and other special operations forces are expected, the Washington Post reported.

Nicholas Hera, a fellow at the Centre for a New American Security, said the battle is at Phase One, with whatever awaits inside the city curren
ty an unknown.

Moreover, while many of the Kurdish People’s Protection Units (YPG) within the SDF are veterans of battles at Kobane, Tabqa and Manbij, others within the militia alliance, such as the Syrian Arab Coalition, and new to the battlefield. That lack of experience could prove important in determining not only who takes the Syrian-dominated city but who eventually holds it.

It is difficult to know how many civilians remain in the city after three years of ISIS occupation.

“The conflict will probably operate along the Manbij model,” Hera said. “That is, an alliance of different militias trained by the United States coal in air strikes and artillery fire on enemy positions.”

While that model has previously been successful, how effective it may be against the entrenched opposition in Raqqa is unknown. There would few doubt the ferocity of the battle to come.

“ISIS has been prepping Raqqa as if it’s the second battle of Fal

However, with the hawks circling the skies over Damascus, questions over how long the regime may continue to enjoy the support of a base with little personal loyalty to its leader are growing more pressing. In the course of the civil war, “Nicholas A. Heras, a Bacevich Fellow at the Institute estimated that ownership of lands in the city has declined by 90 percent.”

In 2011, the Middle East Research Group, Makhlouf, might indirectly control more than 200 individuals. The energy and construction industries, and electricity has been cut off in in
temperate conditions.

However, with the hawks circling the skies over Damascus, questions over how long the regime may continue to enjoy the support of a base with little personal loyalty to its leader are growing more pressing.

For Hera, any sudden attempt to topple the Damascus regime would be to risk opening even wider the Pandora’s box that has spilled so many evils onto Syria’s soil.

Simon Speakman Cordall is a section editor with The Arab Weekly.

The Arab Weekly