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**Military and Security Structures of
the Autonomous Administration
in Syria**

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Special Report

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Definitions and Abbreviations

PYD	Democratic Union Party
SDF	Syrian Democratic Forces
DAA	Democratic Autonomous Administration: Autonomous Administration is what the members of the DAA call their territory, but the official title remains as it is described above.
PKK	Kurdistan Worker's Party
YPG	People's Protection Units
YPJ	Women's Protection Units
HPX	Self-Defense Units
HPC	Civilians' Defense Forces (Hêzên Parastina Cewherî)
HPG	People's Defense Forces
HAT	Hêzên Antî Teror Asayîşa Rojavayê Kurdistanê (HAT) or Special Weapons and Tactics (SWAT) Units
IFB, Turkish version if IFB – EOT	International Freedom Battalion, also known as Enternasyonalist Özgürlük Taburu
DBK	Kurdistan Supreme Committee
MGRK	People's Council of West Kurdistan
KDP	Kurdish Democratic Party
PUK	Patriotic Union of Kurdistan
ENKS	Syrian Kurdish National Council
MLKP	Marxist Leninist Communist Party
Jazira (Cizre) Canton	A province of the DAA; the term “canton” means province.
TIKKO	Liberation Army of the Workers and Peasants of Turkey
RMCO	Roj Mine Control Organization
TEV-DEM	Movement for a Democratic Society: This is the umbrella organization of the PYD.
KCK	Kurdistan Communities Union
MFS	Syriac Military Council
Sotooro	Christian forces, allied with the YPG
Pro Regime Sotooro	Christian forces, allied with the regime
JN, JFS, HTS	Jabhat Al Nusra, Al Qaeda's branch in Syria, which changed its name to Jabhat Fateh al Sham and then to Hayat Tahrir al Sham
IS, ISIS, Daesh	The so-called “Islamic State”
CENTCOM	The United States Central Command

Contents

Definitions and Abbreviations	1
Executive Summary	4
Introduction	9
Political Backgrounds and Military Formations	10
Part I: Military Structures in the DAA	14
First: People’s Protection Units.....	14
1. People’s Protection Units, Yekîneyên Parastina Gel (YPG).....	15
2. Women’s Protection Units, Yekîneyên Parastina Jinê (YPJ).....	15
3. Human and Administrative Structure.....	16
4. Restructuring the YPG.....	20
Second: Auxiliary Foreign Forces of YPG and YPJ.....	24
Third: Self-Defense Forces (HPX).....	25
Mandatory Training Courses Held in Jazira Canton.....	27
Military Discipline Units.....	29
Self-Defense in Afrin.....	31
Self-Defense in Kobani Canton.....	33
Fourth: Christian Forces.....	35
Sotooro Forces of the Syriac Union Party.....	35
Sotooro - The Regime.....	36
Assyrian Forces.....	36
PART TWO: Internal Security Forces: Asayish Rojava	37
First: Central Administration: Asayish Rojava.....	37
Conditions for Joining.....	40
Second: Traffic Police “Traffic Rojava”.....	40
Third: Counter Terrorism Forces (SWAT): HAT.....	41
Fourth: Women’s Asayish.....	41
Fifth: Civilians' Defense Forces “Hêzên Parastina Cewherî” (HPC).....	41
Sixth: Other organizations.....	43
Checkpoint security.....	43
Asayish General Security.....	43
Anti-Organized Crime Branch.....	44
Asayish Demining Specialists and the Rojava Mine Control Organization.....	44
Part Three: The Military Coalition: Syrian Democratic Forces	45
Formation and Organizational Structure.....	45
Syrian Democratic Forces Numbers.....	46

SDF Structure.....	48
Forming the Regiments.....	50
Second: Main Military Forces in the SDF	51
1. Founding Forces.....	51
2. Forces that joined after SDF formation.....	53
3. Elite Forces allied with SDF	54
Third: External Support	54
Armament Support.....	54
American Support to the SDF.....	55
Foreign Military Presence.....	56
Fourth: Internal Relations of the Syrian Democratic Forces	58
Conflict with the Elite Forces	59
Conflict Between the YPG and the Sanadeed Army	59
Conflicts between the YPG and the Jabhat Thuwar Raqqa	60
The Conflict with Liwa al Tahrir and Jabhat Ahrar Raqqa.....	62
Conflicts with Liwa Suqoor Raqqa.....	64
Conclusion.....	64
Appendix: The Administrative, Legal, and Executive Structures of the Autonomous Administration.....	67

Executive Summary

The military bodies that are part of the Autonomous Administration in northeastern Syria receive their inspiration from a number of factors related to the political leanings of the parties that control the region. Thus, the group extracts its legitimacy, not from local demands for its presence, but instead from the urge to achieve certain political ends, including local empowerment and establishment. There are two main references for the group's project. First, the project references the political ideals of the Democratic Union Party (PYD) and Tev-Dem, formerly known as Rojava KCK, which contributed to the formation of the military units there. Second, it references the direct connection of the military units to the administrative, legal, and executive bodies of the Autonomous Administration.

- The organization into a united structure of the military groups loyal to the PYD happened during two time periods. First in 2004, small groups were formed after the protest movement at the time. These groups were formed in villages and did not form into any official military group as part of the PYD until the recent Syrian revolution. The majority of the party's military activities were directly aligned with the Kurdistan Worker's Party (PKK), especially on issues like recruitment. The second time period is best identified by the organization of military forces into a united force, known as the Syrian Youth Movement, which was led by Khabat Derik.
- Military control over the armed forces of the Autonomous Administration is due to a combination of internal factors, including a joint effort between the Assad regime and the Autonomous Administration to establish stability, as well as support from outside actors, such as the international coalition. These factors did not result in a degradation of the group's autonomy.
- The YPG and YPJ are the backbone of the military forces in the Autonomous Administration. They depend upon the PKK for their training and military planning. Their force is estimated to comprise between 20,000 and 30,000 fighters. To maintain military hierarchy and organizational structure, they depend on the experiences and advice of the PKK. The YPG also created two academies, one for men and women respectively. The academy for women is called "Martyr Sheelan Academy."
- The Autonomous Administration started its reform and restructuring of its military units at the beginning of 2017. This was done in coordination with the international coalition and with American support for the Syrian Democratic Forces. The YPG, along with the SDF, also managed to take control of expansive, another factor that resulted in the need for restructuring. The structure they chose to implement is not much different than the YPG's existing structure, since it is based on their internal bylaws. The YPG does not give accurate public information about its true numbers, but the group has suggested that it comprises approximately 50,000 fighters.
- The HPX is another main fighting force in the Autonomous Administration. This group is composed of citizens who are required to join through the forced conscription program. The Self-defense Council spearheaded these efforts after the Self-Defense and Protection

Council provided confirmation through a social contract signed on January 21, 2014. The council's bylaws were adopted by the legislative council on July 13, 2014.

- The military forces created this structure to “build a well-trained and disciplined military force that would form into an army with official recognition and organized with a clear hierarchy,” according to Rizan Kilu, a co-president of the Self-Defense and Protection Committee in Jazira.
- In Jazira Canton, there were 29 training courses offered between November 20, 2014 and July 21, 2017. In the Ain Arab Canton there were 8 training courses offered between June 6, 2016 and October 10, 2017. In the Afrin canton there were 10 training courses offered between July 5, 2015 and June 5, 2017.
- After the training program, the Self-Defense Council depends on the conscripted fighters to provide various services, offer logistical support to the YPG, and construct or renovate military academies and buildings.
- The Self-Defense Council in Afrin trains special forces at a higher rate than other cantons. These special forces are recruited and trained from among the conscripted locals. Three groups of special forces in Afrin have graduated as of the date of publication of this report.
- At age 18, males are required to serve a minimum amount of time and are not excused, unless they have special permission or they reach the age of 40. Women are allowed to volunteer.
- The Military Discipline Units of the Self-Defense Council are the military police. They pursue defectors and others who have failed to report for service. They also carry out some court orders alongside the conscription office.
- There are also a number of foreign groups that fight alongside the YPG. One such group is the International Freedom Battalion, formed in Ras Al Ayn on June 10, 2015. The members come from a number of countries and ideologies, including Turkish leftists (MLKP) and the Liberation Army of the Workers and Peasants of Turkey (TIKKO). There are also members of leftist movements from Europe that formed the Bob Crow Brigade and the Henri Krasucki Brigade.
- Some of the Christian forces in Hasakah province are allied with the YPG. Their military alliances are determined according to three main factors, 1) ethnic identity, including Christian Arabs and those with an independent Christian nationality; 2) the ethnic differences between the Assyrians, Syriac, and Armenian Christians; and 3) the different Christian dogmas and their affiliations with different churches.
- The Asayish were formed as a central security force when the People's Council of West Kurdistan (MGRK) took over cities populated by Kurds in the area. They started their official operations after the regime pulled out of Ayn al Arab (later named Kobani), Rmeilan, Malkiye, and Deirik. Once organized, the Asayish announced their intention to submit to the power of the Kurdish Supreme Committee (DBK), comprised of the Kurdish National Council (ENKS) and the MGRK. They now consider themselves to be a part of

the Syrian Democratic Council (MSD) and the Autonomous Administration's legislative wing. They oversee a number of forces, including the local traffic police, the counter terror forces (HAT), the Women's Asayish, security checkpoints, general security, and anti-organized crime operations.

- The Hêzên Antî Teror Asayîşa Rojavayê Kurdistanê (HAT) or Special Weapons and Tactics (SWAT) Units of the YPG are responsible for dealing with all security issues that arise in any city in Rojava. Issues include kidnappings, terrorism, suicide bombings, and others threats. The HAT, or SWAT, also support the YPG and SDF's offensive operations. They also conduct surveillance and raid operations.
- The Women's Asayish first convened on October 26, 2016 with 500 volunteers in Ain al Arab in Jazira canton.
- The Civilians' Defense Forces, or HPC, was named for the Autonomous Administration's role within the "core of society." The HPC is responsible for protecting local neighborhoods and the committees that operate in the cantons. The group has its own checkpoints and actively investigates any possible threats in the cantons.
- The Roj Mine Control Organization (RMCO), which coordinates with the demining units in the Asayish, is responsible for disarming all mines, especially in the rural areas where there have been—or still are—active battlefronts. Since 2014, RMCO has cleared 51 square kilometers and destroyed 8,704 mines.
- Not only are the aforementioned military structures the backbone of the Autonomous Administration, but the alliances that the YPG made with foreign and regional powers also contribute to the effectiveness of the military structure. With the YPG as the main force in the alliance, and with the group's growing importance, the focus quickly shifted to the fight against terror. This fact was confirmed when the International Coalition to fight ISIS in Iraq and Syria designated the YPG as its military partner, leading ground operations.
- At the establishment of the SDF, the groups present included the YPG, YPJ, Sotooro, Jaysh al Thuwar, Syriac Military Council, Sanadeed Army, Raqqa Revolutionary Front, Northern Sun Brigades, Jazeera Brigades, Freedom Brigade, and the 99th Infantry Brigade. After its formation, a number of other groups joined the SDF. These groups included the Free Officers Gathering (Hussam Awak), Manbij Military Council (Manbij Revolutionaries, Jund Al Haramayn Brigade, Euphrates Brigades Gathering, Al Qusay Brigade, Turkmen of Manbij Brigade, and Northern Sun Brigades), and the Army of Tribes. There are special forces allied with the SDF, but they are not officially part of the group.
- The formation of the SDF came two weeks after the Russian intervention in September 2015. On October 12, 2015, two days after the SDF's formation, the spokesperson for the US Secretary of Defense announced that an American C17 landed in Hasaka province to deliver more than 100 containers of military supplies.

- According to unofficial sources, the American weapons delivery was organized by Lahor Sheikh Jinki, the nephew of the late Jalal Talabani.
- At the same time as the SDF's formation, the YPG was expanding its control of majority-Arab territories in rural Hassaka, Raqqa, and Afrin. Only 11 days earlier, the Americans announced the termination a program to train and equip Syrians due to a decision to call back some troops from foreign training missions.
- American support for the SDF is a main factor contributing to the group's strength and capacity. The US provides air support, protects YPG forces from attacks, and sends experts, advisers, marines, and other American troops to SDF territories.
- These trends were supported by the continued leadership of the coalition, which offered increased armed support to Syria's Democratic Forces and the YPG through the construction of a five or six military bases in the countryside of Hasaka, Aleppo, and Raqqa. The US provides three main types of support for the SDF—arms, military bases, and protection from enemy advances.
- The SDF consulted more than 500 foreign advisers, primarily from the US, France, and the UK to a lesser extent. These advisers helped train the SDF and YPG.
- There are approximately five to six moving and permanent American military bases in northern Syria.
- The SDF does not publicize accurate information about its numbers. Instead, Omran's research team depends on public statements, which provide hints that uncover more accurate information. Often, SDF commanders speak to friendly local media and exaggerate the group's true numbers. Rough estimates suggest that the group comprises 60,000 to 75,000 fighters.
- On January 1, 2016, the SDF began recruiting fighters by accepting volunteers, offering monetary compensation, and forcing others to join through conscription. The group has trained and graduated 12 groups since February 16, 2017. The graduates were from Shadadi, Raqqa, and Deir Ezzor.
- After the formation of the SDF, new fighters directly joined the military structure, instead of joining groups that operated under the SDF banner. The SDF leadership even used force to stop people from joining such groups, as was the case with the special forces of the Tayyar Al Ghad. It is notable that the Christian Forces and the Sanadeed Army are not held to the same standard.
- The SDF structure includes the following components: the Military Council (which includes leaders from all member groups), the SDF General Commander, the General Command of the SDF (led by the General Commander and 9 to 13 members, depending on need), and the Military Discipline Committee. Unlike the YPG, the SDF did not form separate military units, except for the Jaheesh Tribe, which formed a special force of 200 tribesmen independent of the SDF.

- The SDF has not completely integrated of all their forces, for the same reasons that the Syrian opposition groups have failed to do so for six years. The groups that have joined the SDF have, in fact, not separated completely from their original structures.
- The SDF was created from a mixed alliance of groups including tribes, as well as groups that were not tribal in nature but had formed in Raqqa and rural northern Aleppo. There are also some religious groups, like Christian forces, and others built upon nationalistic visions.
- There are major differences between the main force of the SDF and the YPG, and they continue to face difficulties due to this reality. Currently, there is not active armed conflict between the YPG and other groups that are part of the SDF, but some of the problems are rooted in previous conflicts. For example, there was a conflict between the YPG and the Sanadeed Army. During the Raqqa operations there were also tensions between the YPG and the special forces controlled by the Tomorrow Movement.
- The Raqqa Revolutionaries Front is considered to be one of the oldest allies of the YPG. The group had a central role in taking control of Raqqa from the regime in March 2013.
- The SDF alliance is problematic and will continue to negatively impact local and regional developments, despite the rationale for the SDF's, its military and security structures, and its alliance with the YPG.

Introduction

The PYD was always a known political party due to the role that it played and its position in Syria. This role was enhanced as its political, military, and foreign relations started to develop—a key indicator for how the group strategized to establish the “Democratic Autonomous Administration.” For the purposes of this paper, we will either refer to the PYD’s Democratic Autonomous Administration as DAA or “Autonomous Administration.” Despite the group’s claim of having a true “democratic experience,” its all-or-nothing approach coupled with its lack of comprehensive political and popular support makes its military and security operations the backbone of its policy. The group also is connected directly (though not through its leadership structure) to the ideologies of the PKK, which is classified as a terrorist group by the US, EU, and Turkey. The PKK poses a significant security threat to regional countries, since its ideology transcends state borders despite that not being directly written within the YPG or the PYD’s literature, since such ideological references already exists in PKK texts.

Not only does the group have a problematic presence, it is coupled with a unique experience in local governance, supported by military, security, and administrative structures. The most important of these tools is the military and security structures and their relationship with each other, their inner structures, and their ideological references. For these reasons, the military and security structures are the backbone of the DAA. In order to identify and evaluate the problems with the DAA, we attempt to analyze these structures, review the context of their formation and evolution, and examine accompanying challenges.

The purpose of this report is to provide a comprehensive source of knowledge about the DAA’s military structures, as well as to provide objective analysis on the DAA’s nationalistic or cross-border aspirations. The paper examines the likelihood that the group will achieve its goals considering its structures and available resources. The paper is separated into three parts and provides local and regional policy makers with a description of the DAA’s structures, the group’s legitimacy, and its capacity to either establish security or exacerbate threats. To achieve this aim, we identified the main structures and described 1) how they operate, 2) who supports them both inside and outside, and 3) the strengths and weaknesses of the security structures.

This analytical report uses open source information, investigation, and interviews. Before the first of three sections, there is an explanation of the ideological and political foundations of the DAA. Then, there is a description of how the military and security forces were formed. In the first section, there is a description of the YPG and the YPJ. There is also a description of allied foreign forces that support the YPG in DAA territory. The description includes the forces’ structures, capacity, and numbers. There are also descriptions of military training courses and Christian forces that operate in DAA territory. In the second section, there is a description of the internal security forces, Asayish, and its main structures. This section includes information on traffic police, counter-terrorism units, the Women’s Asayish, and the Special-Defense Forces.

The third section of the report discusses the SDF, the military coalition of which the YPG compose the main fighting and control force. Here, there is a description of how the SDF

formed, its structure, and the main fighting forces that joined. This section also addresses the effect of foreign support on the group in political and military terms. Finally, the paper analyzes the main points of contention among the groups operating in the DAA and examines whether they are able to remain an effective military and administrative force.

Political Backgrounds and Military Formations

The military bodies that are part of the Autonomous Administration get their inspiration from a number of factors related to the political leanings of the parties that control the region. Thus, the group extracts its legitimacy, not from a local demand for its presence, but instead through the need to achieve certain political ends, including local administration. There are two main sources of influence.

First: Political Foundations of the PYD

The relationship between the PYD and PKK has always been a point of contention in establishing the foundations of Kurdish political and military organizations. These traditional foundations do not have public consensus either. The PKK's teachings spread into the majority Kurdish territories over the past thirty years. The PKK used the calling cry of "freeing greater Kurdistan" to recruit fighters and build a support network. On August 10, 1997, the US⁽¹⁾ designated the PKK as a terrorist group. The EU and NATO⁽²⁾ made the same designation on June 2, 2002. Additionally, the Adana Agreement led to a new security situation, which applied pressure and limitations on the PKK. As a result, the group was forced to split up its military branches according to the different territories in Kurdistan. The group adopted a new policy that allowed its supporters in Syria, Iraq, Iran, Turkey, and European countries to form their own local organizations and parties. These organizations could spread the group's ideology without having any official connection to the PKK. As a result, PKK supporters around the world began forming organizations that exclusively focused on advocating Kurdish national rights, a different concept than that of "Kurdistan's core," which the PKK had previously focused on.

The PYD was formed on September 20, 2003. It established clear political foundations, including the prevention of regional efforts to besiege the independence-minded PKK.⁽³⁾ To deal with this regional pressure, the PKK built organizations and institutions that operate independently. The PKK is historically known for its armed activities, which have not caused the group to lose political or ideological influence over the groups.⁽⁴⁾

Accordingly, the roles of the Kurdistan Communities Union (KCK) and the Movement for a Democratic Society (TEV_DEM) were critical to forming the foundations of the military units. Parallel to the PKK's own efforts to organize activities in Syria, these related organizations created KCK of Rojava. This organization acted as an umbrella structure for all PYD-related

⁽¹⁾ Foreign Terrorist Organizations 'U.S department of state Date:1997/08/10 التاريخ: <https://goo.gl/1iWssJ>

⁽²⁾ FIGHT AGAINST TERRORISM : ACHIEVEMENTS AND QUESTION 'Date: 04/05/2004: NATO Official Website: <https://goo.gl/jcdkij>

⁽³⁾ Democratic Union Party from the Foundation to the Fourth Anniversary: Stations and Stances, Location: Latti Meh, Date: 28/09/2007, link: <https://goo.gl/xZxQt1>

⁽⁴⁾ The PYD was involved in a number of conflicts in the period following the announcement of the beginning of internal problems between "Kamal Shahin and those with him" on the one hand and the body that we now know as the PYD. Kamal Shahin eventually failed, who was a founding member of the PYD, to form a "fully Syrian Kurdish party. After failing at this he announced the formation of "Al-Wefaq" and then was assassinated in one of the areas in Kurdistan, Iraq on 14/03/2005.

organizations. It was closed on July 7, 2011 and renamed TEV_DEM in mid-2011.⁽⁵⁾ TEV_DEM was in competition with the Kurdish National Council (KNC) and created the People's Council in Western Kurdistan on December 12, 2011. The council was charged with forming administrative structures to administer the Kurdish areas and prepare for the announcement of the DAA. They were also charged with promoting the project to the locals and recruiting members to join the DAA, created on November 12, 2013.⁽⁶⁾ Due to the failed agreement with the KNC regarding the administration of Kurdish areas, the DAA was officially announced on January 21, 2014.^{(7) (8)}

Second: Connecting the military and security structures with the administrative structures in the DAA

The social contract of the DAA in northern Syria explains that Syria is a free and democratic state that is both independent and sovereign. Its parliamentary system is a democratic union based on pluralism and consensus. The administrative cantons of the DAA are considered to be part of Syria's geographical territory. In northwest Syria, the city of Qamishli, which is part of Jazira canton, is where the DAA set up its base. The Executive Committee is in Amude, but the capital remains Qamishli. The three cantons are overseen by a chairman of the Executive Committee of each district. There are three DAA districts—Qamishli, Kobani, and Afrin.⁽⁹⁾ This committee was established on March 27, 2014. For each district, there are semi-independent military, security, and administrative structures. (See Appendix 1.)

A number of factors contributed to strengthening the relationship among PYD members, different organizations created by the PYD, as well as TEV_DEM and its related organizations. These factors include their reputation for being the most organized, dedicated, and disciplined organizations operating in the DAA. They are also the most consistent supporters of the DAA project, as evidenced by their continued efforts in that regard. To them, the DAA project is best suited to protect Rojava from various threats. They also considered self-defense as a basic tenet in the social contract, announced by the People's Council in Western Kurdistan. They also added a clause, which affirmed that self-defense and defense of the Kurdish people were basic rights.⁽¹⁰⁾ Before even announcing its formation of the DAA, the PYD began forming military organizations on the basis of "public self-defense" in order to gain public support, while also enjoying the political cover provided by the social contract.

⁽⁵⁾ The People's Assembly of West Kurdistan issues the final statement of the first conference, the site of: Voice of the Kurds, Date: 19/12/2011, link: <https://goo.gl/odqmyT> For more information about the Council and the Movement for Democratic Society please see: The Charter of the Democratic Society Movement (TEV-DEM), link: <https://goo.gl/H4nJWa>

⁽⁶⁾ Washington and Ankara welcome the Kurdish Council and express "concern" about self-administration, Arenews, Date: 15/11/2013, link: <https://goo.gl/eaJtuF>

⁽⁷⁾ The Kurds agree on transitional administration: a provisional body and a constitution within 40 days, location: Aranews, Date: 09/09/2013, link: <https://goo.gl/PW4kpX>

⁽⁸⁾ After a Year of Formation: Autonomous Democratic Governance Optimal Management System, Location: Hawar Agency, Date: 21/01/2015, Link: <https://goo.gl/YyD6Nk>

⁽⁹⁾ After a Year of Formation: Autonomous Democratic Governance Optimal Management System, Location: Hawar Agency, Date: 21/01/2015, Link: <https://goo.gl/Me1gTq>

⁽¹⁰⁾ The Charter of the Movement of Democratic Society in Western Kurdistan explained the right and means of providing protection and security through its assertion of the right of self-protection guaranteed by the international covenants and conventions, which includes the defense of identity, language, culture and social, political and even artistic and economic existence against all dangers that threaten it. Therefore, the society needs autonomous mechanisms that enable it to defend the legitimate rights, starting with the local people's committees and through the institutions of language protection and culture development and the end of the self-defense units of the people. See the People's Assembly in Western Kurdistan issues the final statement of the first conference. Ibid.

As for the beginnings of the military formations related to the PYD there are two main factors to consider:

The first factor is an effort to create “organized armament”. Generally, groups that opposed the regime and demanded reform during the Syrian revolution did not set out to take up arms. Even the Kurdish community in Syria exercises peaceful opposition to the Ba’ath regime and its policies. Eventually, the presence of weapons and armed attacks in Syria pushed the Kurdish parties to form military units, comprising the party members and their closest supporters. Some of the most important armed Kurdish groups were formed by individuals unrelated to the PYD, especially in the city of Aleppo and its surrounding areas. Also, these Kurdish armed groups are not known to have participated in any battles. They mostly participated in protests while wearing military-style clothing and marching in an organized militant style.⁽¹¹⁾

By this time, the regime was fighting various armed opposition groups across Syria, but the Kurdish areas were not seeing much action. This is due to the regime’s unofficial policy to abstain from violence when subduing protests in majority-Kurdish areas,, unlike other parts of Syria. When armed resistance began to organize in rural areas, the regime began to pull its troops away from their positions on the border and the northern cities. This first started in Ayn Arab, or Kobani. Then the majority of the regime’s northern positions followed. Plenty of new military formations were emerging in Qamishli, Hassaka, and around Afrin, as the regime pulled its troops from these northern cities. There were three types of Kurdish armed groups: small units overseen by various political parties, groups affiliated with different types of youth movements, and the YPG and the other military structures relate to the DAA, which this report focuses on.

The YPG and the PYD stand out from other Kurdish parties and military formations because they depend on the experiences of and their connections with the PKK in order to create and strengthen their own military structures. Some of the more notable people involved include PKK leaders Khabat Derik, Can Polat, Shahin Cilo, Ilham Ahmad, and Aldar Halil. These individuals use their experience to identify goals, make plans for controlling territory, and organize recruitment and training of the youth. These are all critical issues that other Kurdish parties are unable to realize.

December 8, 2012 was a main turning point for the YPG’s operations in northern Syria.⁽¹²⁾ On this day, opposition groups took over most of the western neighborhoods of Ras Al Ain, or Serekaniye. There were some skirmishes between the opposition groups and the YPG until they signed ceasefire agreements and decided to join forces to liberate cities under regime control. It was agreed that no fighters would carry their weapons inside the city, and any place from which the regime withdrew would be considered liberated.⁽¹³⁾ Over several months, the ceasefire was violated and eventually fell through. Jabhat Al Nusra appeared to be growing stronger, while moderate opposition groups were getting weaker in the face of the YPG. The

⁽¹¹⁾ Qamishli: Al-Antariya District Sheikh Maashouq Battalion visits the Martyr Daleel and Qadrabek Graves. Location: YouTube Kurdish Youth Organization, Date: 12/03/2014, link: <https://goo.gl/xSkjer>

⁽¹²⁾ The Free Syrian Army controls Ras al Ain and its border crossing. And the regime mobilizes its forces to break into it, location: Aks al Sair, Date: 08/12/2012, link: <https://goo.gl/BNpOpT>

⁽¹³⁾ Military Agreement between Kurdish Forces (YPG) and the Free Army, Website: YouTube Ro Mav, Date: 17/02/2013, link: <https://goo.gl/kWVW98>

area saw severe fighting in June 2013, resulting in Nusra being pushed out of the area on June 17, 2013.⁽¹⁴⁾

During six months of fierce fighting in Ras Al Ayn, the YPG recruited hundreds of young fighters, and the so-called “Islamic State” (ISIS) began taking over parts of Syria. This removed the possibility of any other force forming enough strength to face the YPG. Thus, the YPG turned out to be the force that was protecting the Kurds and other minority groups from the extremist groups and military chaos. The YPG also stopped any groups from forming outside of its own command structure, with exceptions only for the Christian Asayish and the Sanadeed Army.

During the establishment of the military forces of the DAA, there were great challenges in dealing with the PYD’s habits of secrecy, its use of pseudonyms, and its strategy of constantly changing the leadership, as well as altering the roles of different organizations and their identities. There was also significant overlap among the different military structures, with no clear command or control system among them. These difficulties are also related to identifying a clear timeline about the creation of the DAA’s military structures. According to the former YPG spokesman Ridor Halil, it all started during the Qamishli Revolt in 2004. He says that at that time, Kurds started to realize the need for a protective force to stop anyone who was trying to attack them. Ridor says that they started to form small groups after 2004 in some of the villages; however, there is no evidence to confirm that there were any military formations related to the PYD before the start of the Syrian revolution. This is the case since the military formations were all directly linked to the PKK, which recruited all of its fighters for different military units.

The beginnings of the PYD can also be traced back to the formation of small cells in the Syrian Revolutionary Youth Movement, under the leadership of Khabat Deirki, a former PKK leader whose real name is Mohammad Mahmoud from Dereik. He was killed due to unknown circumstances on January 13, 2012. Most statements from the PYD consider Khabat the founder and first leader of the YPG. After his death, the YPG, YPJ, HPX, Asayish (General Security), Women’s Security Forces, Rojava Traffic Police, HAT, Anti Organized Crime, and Emergency Responders were all formed.

The table below shows the names of the cities in this report. They were transliterated from Arabic and Kurdish.

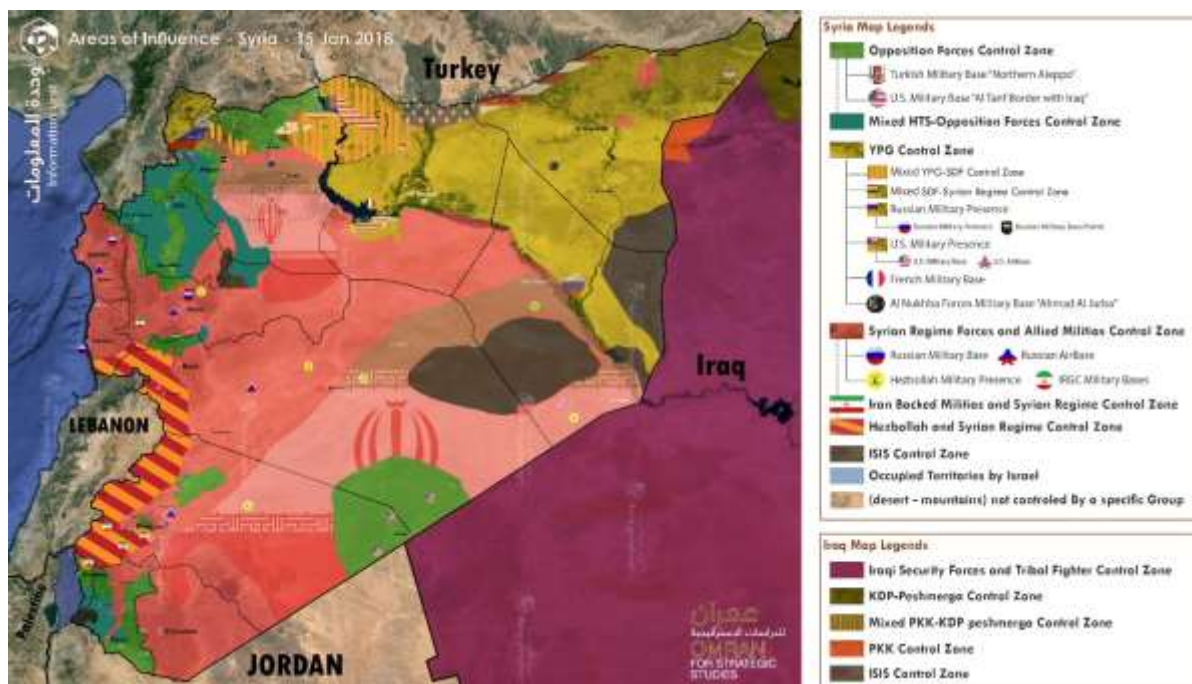
Kurdish Name	Arabic Name
Jal Agha	Mabada
Tal Kojar	Yarubiya
Tirbespiyê	Qahtaniya
Qamishlo	Qamishli
Dirbasiye	Dirbasiye
Serekaniye	Ras al Ain

⁽¹⁴⁾ Kurds expel "Nusra" and "Al Qaeda" from Ras Al Ain Syria, Website: Al Arabiya Net, Date: 17/06/2013, link: <https://goo.gl/SgPAie>

Gire Sipi	Tal Abyad
Kobani	Ain Al Arab
Deirik	Malikiyah

Part I: Military Structures in the DAA

The map below shows which groups control which territory in northern Syria. The areas that the DAA controls came as a result of a number of internal factors. In one such case, both the regime and the DAA wanted to ensure stability. There were also external factors involved such as assistance from the international coalition. We should not forget to mention the local factor playing in favor of the DAA’s various structures. That is why offering a comprehensive description of the DAA and its related military structures is of such great importance. In this exercise, we will clarify two main issues, 1) the level of integration among military structures and the impact on their management and continuity and 2) how the military and security structures were engineered and the level of connection they have with the related political parties.



Map 1 shows control areas of parties with military presence in northern Syria.

First: People’s Protection Units

This military structure is split into two groups. First, there are the People’s Protection Units. Then, there are the Women’s Protection Units. There is no real difference between their roles. They get their military mandate directly from the social contract of the DAA. Article 15 states, “The People’s Protection Units is the only national organization responsible for protecting the safety of the cantons and their regional sovereignty. They exist to protect the interests of the people and to protect their hopes and national security. The units reserve the right to self-

defense as a condition for their existence. Their relations and missions are determined by the legal committees of the DAA's cantons."⁽¹⁵⁾

1. People's Protection Units, Yekîneyên Parastina Gel (YPG)

The YPG is the backbone of the military forces in the DAA. Its formation was announced on July 19, 2012 through an official statement by its leadership.⁽¹⁶⁾ Before changing its name, the group used to operate as the Kurdish Youth Units, or the YXK. The YXK was founded under the leadership of Khabat Deirik. The YPG was announced on the day that regime forces pulled out of Kobani.⁽¹⁷⁾ Despite this delayed announcement, these forces began to form at the start of the revolution. In Rajo, part of Afrin canton, they set up military training camps.

In Rajo, there was a military training camp for fighters who joined at the end of 2011. These fighters included many women who joined the YPJ.⁽¹⁸⁾ The YPG's first battle was in Serekaniye, or Ras al Ain, in January 2012. The YPG made its mission clear in its statement, claiming that the group would protect the Kurdish people and their cultural, political, and social existence. The group also expressed approval for the Erbil Agreement between the Kurdish National Council and the Council of West Kurdistan. The YPG depended on the PKK for military and ideological training, either on the ground in PYD-controlled areas or in its traditional stronghold, the Qandil Mountains in Iraq.⁽¹⁹⁾

2. Women's Protection Units, Yekîneyên Parastina Jinê (YPJ)

It is incorrect to claim that the YPJ is either completely independent from or part of the YPG. In the YPG's own bylaws, there is a clause that creates two different training academies, one for males and the other for females, called "Martyr Sheelan Academy."⁽²⁰⁾ The bylaws also stipulate that women must comprise 40 percent of the YPG.⁽²¹⁾ Due to the YPJ's push to gain widespread support, both from politicians and the general public, the group often suggests during public events that it is an independent entity. After the SDF was formed, the YPJ joined in their own capacity. The group had its first meeting in Malkiye on April 2, 2013, and it made an official announcement of its formation two days later. Before the announcement, female Kurdish fighters were organizing themselves into small groups, the first of which was in Jandris, Afrin, on February 23, 2013.⁽²²⁾ The group called itself "Martyr Roken Brigade." Then, on March 8, 2013, the first military unit was formed in Qamishli under the name "Martyr Adalet Brigade."

They were not announced until two years after the start of the Syrian revolution and the formation of the YPG. But there were already a significant number of female recruits dedicated to the cause, without actually being a completely independent body. The female military units benefited from the experiences of the PKK's hundreds of female Syrian recruits who had previously fought with the PKK and now play a major role in the YPG's command and operations.⁽²³⁾

⁽¹⁵⁾ Ibid. See the Social Contract reference earlier.

⁽¹⁶⁾ Akhbar Al Watan Official announcement on the formation of the People's Protection Units in western Kurdistan YPG, Source: Voice of the Kurds, Date: 19/07/2012, link: <https://goo.gl/SCLh41>

⁽¹⁷⁾ Three Years of the July 8-19 Revolution, Location: Hawar Agency, Date: 19/07/2015, Link: <https://goo.gl/xRc6RX>

⁽¹⁸⁾ Fighters of the Revolution, ibid., Date: 14/07/2015, link: <https://goo.gl/ki1E1K>

⁽¹⁹⁾ Rustam Jia. Years of Torture in the Regime Prison and Years of Resistance in Kobani, Location: Ronahi Newspaper Issue 33, Date: 10/2016, link: <https://goo.gl/uqx43U>

⁽²⁰⁾ Women in Their Own Way Open the Road to Solutions, Source, 05/03/2015, Link: <https://goo.gl/iw6Rro>

⁽²¹⁾ Rules of Procedure of the People's Protection Units, Location: Archive of Alan Othman, Date: 2012, link: <https://goo.gl/qnwWsT>

⁽²²⁾ Ibid. See 18

⁽²³⁾ The sons of the city of Siri Kani will send off Janda Walt with greetings and slogans of loyalty, Source: Furat Agency, Date: 03/11/2012, link: <https://goo.gl/1N2cdC> , Link: <https://goo.gl/WqWUeS>

It is not clear which direct military confrontations the YPJ engaged in as an independent unit. However, in 2012, we saw many casualties among female fighters in the PKK's ranks but little information on where they were killed. According to publicly available information, the first Kurdish female fighter to die in Syria is Fayan Dirbasiye, but her real name is Ragda Mohamad Nabi, born in a village called Salhiyeh in 1991. She was killed on April 5, 2013 in unclear conditions. The announcement of her death confirms that she was killed in Syria carrying out a "military mission" in an undisclosed location.⁽²⁴⁾ The second record of a female fighter killed is Klistan Amara. Her real name is Hatun Shaheen, and she was killed on September 29, 2013, during an attack by ISIS on Qazali village, west of Tal Abyad.⁽²⁵⁾ It is interesting to note that a large number of Turkish female fighters of the YPJ were killed while engaged in combat inside Syria. For example, there is Dayali Fayan in Raha who was injured in fighting with ISIS near Kobani on October 19, 2014.⁽²⁶⁾ The first female fighter to be killed in Afrin was Raperin Ali who fell in fighting with ISIS near Jalabra village, near Shirawa, on October 28, 2013.⁽²⁷⁾

3. Human and Administrative Structure

The YPG's leadership avoids disclosing accurate information about the group's actual numbers. A source inside the YPG's media office estimated that the forces comprise some 50,000 fighters, including 15,000 females. This number is possibly an exaggeration. The number is probably closer to 20,000 to 30,000 fighters. We determined this number based on the size of the cities the YPG controls and from monitoring volunteer trends, such as the rate of volunteers to sign up for service compared to the announced numbers of conscripted fighters. There was also a discrepancy between declared numbers of graduated trainees - 50 males and females - compared to numbers of youth forcefully taken in by Asayish Forces in areas under their control for military service. It is quite difficult to ascertain the actual number of YPJ members. The YPJ commander Nisreen Abdallah told a local media source "in regards to the number of YPJ fighters, there are thousands, and hundreds are joining every day."⁽²⁸⁾ Another YPJ commander, Cihan Sheikh Ahmad, claimed that there were more than 10,000 female fighters. Realistic estimates suggest about 5,000 fighters.

The structural composition of the YPG is adopted from the PKK's own experiences. Even though there is a command and control structure in the YPG and the YPJ, an observer would assume that they do not have a necessarily strong centralized power structure. This is a result of the PKK's policy of allowing senior leaders to remain in their positions for extended periods. The PKK's leadership does not allow many of its members to publicly announce their affiliation and sometimes make them serve in positions for extended periods of time without anyone knowing who they are or what exactly they do. For security reasons, the names of the individuals, their titles, and their roles are routinely changed in order to maintain some level of anonymity. Generally, there is consistency among the membership about the correct usage of names despite there being multiple name changes in a short period of time. Essentially, members use the correct name, even if it is a decoy name, when they are supposed to.

Evaluations of the YPG's military chain-of-command structure revealed that significant resources were allocated to creating this military structure. Its details are explained in the bylaws, despite being different than the actual military names they gave themselves. These include Group, Faction, Unit, Brigade, and Area. All of these formations are under a unified command, called the General Command of the People's Protection Units and the Women's Protection Units, headed by Siban Hamo.

⁽²⁴⁾ The funeral and burial of Fayan in Dirbasiya, the previous source, Date: 05/04/2013, link: <https://goo.gl/5FK2uz>

⁽²⁵⁾ Thousands in Kobani, the body of the fighter Kulstan Amara, the previous source, Date: 29/09/2013, link: <https://goo.gl/HDiS6Q>

⁽²⁶⁾ Fighter Diyala Vian loses her life due to wounds, previous source, Date: 19/10/2014, link: <https://goo.gl/4vjNq2>

⁽²⁷⁾ Hundreds in Afrin, the body of the fighter Avesta, Previous source, Date: 28/10/2013, link: <https://goo.gl/G1pvZ3>

⁽²⁸⁾ Kurdish leader to the "Seventh Day": Turkish President seeks to establish an Erdoganian empire in the region, Source: the Seventh Day, Date: 25/08/2016, link: <https://goo.gl/eaZMQx>

Some media reports suggest that the General Command of the YPG/YPJ is actually run by two people. One is Bahoz Erdal, also known as Fahman Huseyin or Dr. Bahoz, the commander of the HPG (People's Defense Forces, armed wing of the KCK/ PKK). The other is Shahin Jilo, member of the Executive Committee of the KCK; he appeared alongside a US soldier after a Turkish airstrike on Qurah Jukh, near Ain Dewar in northeast Syria.⁽²⁹⁾ ⁽³⁰⁾ ⁽³¹⁾ Out of the General Command grew the Military Council, which consists of the military field commanders.⁽³²⁾

The YPG bylaws consist of six chapters and 18 articles. They cover all issues, including structure, symbols, and goals. There is a description of the administrative and command structures, as well. Here, we present a summary of what is found in the original.

1. Article 1: Name: YPG organizes itself as the main force in West Kurdistan. Its military name is the People's Protection Units.
2. Article 2: YPG Symbols: A yellow background with a red star near the bottom; YPG is written in large green letters above the star; on the two sides and around the star is a green line.
3. Article 3: The YPG's goals are centered on the paradigm of a democratic society, ecology, and gender equality with the aim of building a democratic Syria and a free Kurdistan. They aim to protect the ethical and political society. They will take a self-administration approach to managing their affairs. There will be no special treatment for any specific religious group, language, nationality, or gender. The parties should all meet the democratic and national interests of the people, especially the people of western Kurdistan. They should also struggle to achieve freedom for all Syrian ethnicities and organize all those present in western Kurdistan to stand together in defense against any attacks by an internal or external enemy. They consider self-defense to be a basic right and the core of their mission. Therefore, the YPG is a national military force that is independent of any political powers. Decisions on protecting national interests are left up to the Kurdish Supreme Committee. This committee was agreed upon by the KNC/ENKS, TEV-DEM, and PYD. TEV-DEM is the umbrella organization of the PYD.
4. Article 4: Administrative Mechanisms in the YPG: First there is a general command and then there are sub-commands. The YPG has three administrative areas: Al Jazeera AKA Cizre, Kobani, and Afrin.

⁽²⁹⁾ Fahman Hussein. "Officer" Connecting Kurds in Syria and Turkey, Location: Al Jazeera, Date: 12/07/2016, link: <https://goo.gl/BhTdJS>

⁽³⁰⁾ Special interview with Comrade Shaheen Jilu, member of the Leadership Council, on the fourth phase of our struggle, website: PKK, link: <https://goo.gl/txPQwU>

⁽³¹⁾ The media and former official of the Supreme Council of Information in the Jazira Canton, Farhad Shami, shared through his page on the social networking site "Facebook" a picture showing the member of the Kurdistan Community Leadership Council KCK Shaheen Gilo accompanied by a number of US military. Shami said that Mr. Gilo is visiting with US military leaders the area that was targeted by the Turkish army in the area of Karak Gokh. See more here: The overlap and integration of terrorist organizations. PKK, The real controller of the PYD, Sabah Al Turki Website, Date: 17/03/2016, link: <https://goo.gl/dSLFna>

⁽³²⁾ It is hereby referred to as the Military Section. Article 5 of the Rules of Procedure states: "The section of the members of the YPG shall be based on the democratic and ecological society and the freedom of the sexes for a democratic Syria and a free Kurdistan. It shall protect the moral political community without religious and linguistic discrimination. Regardless of political, sectarian, gender and partisan affiliation; against any external attack. And on the basis of the concept of legitimate self-defense and on the basis of the rules of procedure outside the scope of personal interests. I swear with all boldness and organization take the decision to join despite all the difficulties and the need for a strong will and great strength. Victory is the only option. I swear to this before martyrs of Kurdistan, the valiant Kurdish people and my fellow fighters."

The higher military institutions are structured as follows.

- The highest military formation is the High Military Council, which meets once per year or in emergencies. At the annual meeting, the council reviews the previous year's operations and plans the following year.
- The YPG's Military Council consists of 55 members and meets every six months. They are responsible for their own commands.
- The YPG General Command is responsible for day-to-day YPG operations, carrying out orders of the Military Council, and creating and executing necessary plans.
- Local military councils oversee and carry out local decisions. The number of council members depends on the size of the population they represent. They meet every three months.

Underneath these command structures, forces operate under the command of the local military councils, overseen by the General Command responsible for executing decisions from the Military Council.

The YPG forces are organized into three main units. Article 4 of the bylaws outlines YPG's general structure, with further specifics contained in articles 15 and 16, including the mandate and jurisdiction. The three articles were later merged to place smaller units and divisions within higher ranks. The results were as follows:

- **Units:** Professional high-skilled forces: The high-skilled forces are responsible for ensuring freedom for the Kurdish people under the pretext of building a free and democratic society that encourages gender equality. This group is comprised of the most dedicated members, including full-time volunteers, and trained on political and military strategy with the full understanding that armed self-defense is a legitimate policy.
- **Resistance Units:** These units comprise local fighters in the provinces (Ayalat). There are either one or two units formed to stop any assault on that geographical area. They are always on alert and on standby. The members are carefully chosen, especially focusing on those whom the leadership trusts. These units are secret and their existence is not known to the locals; sometimes members of the same unit do not know each other.
- **Local forces:** These are the Special Defense Forces, which implement the concept of legitimate self-defense with the aim of democratizing the region in order to offer protection, equality and freedom. Their structure is organized and has a clear command. The members of these forces are the locals themselves, and they fight for their localities. They are from and live in those areas, as well. They take part in military operations without disrupting their normal lives.

The operational structure of these forces is broken down into 5 categories.

1. "Tim," which is made up of three to five individuals.
2. "Taxim," which is two teams made up of six to 10 individuals, or two "Tims".
3. "Siriya," which is made up of three "Taxim," or 18 to 30 individuals.
4. "Katiba" (Tabur), which is made up of three "Siriya," or 48 to 90 individuals.
5. Al Ayalat or Provincial Command, which is the highest command of the brigades.

Article 8: The Academy's Command is connected directly to the YPG's General Command and is comprised of all the military sub-councils. The Academy is responsible for training the selected recruits to become future instructors. There are two main academies, and they are "Martyr Khabat Military Academy for Males" and "Martyr Sheelan Academy for Girls." The main operation of these academies is to train future YPG members and identify skilled individuals, who are selected for leadership and special skills training. The General Command is in complete control of the academies and opens new training camps when needed.

Article 9: Border Units and Border Command: The border stations will operate under the command of the military units.

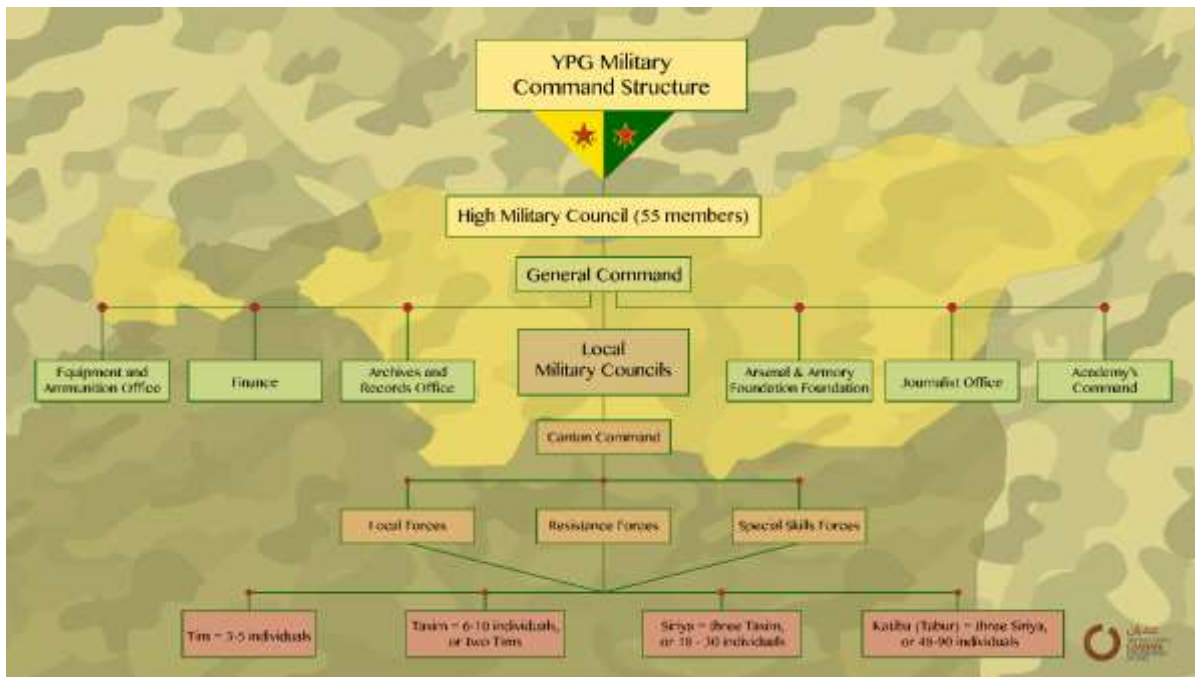
Article 10: Al Arzaq Foundation: Logistics: This is a Logistics Command that is responsible for securing supplies and storing six months of back-up supplies.

Article 11: The Archives and Records Foundation is directly connected to the YPG General Command and oversees all archiving and record-keeping; this foundation reports to the General Command.

Article 12: Arsenal and Armory Foundation: Its physical presence shall be built within the headquarters of the General Command and the offices of the sub-commands. It is responsible for storing, monitoring, and protecting the ammunition and other military equipment. It should always be ready for live operations and for distributing reinforcements and supplies according to demand. It should avoid wasting any ammunition or equipment carelessly.

Article 13: Finance: This department is overseen by the YPG General Command and is responsible for all fiscal policy and monitoring all income and expenses. It is also responsible for finding alternative sources of financial support.

Article 14: Reporters: This unit will be formed under the General Command according to the need and will be utilized as messengers between the General Command and sub-commands. Every sub-command should create its own Reporters Units to maintain communication between the sub-commands.



Graph (1): Shows the YPG command structure. All graphics and maps in this report are produced by the Omran Center- Information Unit.

4. Restructuring the YPG

The DAA expressed interest in creating larger military units, or regiments, at the start of 2017. This came at the same time as the international coalition was increasing its support to the SDF. The YPG and the SDF were also expanding the territory, which they control. ISIS was also on the run and losing territory in Syria. The international actors in Syria also wanted to solidify the borders between the territories they control, as specific agreements—such as the de-escalation zones and ceasefires in southern Syria—began to fall into place. The American strategy here has been to organize the armed forces in northern Syria into a professional military. This is evidenced by large convoys of freight trucks carrying military assistance that have gone to Qamishli and Malkiye on a daily basis. The supplies include weapons, ammunition, vehicles, parts, logistics equipment, and other types of military aid. Some of the aid goes to the SDF and the rest is distributed among the 10 US military bases, which include two landing strips and Tabqa Military Airport—which was taken over during the "Wrath of the Euphrates" military operation in Raqqa.⁽³³⁾ Some reports claim that the US plans to use Tabqa as a military airbase in future operations.

In its military budget report for 2017-2018, the US allocates funds for “fighting Daesh” in Syria and Iraq. The report’s section on Syria says that Washington is focused on supporting what it calls the VSO, or Vetted Syrian Opposition. This refers to armed Syrian opposition groups that have been approved—moderates who are not affiliated with extremist Al Qaeda-linked groups. Washington is convinced that it will fight ISIS in Syria. The report indicates that there are approximately 25,000 fighters and an additional 5,000 at the beginning of 2018. These forces are completely dependent and committed to the US support and plans. The US provides them

⁽³³⁾ Why did Turkey decide to disclose secret information about US bases in Syria now?, Turk Press, Date: 22/07/2017, link: <https://goo.gl/PEKZxC>

with salaries, weapons, and food, as well as \$60 million (USD) under the category of “ongoing operations.” There is another \$40 million (USD) for transportation and \$7 million (USD) for “basic life needs” of the approved fighters. There is another \$300 million (USD) for training and supplies in 2017, as well as another \$400 million (USD) for training and supplies in 2018.⁽³⁴⁾ Interestingly, at the same time this report was published (May 9, 2017), Washington announced its immediate military support for the YPG.⁽³⁵⁾

Before the appearance of the American defense budget, on February 8, 2017, the YPG announced its intention to form new military units. The announcements from the DAA, the YPG, and PYD about the plan indicated that they were forming something closer to a professional army.

Dr. Salah Jamil, public relations officer of the YPG, announced that it was critical to form military forces that are more organized and more professional, since the YPG had been engaging in battle for six years. During these six years, the YPG gained much fighting experience and grew in size to such an extent that the group compares itself to a legitimate state military. The YPG decided that it was time for the most experienced fighters to oversee the training of new military units.⁽³⁶⁾

In the YPG’ statement there were conditions for joining and potential benefits for volunteers:

- The volunteer cannot be younger than 18 and no older than 40.
- The volunteer cannot have any illnesses and must be in sound physical condition.
- The volunteer must be willing to commit to 28 months of military service, starting on the day of acceptance and open to renewal at any time.
- After 12 years of service, the volunteer is eligible for retirement.

Benefits include:

- The volunteer is excused from the mandatory security service after completing volunteer service.
- The volunteer's wife, children, and parents can benefit from health insurance.
- The volunteer will receive financial aid if injured and unable to complete the mandatory military service.
- The volunteer can take a three-day leave every 15 days except in emergency situations.⁽³⁷⁾
- The volunteer will receive \$100 (USD) per month.⁽³⁸⁾

⁽³⁴⁾ A detailed American financial plan to fight Daesh in Syria, Source: Rozana, Date: 07/06/2017, link: <https://goo.gl/Xbei5S>

⁽³⁵⁾ In a press release the YPG react the White House decision to arm the People's Protection Units, Site: People Protection Units, 10/05/2017, <https://goo.gl/nUPnAe>. To learn about the position of the Syrian Democratic Forces, please visit: Washington's decision to arm the Kurds accelerates "the elimination of terrorism", Al-Quds Al-Arabi, 10/05/2017, link: <https://goo.gl/kkpzri>

⁽³⁶⁾ The announcement of a "professional" military regiment of the People's Protection Units and the opening up the door to volunteers, Source: Wilat FM, Date: 10/05/2017, link: <https://goo.gl/7JEvs4>

⁽³⁷⁾ (Military cohorts) are the focus of two meetings in Amude and Tal Tamer, Source: Hawar Agency, Date: 04/07/2017, link: <https://goo.gl/j9Rqv3>

⁽³⁸⁾ (PYD) in connection with the formation of a fighting force "outside the borders of Kurdistan Syria", Source: Bass News, Date: 08/02/2017, link: <https://goo.gl/sVSq5v>

There is no difference in the structure of the new formations announced by the YPG. It will be structured as follows:

1. Unit (Tîm).
2. Group (Taxim) - three units.
3. Siriya (Beluk) – four to six groups.
4. Katiba (Tabur) - includes four to eight groups and has between 40 and 50 fighters.
5. Regiment (Foc) - includes four to eight Katiba and has between 300 and 400 fighters.

In an interview, one of the new regiment commanders stated that there would not be any official military ranks but instead a commander in charge of each of the sub groups in the regiment (Tabur, Beluk, Taxim, Tim). He added that until the new regiment command structure is officially determined, there should be three commanders in charge of each regiment, and if there is a YPJ force in the regiment, then at least one of the three must be a woman.⁽³⁹⁾

As for the future of its name, the YPG brand is cause for concern for both the US and Turkey. The YPG is also concerned with the Autonomous Administration and its links with the PKK. The PKK pays special attention to the way that it names the groups it establishes, just as the PKK chose the YPG's name. Interestingly, when the SDF was formed, the US quickly moved to insist that the newly established force had no links with the YPG or the PKK. Even the American Special Forces General Raymond Thomas admitted that US officials requested the YPG to change its name. That is exactly what happened. During his speech at the Aspen Institute in Colorado, the general clarified that the name change happened as a result of pressure from Turkey. Turkey is a strategic ally of the United States in its fight against common enemies. The general added that the change happened very quickly, only one day after the demand. The YPG was willing to undergo the name change since it was interested in being a part of the Geneva and Astana talks. The group knew that it could not do so if it had any connection with the PKK.⁽⁴⁰⁾

The new regiments were formed with the participation of the YPG, SDF, and Democratic Society Movement during the battle for Raqqa. This was a slow process. During this time, there were calls from a number of DAA officials suggesting that a professional and organized military should be formed instead of the guerilla style warfare that they had been used to for many years. It is probable that the SDF will undergo another name change in the near future, since the SDF has not been completely accepted. A source inside the DAA told us that the new name would not be affiliated with any nationality or ethnicity. Something like that was observed in the naming of a newly formed regiment in Kobani. In the YPG General Command's announcement, it said that the YPG would now be called the "Rojava Defense Forces."⁽⁴¹⁾

⁽³⁹⁾ The military regiment system enters into force and opens the door to volunteers, Source: Ronahi, Date: 09/04/2017, link: <https://goo.gl/zNmKhT>

⁽⁴⁰⁾ US General: Kurdish People Protection Units Change Their Name at Our Request, Location: Rudaw, Date: 22/07/2016, Link: <https://goo.gl/LMvWZx>

⁽⁴¹⁾ The announcement of the formation of regiments of the Rojava Protection Forces, Location: Hawar Agency, Date: 13/02/2017, link: <https://goo.gl/gA4MLK>

The chart below identifies the regiments, their force numbers, and the date of formation of the new YPG regiments in Jazira.⁽⁴²⁾

New Regiments Formed in Jazira				
Name of Regiment	Commander	# of Fighters	Area	Date of Formation
Kabar	Rahima Kobani	208	Malkiye	2017/04/10
Zana			Kirki Liki aka Mabada	
Chav Rash	Dilbreen Kobani	200	Ras Al Ain	2017/05/09
Jaqdar Kahraman				
Gamkeen	Rashid Omar	200	Dirbasiye	2017/06/02
Third Regiment or Martyrs of Qarjoo	Mustafa Jaziri	200	Jal Agha	2017/07/12
Dugan		70	Hassaka/Salhiye	2017/07/20
These are approximate numbers and formations since there are no official numbers on the fighters of the new regiments. Also, the YPG regularly change the names, sizes, and roles of the regiments so it is difficult to confirm exactly what formations are active at a certain time.		875		Total of 7 Regiments

Table 1: Shows the regiments that were formed in Jazira

In Kobani: The YPG General Command opened up registration for volunteering in its ranks in the area on February 13, 2017. The chart below shows the names of the newly formed regiments and the dates they were formed, as well as their force numbers. Groups are usually named after “martyrs,” meaning the YPG fighters that were killed⁽⁴³⁾:

New Regiments in Kobani				
Name of Regiment	Commander	# of Fighters	Area	Date of Formation
1st Regiment or Euphrates Martyr	Suzdar Dereik, Mustafa Dadli	220	West of the city	2017/02/13
Shavgar Kobani	Fidan Zinar	90	_____	2017/02/18
Hoger	Delsuz Kobani	250		2017/02/22

⁽⁴²⁾ A ceremony for the announcement of the formation of military units "Martyr Kabar" and the "Martyr Zana" Regiments, site: Hawar Agency, Date: 10/04/2017, link: <https://goo.gl/yeKzAy>, "The Martyr Jaf Rush" and the "Martyr Gekdar Kahraman", Source, Date: 09/05/2017, link: <https://goo.gl/q19QZP>, 02/06/2017, link: <https://goo.gl/swZTwN>, formation of a third group of People's Protection Units in Kerki, source, Date: 12/07/2017, link: <https://goo.gl/z0JEiM>, People protection units for the formation of a military regiment on behalf of the Dogan Regiment, Source: Self Defense Council, Date: 20/07/2017, link: <https://goo.gl/XTF4jx>

⁽⁴³⁾ Day trip with one of the military YPG regiments, Source: Hawar Agency, Date: 05/03/2017, Link: <https://goo.gl/bp3ktE>, 02/2017, link: <https://goo.gl/eiTvbs>, the The batch includes all the components of Kobani, The previous source, date: 18/02/2017, link: <https://goo.gl/FrxGx2>, The formation of other groups to join Kurds and Arabs, previous source, date: 22/02/2017, link: <https://goo.gl/qh7vyr>, Formation of three military regiments and preparation for the fourth, date: 10/06/2017, link: <https://goo.gl/AuqWVC>, Formation of the Fifth Regiment with the graduation of 113 fighters, previous source, Date: 24/03/2017, link: <https://goo.gl/ufE9uf>

Firas			Rural Tal Abyad/ Kri Spi	
Masiro Suruj	Ashraf Mustafa	113	Tal Othman south of Kobani	2017/03/24
These numbers are an estimate because there is no way to verify actual numbers from official YPG statements. DAA sources were used instead		670		5 regiments total

Table 2: Shows new regiments formed in Kobani

New military formations started to come together in Afrin on January 14, 2017 in a statement from the Executive Committee of Afrin, which commemorated the YPG founder Khabat Dereik and named the first regiment in his honor.⁽⁴⁴⁾ The table below shows the names and details of the new regiments formed by the YPG in Afrin.⁽⁴⁵⁾

New Regiments formed in Afrin				
Name of Regiment	Commander	# of Fighters	Area	Date of Formation
Khabat Dereik	—	236	Rifaat Academy	2017/02/27
Shayar Afrin	Mirivan Arjin	235	Afrin	2017/04/20
Shahin Rojhelat	Hueyin Kabar	236	Rifaat Academy	2017/06/07
Mazlum	Nucin Dereik	234	Rifaat Academy	2017/07/02
These numbers are an estimate because there is no way to verify actual numbers from official YPG statements. DAA sources were used instead		940		4 Regiments Total

Table 3: New regiments formed in Afrin

Second: Auxiliary Foreign Forces of YPG and YPJ

A number of foreign forces are allied with the YPG and YPJ in Syria. The most notable of these groups is the International Freedom Battalion. The YPG started to accept foreign volunteers in late 2014. This was after the battle for Kobani and the media coverage that the YPG received, as well as the support it got from the international coalition. The fighting at Tal Tamer March 4, 2015 was the first real sign of foreign fighter presence among YPG forces.⁽⁴⁶⁾ During this fighting, a number of foreign fighters were killed and their deaths were officially announced by the International Freedom Battalion in Ras Al Ain on June 10, 2015.⁽⁴⁷⁾ There are a variety of members from different backgrounds, nationalities and ideologies including

⁽⁴⁴⁾ The Executive Board in Afrin recalls the founder of YPG, the previous source, Date: 14/01/2017 Link: <https://goo.gl/RAuh8x>

⁽⁴⁵⁾ Formation of the first group in Afrin, the previous source, Date: 27/02/2017, link: <https://goo.gl/44gDdy>, and The formation of the second group in Afrin, Date: 20/04/2017, link: <https://Goo.gl/trVwvr>, The announcement of the formation of a third military regiment in Afrin, the previous source, Date: 07/06/2017, link: <https://goo.gl/aXSpT5>, the formation of a fourth regiment in Afrin, 2017, link: <https://goo.gl/PW8BzP>

⁽⁴⁶⁾ The second foreign fighter in the «YPG» falls in the battles of Tel Brak, Date: 03/04/2015, link: <https://goo.gl/v5gJXy>

⁽⁴⁷⁾ Declaration of the World Freedom Battalion in Sari Kani, Location: Hawar, Date: 10/06/2015, link: <https://goo.gl/8YzyL5>

Leftist Turks and especially a large number of Communist–Leninist–Marxist Turks known as MLKP.⁽⁴⁸⁾ There is also the Liberation Army of the Workers and Peasants of Turkey, which is the armed wing of the MLKP established in 1973.⁽⁴⁹⁾ There are also leftists from around Europe and, according to one commander of a foreign fighter “Katiba” in the YPG, they include volunteers from all over the world who come to support the revolution of Syrian Kurdistan and to fight for Kurdish independence. Their members are mainly communists and socialists but also include some anarchists.⁽⁵⁰⁾ The International Freedom Battalion comprises a number of groups, including the following.

Western Groups:

1. Bob Crowe Battalion (BCB), named after a British unionist.⁽⁵¹⁾
2. Henri Krasucki Brigade, named after a French trade unionist and communist leader.
3. Antifascist International Tabur (ANTIFA), more international membership.⁽⁵²⁾
4. Anti-Fascist International Tabur (AIT), mostly Spanish and Latin people.⁽⁵³⁾

Turkish formations include two main groups:

1. Peoples United Revolutionary Movement (Halkların Birleşik Devrim Hareketi-HBDH).⁽⁵⁴⁾
2. United Freedom Forces (Birleşik Özgürlük Güçleri - BOG).⁽⁵⁵⁾

Third: Self-Defense Forces (HPX)

The Defense and Self-Protection Council was formed during the DAA meeting on January 21, 2014, and the law was passed by the Legislative Council on July 13, 2014..⁽⁵⁶⁾ It was amended on January 16, 2016 and includes 13 articles that introduce the Self-Defense Forces and the related details.

Article 2: This is a mandatory service for males between the ages of 18 and 30. These men will be part of the defense council of the DAA.

Article 3: Males are required to join when they reach 18 years of age. Each is dismissed if 1) he completes his service in full or 2) he is over 40 years of age. Females can join voluntarily.

Article 4: The mandatory service is 9 months.

Article 5: Those who are exempt from the mandatory military service: a) families of martyrs documented by the Committee of Martyr Families, b) an only child to one of the parents, c) handicapped, disabled, or those with illnesses that prevent them from fulfilling their service only after proper medical authorities confirm such conditions.

⁽⁴⁸⁾ A fighter from YPG's World Liberty Battalion died in the battles of the town of Balakqa, Source: Arenious, Date: 22/06/2015, link: <https://goo.gl/ZEAjF3>

⁽⁴⁹⁾ MLKP nedir?, Location: Nadir al-Turki, link: <https://goo.gl/m3uK5j>

⁽⁵⁰⁾ Ibid.

⁽⁵¹⁾ British volunteers in the Bob Crowe Brigades ready for death in the fight against Daesh in Syria. New Dawn: 18/09/2016, Link: <https://goo.gl/e74NjI>

⁽⁵²⁾ Armed Kurdish group Antifa declares world war on capitalism, Source: narrative-collapse, Date: 31/03/2017, link: <https://goo.gl/CCetnv>

⁽⁵³⁾ The Anarchists vs. The Islamic State, Rolling Stone Magazine, February 14, 2017, Link: <https://goo.gl/6Vcmqc>

⁽⁵⁴⁾ Movement of the Common Peoples' Revolution, Website: Official Website: hbdh-online.org, link: <https://goo.gl/z5e1Py>

⁽⁵⁵⁾ International Freedom Battalion »In Syria:« Zinc Boys »or mercenaries?, Source: Assafir, Date: 24/12/2016, link: <https://goo.gl/y63SS6>

⁽⁵⁶⁾ DAA mandates the act of the performance of Self-Defense service in Jazira Canton. Source: Syrian Observatory for Human Rights, Date: 13/07/2017, link: <https://goo.gl/d6AVJz>

Article 9 provides a \$1,000 (USD) stipend to native residents of the DAA living outside or with foreign nationalities every time they return to the DAA, as long as the military allowance does not exceed \$5,000 (USD).⁽⁵⁷⁾

During a press conference, Abdul Karim Sarukhan, president at the time, stated that the number cannot be more than \$200 (USD) and cancelled the previous stipend.

(2) Part 1 of Article 9 does not include DAA natives living in neighboring countries.

(3) The length of service was previously 6 months and then increased to 9 months.⁽⁵⁸⁾

The increase in months of service was decided due to the intensified fighting that the DAA was engaged in against IS. At the time, they were conducting an offensive towards the outskirts of Raqqa and making plans to take Manbij. The law was inaugurated by the “Shared Governance” or the leadership of the district on July 6, 2017 and updated on June 24, 2017. The amendment includes the current residents as well as those who travelled to the canton before 2011.⁽⁵⁹⁾

The Self-Defense and Protection Council organizes the mandatory military service. This is how the DAA enforces its laws on the Kurds and others living in DAA-controlled territory. DAA-allied groups offered money to new recruits who are expected to fulfill the entire mandatory service.

The Self-Defense and Security Council views itself as the sole body responsible for the safety and security of the respective canton based on the concept of the right to self-defense. They carry out their responsibilities under the auspices of the Executive Committees of the DAA. The council carries out the orders of the Legislative and Executive committees related to security within the canton’s borders and aims to work according to the principles of the Democratic Autonomous Administration to carry society towards being a “democratic nation.”

The council's responsibilities include:

1. Protecting the canton’s borders from external attacks.
2. Advancing the protection and security of the canton.
3. Submitting regular reports on the security situation to the leadership of the Executive Committee of the Autonomous Administration of the canton.
4. Holding national campaigns to enhance the culture of self-protection and self-defense.
5. Coordination and cooperation with other committees.
6. The Self-Defense and Security Council is the only official party with rights to sign any agreements related to defense and security and other agreements dealing with these issues.
7. Acquiring all the supplies and resources needed to conduct proper military and security operations.⁽⁶⁰⁾

⁽⁵⁷⁾Self-Defense Duty Centers, Announcement No. 1, Applications for the postponement of medical students up to the age of 33 for DAA students are accepted under the following conditions. Source: Self-Defense Department of the Jazira Canton, Date: 22/03/2017, <https://goo.gl/JYxDqw> , You can also see a draft amendment of the law of the duty of self-defense which will be discussed at the next session of the Legislative Council on Saturday 16/1/2016, Source: Legislative Council of the Jazira Canton, Date: 13/01/2016, Link: <https://goo.gl/d3rzVb>

⁽⁵⁸⁾ Ibid.

⁽⁵⁹⁾ Joint Governance Ratifies the Law of Duty of Self-Defense, Source: Hawar Agency, Date: 06/07/2017, link: <https://goo.gl/F1gmJN>

⁽⁶⁰⁾ Website of the YPG, link: <https://goo.gl/zPrLFD>

The Self-Defense and Security Council depends on the fresh recruits who have completed training to provide logistical support to the YPG. They build and renovate the training academies and other military structures.⁽⁶¹⁾ They also man the supply lines and deliver supplies to the YPG and HPG forces in the battle fronts or other advanced positions.⁽⁶²⁾ These forces are headed by Rizan Gelo and Azimet Deniz and their deputies are Ayed Ibrahim and Ala Alsatem. The general commander of the Self-Defense Forces in Jazira is Siyabend Welat.

Since the DAA enforces mandatory service among Kurdish youth without exception. This has pushed many young people to leave the DAA creating a lapse in the age groups of people inside the territory. There were a large number of children and elderly residents but young adults had left. Despite the difficulty of confirming specific numbers from the Self-Defense and Security Council, we have established a solid estimate based on DAA media sources. The table below shows the different training courses held in Jazira with related details:⁽⁶³⁾

Mandatory Training Courses Held in Jazira Canton

Jazira Canton				
Course #	Graduation Date	Trainees	Start Date	Area
1	2014/11/20	71	September 2014	Jazira
2	2014/12/21	141	November 2014	Jazira
3	2015/1/12	208	December 2014	Dereik
5 & 4	2015/02/14	419	January 2015	Dirbasiye
6	2015/03/19	260	January 2015	Jazira
7	2015/5/2	139	March 2015	Amude
8	2015/05/26	152	March 2015	Tal Baydar

⁽⁶¹⁾ Self-Defense Forces Jazira Canton, "Heavy Machinery Division of the Self-Defense Forces", Date: 22/06/2017, link: <https://goo.gl/WcLpLb>, Movement of Fighters in Logistics Department: Heavy machinery division of the Self Defense Forces 28/03/2017, link: <https://goo.gl/Ido58k>

⁽⁶²⁾ Part of the Foundation for the Implementation of Military Construction of Self-Defense Forces, Source: YPG in Jazira Canton, link: <https://goo.gl/WcLpLb>

⁽⁶³⁾ Graduation of the first session of the Self-Defense Forces in Jazira Province, Source: Self-Defense Authority, Date: 20/11/2014, link: <https://goo.gl/hMMnXU>, Opening of the second session, Date: 30/11/2014, link: <https://goo.gl/hoKtB2>, Graduation of the third session, Date: 13/01/2015, link: <https://goo.gl/Mogmpt>, 4 & 5, Date: 23/08/2015, link: <https://goo.gl/vkB8wn>, Self-Defense Forces, 7th session, Date: 10/10/2015, link: <https://goo.gl/SBCkar>, Release of the Eighth Session of the Self-Defense Forces, Date: 23/11/2015, Link: <https://goo.gl/PfLmbe>, 9th Session of the Self-Defense Forces, Date: 22/06/2015, link: <https://goo.gl/zJreb4>, Graduation of the course Self-Defense Force, Date: 15/07/2015, link: <https://goo.gl/8pr6Hv>, 11th Graduation Ceremony of the Self-Defense Forces, 21/08/2015, link: <https://goo.gl/xnkNVw>, Graduation of the Twelfth Session, Date: 10/09/2015, Link: <https://goo.gl/rnYjgz>, End of the 13th Session of the Self-Defense Forces, Date: 20/10/2015, Link: <https://goo.gl/34qf5B>, graduation of the 14th session of the Self-Defense Forces, 09/12/2015, link: <https://goo.gl/AvW9tK>, Commando drills for the 15th session, Date: 20/11/2015, <https://goo.gl/5M6P5F>, Graduation of the 16th Batch of Self-Defense Duty, Date: 02/02/2016, link: <https://goo.gl/VWCzUC>, General Command of the Self-Defense Forces), Date: 17/02/2016, link: <https://goo.gl/XgihL6>, Graduation Ceremony of the Eighteenth Session, Date: 06/04/2016, link: <https://goo.gl/BZz94J>, Training Course 19, the link was deleted, from the site. 20th Session of the Self-Defense Forces, Date: 17/05/2016, link: <https://goo.gl/Co5yuF>, Graduation of the 21st Session, Hawar, Date: 04/07/2016, Date: <https://goo.gl/GexQeX>, 350 fighters joined the duty of self-defense, Date: 05/08/2016, link: <https://goo.gl/NNrXwF>, Academy of Martyr Ahmed Badley left on Saturday the twenty-third session, Date: 11/09/2016, The link: <https://goo.gl/dM5sAZ>, "self-management" graduated the 24th session of the forces of "self-protection", location: Agency and Smart News, Date: 29/10/2016, link: <https://goo.gl/Vo1DAZ>, Graduation of the 25th military course in the name of martyr Majd Othman, Date: 30/11/2016, Location: Self-Defense Forces, Link: <https://goo.gl/nV9UBD>, Graduation of new batches of self-protection forces, Location: Ronahi: Date: 08/01/2017, link: <https://goo.gl/yudeS6>, graduation 27th Session (27), Location: Military Discipline Units, Date: 21/02/2017, link: <https://goo.gl/Mxy2YK>, 1600 Self-Defense Forces in Jazira finish their training course, Location: Ronahi, Date: 31/05/2017, Link: <https://goo.gl/uiwEU7>, Opening of the 28th Session of the Self-Defense Forces, previous source, Date: 13/04/2017, link: <https://goo.gl/jq11pT>, Opening of the 29th session of the Academy Martyr Hassan Darwish, Date: 21/07/2017, link: <https://goo.gl/WeiSvp>.

9	2015/06/21	150	April 2015	JaziraDirbasiye
10	2015/07/15	290	March 2015	Tal Baydar
11	2015/08/21	331	June 2015	JaziraDirbasiye
12	2015/9/10	500	August 2015	Tal Baydar
13	2015/11/20	300	July 2015	Tal Baydar
14	2015/12/09	"180 "	October 2015	Tal Baydar
15	2015/11/20	"300"	September 2015	Tal Baydar
16	2016/2/2	271	December 2015	JaziraKarziro
17	2016/02/16	330	December 2015	Tal Baydar
18	2016/4/6	330	February 2016	Ger Zero
19	2016/5/2	75	March 2016	"Kobani"
20	2016/6/8	175	July 2016	Ger Zero
21	2016/7/4	450	April 2016	Tal Baydar
22	2016/8/6	350	Jun 2016	Ger Zero
23	2016/9/11	300	August 2016	Tal 23
24	2016/09/28	250	August 2016	Tal Baydar
25	2016/11/30	420	October 2016	Tal Baydar
26	2016/11/22	350	October 2016	Tal Baydar
27	2017/03/21	850	January 2017	Kapka Academy Tal Baydar
28	2017/05/31	1600	April 2017	Nidal Yousef Academy
29	2017/08/17	1700	2017/07/21	Hassan Darwish Academy in Hassaka
These numbers are estimates based on DAA sources that are publicly available.		Total 10800	Total 36 months	29 Total Courses

Table 4: Shows the mandatory training courses in Jazira Canton⁽⁶⁴⁾

⁽⁶⁴⁾ Graduation of the first session of the Self-Defense Forces in Jazira Canton, Source: Self-Defense Authority, Date: 20/11/2014, link: <https://goo.gl/hMMnXU>, Opening of the second session, Date: 30/11/2014, link: <https://goo.gl/hoKtB2>, Graduation of the third session, date 13/01/2015, link: <https://goo.gl/Mogmpt>, 4 & 5, Date: 23/08/2015, link: <https://goo.gl/vkB8wn>, Self-Defense Forces, 7th session, Date: 10/10/2015, link: <https://goo.gl/SBCkar>, Release of the Eighth Session of the Self-Defense Forces, Date: 23/11/2015, Link: <https://goo.gl/PfLmbe>, 9th Session of the Self-Defense Forces, Date: 22/06/2015, link: <https://goo.gl/zJreb4>, Graduation of the course Self-Defense Force, Date: 15/07/2015, link: <https://goo.gl/8pr6Hv>, 11th Graduation Ceremony of the Self-Defense Forces, 21/08/2015, link: <https://goo.gl/xnkNVw>, Graduation of the Twelfth Session, Date: 10/09/2015, Link: <https://goo.gl/rmYjgz>, End of the 13th Session of the Self-Defense Forces, Date: 20/10/2015, Link: <https://goo.gl/34qf5B>, graduation of the 14th session of the Self-Defense Forces, 09/12/2015, link: <https://goo.gl/AvW9tK>, Commando drills for the 15th session, Date: 20/11/2015, <https://goo.gl/5M6P5F>, Graduation of the 16th Batch of Self-Defense Duty, Date: 02/02/2016, link: <https://goo.gl/VWCzUC>, General Command of the Self-Defense Forces), Date: 17/02/2016, link: <https://goo.gl/XgihL6>, Graduation Ceremony of the Eighteenth Session, Date: 06/04/2016, link: <https://goo.gl/BZz94J>, Training Course 19, the link was deleted, from the site. 20th Session of the Self-Defense Forces, Date: 17/05/2016, link: <https://goo.gl/Co5yuF>, Graduation of the 21st Session, Hawar, Date: 04/07/2016, Date: <https://goo.gl/GexOeX>, 350 fighters joined the duty of self-defense, Date: 05/08/2016, link: <https://goo.gl/NNrXwF>, Academy of Martyr Ahmed Badley left on Saturday the twenty-third session, Date: 11/09/2016, The link: <https://goo.gl/dM5sAZ>, "self-management" graduated the 24th session of the forces of "self-protection", Splice: Smart News Agency, date: 29/10/2016, link: <https://goo.gl/Vo1DAZ>, Graduation of the 25th military course

Military Discipline Units

These Military Discipline Units of the Self-Defense Council are similar to the “Military Police.” They pursue anyone that has failed to report for mandatory military service and inform them of their obligations. They also carry out some court orders and coordinate with the local administrations to pursue anyone they report. These units issue the Obligatory Military Service documentation, and anyone who does not have proper documentation is taken into custody until their situation is worked out. They assist with convoy transportation and logistics between the cities and assist in the security of official military operations of the Self-Defense and Protection Committee.

During wartime, the Military Discipline Units are at the back of the forces ensuring there are no security breaches.

In order for fighters to join, they must believe in the concept of a “democratic nation,” brotherhood between peoples, and the goals of the DAA, in addition to be in good physical condition. During the course of the training, the recruit is instructed about the history of humanity, quantum theories, ecological society, culture, morality, democratic modernity, central civilization, the origin and truth about women, and the Rojava Revolution. These are the basic teachings of Abdullah Ocalan, the founder of the PKK. Members of the Military Discipline Unit receives a monthly salary of 25,000 SYP or approximately \$50 (USD).⁽⁶⁵⁾

Organizational Structure of Military Discipline Units:

- General Command, which is responsible for coordinating between the execution of orders with the units.
- Discipline Units, which pursue all violations.
- Investigation Unit, which is responsible for following up on those who have failed to complete mandatory service.
- Security and Protection Unit.
- Administrative Affairs Unit.⁽⁶⁶⁾

in the name of martyr Majd Othman, Date: 30/11/2016, Location: Self-Defense Forces, Link : <https://goo.gl/nV9UBD> , Graduation of new batches of self-protection forces, Location: Ronahi, Date: 08/01/2017, link: <https://goo.gl/yudcS6> , graduation 27th Session (27) , Location: Military Discipline Units, Date: 21/02/2017, link: <https://goo.gl/Mxy2YK> , 1600 Self-Defense Forces in Jazira finish their training course, Location: Ronahi, Date: 31/05/2017 , Link: <https://goo.gl/uiwEU7> , Opening of the 28th Session of the Self-Defense Forces, previous source, Date: 13/04/2017, link: <https://goo.gl/jq11pT> , Opening of the 29th session of the Academy Martyr Hassan Darwish, Date: 21/07/2017, link: <https://goo.gl/WeiSvp>.

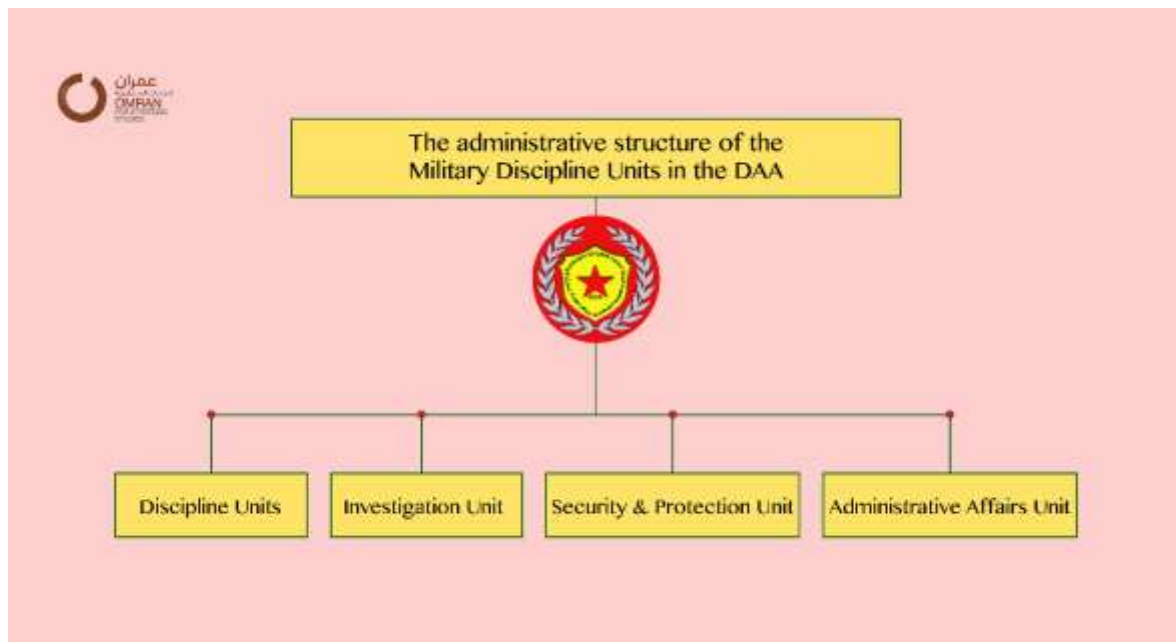
⁽⁶⁵⁾ Military Discipline Units: Example of discipline and organization, Source: Ronahi, Date: 19/04/2017, link: <https://goo.gl/WChSNh>

⁽⁶⁶⁾ The Legislative Council of the Kobani Canton approves the Military Penal Code at its 60th session, Date: October 2016, link: <https://goo.gl/jAJXdJ>

(67) Military Discipline Training Courses in Jazira

Military Discipline Training Courses in Jazira				
Course #	Graduation Date	Trainees	Start Date	Area
1	10/15	"30"	2015/07/24	Amude Headquarters of the Military Discipline Units aka Farhan Academy
2	2016/03/17	53	December 2016	Farhan Academy Amude
3	2016/06/28	54	October 2016	Farhan Academy Amude
4	2016/12/10	49	October 2016	Farhan Academy Amude
5	2017/04/25	50	January 2017	Farhan Academy Amude
6	Aug-17	50	2017/05/20	Farhan Academy Amude
These numbers are estimates based on DAA sources that is publicly available.		Total 286	Total 25 months	Farhan Academy Amude

Table 5: Shows the Military Discipline Training Courses in Jazira



Graph (2): Shows the administrative structure of the Military Discipline Units

⁽⁶⁷⁾ The first training course for Military Discipline Units is to be held at the Ministry of Military Discipline. The second course, Date: 17/03/2016, link: <http://www.goo.gl/grhKjY> , <https://goo.gl/fcJPzx> , Graduation of the third cycle of military discipline, Source: Military Discipline Units, Link: <https://goo.gl/itM8AP> , End of the Fourth Course of Military Discipline, Date: 10/12/2016, Link : <https://goo.gl/3rB5A5> , Fifth Session of Military Discipline, Date: 24/03/2017, link: <https://goo.gl/rzuq9u> , Opening of the Sixth Session of Military Discipline Units, Date: 20/05/2017 , Link: <https://goo.gl/XkzwKi>

The Bronze Troop:

This is a special troop, which was formed by the Asayish on May 10, 2015. Fighters in this troop are assigned to play music on special occasions and upon the arrival of DAA officials and other prominent figures.⁽⁶⁸⁾

Self-Defense in Afrin

The implementation of the self-defense law was delayed in Afrin compared to Jazira province. The announcement of its establishments was issued in the first half of 2015.⁽⁶⁹⁾ It is interesting to note here that the Command of the Self-Defense Forces in Afrin extended the mandatory service duration three times. The first extension was on November 20, 2016 and the request was sent via the Self-Defense Forces Command directly to the head of the Executive Committee in the Canton. The request read as follows:

Due to the sensitive circumstances that our canton is going through and the dire necessity for such measures, we strongly request that you extend the 5th round of mandatory Self-Defense service another two months.⁽⁷⁰⁾

The sixth round of mandatory service was extended two months once again on February 26, 2017.⁽⁷¹⁾

The third extension was during the seventh round and happened on June 1, 2017.

This resulted in all the candidates completing 9 months of training. In this regard, the new head of the Self-Defense Forces in Afrin, Bahcat Abdo, said to a media outlet that the group was planning to extend the mandatory service to 18 months. That is double the existing requirement. His comments came in response to a question about the possibility of a Turkish military attack on YPG and related forces in Afrin. In the same interview, Abdo complained that Russia did not display an appropriate response to Turkish shelling of YPG positions in Afrin. He added that they were not asking Russia for any specific help in their own political endeavors. He interprets the Russian quietness as two separate messages. The first is that Turkey should understand Russia will not intervene in any operation that Turkey carries out against the YPG. The other message is to the DAA that there is one solution and that is the regime must enter Afrin and that there should be a direct relationship between the DAA and the regime. He insisted that they would not allow the regime to enter Afrin and that they would not let the forces, which they formed themselves, operate under the regime's command. He added that they would fight Turkish forces if they advanced towards Afrin. To Russia, he said, that they did not need Russian troops in Afrin and added, "If they came to Afrin for some rest and relaxation, then their leaving will be better than their being present for no reason."

⁽⁶⁸⁾ Brass Band of the Forces of Asayish Roj Ava, Source: Band's website, 14/06/2017, link: <https://goo.gl/m8M741>

⁽⁶⁹⁾ The implementation of the law of the mandatory Self-Defense duty in Afrin, Source: Hawar Agency, Date: 19/05/2015, link: <https://goo.gl/FJfYn4>

⁽⁷⁰⁾ Extension of the service of the fifth session of the duty of self-defense for two months, location: the defense in Afrin, Date: 22/11/2016, link: <https://goo.gl/esXra7>

⁽⁷¹⁾ Decision to keep the military personnel of the sixth session of the self-protection forces in the province for two more months, same source, date: 26/03/2017, link: <https://goo.gl/dRaQNf>, Previous source, Date: 01/06/2017, link: <https://goo.gl/RSSWpN>

The three extensions of the mandatory service duration can be understood in terms of the commander's expression of distrust against the Russian troops in Afrin and the belief that their presence on the borders of the Euphrates Shield territories would not actually deter any Turkish attack.⁽⁷²⁾

The table below shows the schedule of mandatory training courses in Afrin Canton:⁽⁷³⁾

Mandatory training courses in Afrin Canton				
Course #	Graduation Date	Trainees	Start Date	Area
1	2015/08/22	200	2015/07/05	Afrin
2	2015/10/19	285	2015/10/10	Afrin
3	2015/12/9	284	2016/11/16	Afrin
4	2016/2/11	450	2015/12/25	Afrin
5	2016/4/12	525	2016/02/20	Martyr Izzet Camp
Course 6 Group 1	2016/06/25	350	2016/05/25	Afrin
Course 6 Group 2	2016/7/5	350	2016/6/5	Afrin
Course 7 Group 1	2016/09/30	400	2016/08/15	Afrin Kafar Jannah
Course 7 Group 2	2016//10/08	350	2016/08/25	Afrin Kafar Jannah
Course 8 Group 1	2016/11/20	300	2016/10/10	Martyr Izzet Camp
Course 8 Group 2	2017/1/5	655	2016/12/8	Martyr Izzet Camp
9	2017/4/12	700	2017/3/7	Martyr Izzet Camp
10	2017/07/16	700	2017/6/5	Martyr Izzet Camp
11	2017/09/13	800	2017/08/29	Martyr Izzet Camp
Estimates are based on information gathered from public sources within the DAA		5550	Total of 26 months	Total 11 training courses

Table 6: Shows Mandatory Self Defense Training in Afrin

⁽⁷²⁾ Interview with the Presidency of the Defense and Self-Defense Council in Afrin, previous source, Date: 13/07/2017, link: <https://goo.gl/kBkXWg>

⁽⁷³⁾ The first session of the Self-Defense Forces in Afrin Canton, Source: Afrin Hawar, Date: 22/08/2015, link: <https://goo.gl/kK3nS9> , The demobilization of the second session of the duty of self-defense in Afrin district, Self, Date: 29/02/2016, link: <https://goo.gl/kWr1my> , Demobilization of the 3rd Session of the Self-Defense Duty in Afrin District, Date: 22/06/2016, link: <https://goo.gl/TLuMJY> , Date: 11/02/2016, Link: <https://goo.gl/5YYwDh> , Graduation of the fifth session of the duty of self-defense in Afrin province, Date: 16/04/2016, Link: <https://goo.gl/xdequ2> , Sixth Session First Batch For the duty of self-defense in the province of Afrin, Date: 24/05/2016, link: <https://goo.gl/ArV4ED> , Graduation of the first batch of the seventh session of the duty of self-defense in the Afrin Canton, Date: 01/10/2016, link: <https://goo.gl/5sFVty> , Graduation of the second batch of seven self-defense duty courses in Afrin Canton, Date: 08/10/2016, link: <https://goo.gl/hmmveh> , Graduation of the first batch of the eighth course of defense duty Self-Defense Force, Date: 20/11/2016, link: <https://goo.gl/oFHf6w> , Opening Ceremony of the Second Batch of the Eighth Session of the Self-Defense Duty, Location: Defense Authority, Date: 08/12/2016, Link : <https://goo.gl/PaC2iM> , invites youth boycott To attend the ninth session of the duty of self-defense, 13/02/2017, link: <https://goo.gl/hmw6ur> , graduation ceremony (700) fighters of the tenth session, date: 16/07/2017, link: <https://goo.gl/mhFekJ> , The Academy of Martyr "Ezzat" graduated the eleventh session of the duty of self-defense in the Canon, Source: Afrin Media Center, Date: 13/10/2017, link: <https://goo.gl/Hwnmd2>

The Special Forces of the Special Protection Forces

In Afrin, there is a focused effort on producing Special Forces that are chosen by the Self-Defense and Protection Council from those performing their mandatory military service. They have graduated three classes of Special Forces until now. The DAA took these steps to elevate specific recruits to leadership roles for times of emergency. These recruits are portrayed as volunteers, but this is not actually the case; these individuals are forced into service. The first class was announced on February 4, 2017 and even though the course was scheduled to last only 45 days, the course was reported to last from January 24 until May 24. The report clearly indicated that the course lasted only 45 days. ⁽⁷⁴⁾

The table below shows the courses held for Special Forces groups: ⁽⁷⁵⁾

Special Forces Training Courses held by the Self Defense Council in Afrin Canton				
Course #	Graduation Date	Trainees	Start Date	Area
1	2017/01/04	60	December 2016	Zakaria Abed Academy
2	2017/3/2	40		Abed Academy Zakaria
3	2017/05/24	60	2017/01/24	Zakaria Abed Academy
		Total 160	Total duration 3 months	Total 3

Tabel 7: Shows the Special Forces training courses held in Afrin Canton

Military Discipline Courses ⁽⁷⁶⁾

Military Discipline Courses				
Course #	Graduation Date	Trainees	Start Date	Area
1	2016/6/8	50	2016/04/24	Izzet Academy

Table 8: Shows the Military Discipline training course

As part of the military forces, the Self-Defense and Protection Committee created the Brass Band on January 21, 2017. The band plays music at official ceremonies and when receiving prominent individuals. ⁽⁷⁷⁾

Self-Defense in Kobani Canton

The Legislative Committee in Kobani Canton signed the “mandatory self-defense” law into power on June 4, 2016. The law has 13 Articles and establishes all of the conditions and regulations related to the “Self Defense Forces.” ⁽⁷⁸⁾

⁽⁷⁴⁾ Ibid.

⁽⁷⁵⁾ The Self-Defense and Protection Council announced today the formation of the Special Forces within the Self-Defense Council. Special forces, Date: 04/01/2017, link: <https://goo.gl/RE1QmJ> , Graduation of the second bath of Special Forces, 02/03/2017 Link: <https://goo.gl/RE1QmJ> , Graduation of the 3rd batch of special forces in Afrin province, Date: 24/05/2017, link: <https://goo.gl/6RygER>

⁽⁷⁶⁾ Graduation of the first course of military discipline, Source: Hawar Agency, Date: 08/06/2016, link: <https://goo.gl/mHKJjt>

⁽⁷⁷⁾ Announcement of the formation of the Copper Band in the Self-Defense Forces, Source: Self-Defense Authority, Date: 21/01/2017, link: <https://goo.gl/Wi2TwM>

⁽⁷⁸⁾ Approval of the Code of the Duty of Self-Defense in the Kobani Canton, Date: 04/06/2016, link: <https://goo.gl/PVqd8z>

The table below shows the mandatory training courses completed from the start of recruitment in Kobani Canton.⁽⁷⁹⁾

Kobani/Ain Al Arab				
Course #	Graduation Date	Trainees	Start Date	Area
1	2016/07/26	220	2016/06/20	Kandal Academy in Khrous Village, 28 KM south of Afrin
2	2016/09/15	285	2016/08/18	Kandal Academy
3	2016/11/28	286	2016/09/26	Kandal Academy
4	2016/12/29	315	October 2016	Kandal Academy
5	2017/03/19	400	2017/02/20	Kandal Academy
6	2017/6/3	500	2017/04/15	Kandal Academy
7	2017/8/23	400	2017/7/1	Kandal Academy
8	----	400	2017/10/10	Kandal Academy
Estimates are based on information gathered from public sources within the DAA		3800	Total Months 16	Total 8

Table 9: Shows the mandatory military training courses held in Afrin Canton

Military Discipline Units in Kobani Canton

The Self-Defense and Protection Committee of the DAA did not conduct a Military Discipline training course in Kobani/Ain Al Arab. Instead, the conscripts chosen for the Military Discipline Units were sent to the Military Discipline training course held in Jazira. We found that some Kobani natives did actually participate in the third group of the Military Training Course at the Farhan Huseyin Academy in Amude.⁽⁸⁰⁾

In regards to the formation of **regiments**, according to the structure of the DAA and the bylaws of the Self-Defense and Protection Committee, the decision lies with the Self-Defense and Protection Committee. In their eyes, it is the most suitable military organization and the most logical in the DAA command structure and does not disregard the important role of the YPG. This is the case in most of the structures in the DAA. A similar overlap exists between the DAA and the SDF. We find that the SDF is viewed as the military wing of the Self-Defense and Protection Council and is considered the highest federal council established by the PYD

⁽⁷⁹⁾Excerpts from the first session of the Self-Defense Forces in Kobani, Source: Hawar Agency, Date: 26/03/2017, link: <https://goo.gl/4mog4u>, / 08/2016, link: <https://goo.gl/tM6mGh>, 3rd Session of the Self-Defense Duty in Kobani, Canton Kobani, Date: 26/09/2016, link: <https://goo.gl/bkv88Y>, Graduation of new batches of Self-Protection Forces, Date: 08/01/2017, link: <https://goo.gl/mGGev8>, Kobani. The opening of the fifth session of the Self-Defense Forces with the participation of 400 fighters, the site of the 24th edition of the Self-Defense forces in Kobani, Date: 03/02/2017, 06/02/2013 / 06/2017, link: <https://goo.gl/bTEQq4>, 400 young men join the Self-Defense Forces and put their sights on Afrin, Source: Defense Authority, Date: 01/07/2017, link: <https://goo.gl/Gsp6cDKK>, Opening of the Eighth Session of the Martyr Azad Abdulrahman Dewera Azad Ebdilrehman, Source: Kobani Canton Self-Defense Authority, Date: 10/10/2017 Link: <https://goo.gl/vqqDLe>

⁽⁸⁰⁾ Graduation of the Martyr Rudy course of military discipline Source: Self-Defense Forces Date: 28/06/2016, link: <https://goo.gl/tSDtqk>

and its allied parties. The council did form one regiment on August 5, 2017. The regiment comprised 60 members and was established in the Ghweyran area of Hassaka City.⁽⁸¹⁾

Rizan Kilo, a co-president of the Self-Defense and Protection Committee in Jazira, said that the goal of forming military regiments was to build a highly trained and well-disciplined military force that is recognized as a professional military and organized as such. She added that this military force would be responsible for protecting the areas that have been gained recently in Roj Ava. The regiment is similar in size to the other regiment's already operating in the DAA and are placed under similar conditions and receive a \$200(USD) per month salary, as well.⁽⁸²⁾

Fourth: Christian Forces

The Christian forces in Hassaka Province have different political affiliations and military alliances that are driven by three main factors:

1. Ethnic identity: Some Christians identify as Arabs under pressure from the regime, and these Arabs are counted as part of the Baath Party.
2. The ethnic differences between the Christians from Assyrian, Syriac, and Armenian backgrounds.
3. The different Christian churches and relationships between the schools of thought.

The first Christian militias formed at the start of 2013 and began to formally organize after ISIS raided 35 Christian villages in rural Qamishli and Hassaka in 2015.

Christian forces in Hassaka are organized under a number of different banners, including Sotooro, pro-regime Sotooro, Syriac Military Council, and Nattoreh Forces. There is also an ambiguous relationship between these Christian forces and the Christian groups in Iraq.⁽⁸³⁾

Sotooro Forces of the Syriac Union Party

These Sotooro forces are part of the Syriac Military Council (Mawtbo Fulhoyo Suryoyo -MFS), which itself is under the auspices of the Syriac Union Party. The SUP is considered one of the main members of the Bethnahrin National Council (MUB) and a follower of the Dawronoye Modernization Ideology, which includes the World Syriac Union, Syriac Cultural Foundation, and Sotooro, founded in March 2013. They also formed the Bethnahrain Women's Protection Units that work with the DAA's Asayish. They also participate in fighting against ISIS. These forces consider themselves to be part of the DAA and the MFS was even one of the founding members of the SDF. Its stated responsibilities are protecting all citizens regardless of their background or creed and establishing safety and security in the area in coordination with the

⁽⁸¹⁾ Announcement of the first regiment of the Self-Defense Forces of Jazira Canton, Source: Hawar Agency, date: 08/05/2017, link: <https://goo.gl/2AJCGo>

⁽⁸²⁾ Rizan Chloe: Formation of military regiments is to form an officially recognized army, same source, date: 09/05/2017, link: <https://goo.gl/sk2njF>

⁽⁸³⁾ Kurds and Christians Fight Back Against ISIS in Syria, Source: National Review, Date: 19/11/2015, link: <https://goo.gl/gfYvG5> A summary of the information was drawn from the following sources: Sotooro forces ... A unique experience for Syrian Christians , Location: Ara News, Date: 03/03/2014, link: <https://goo.gl/NYidr3> , Pictures: fighters face-to-face with Da'ash, Location: Republic, Date: 14/12/2015, <https://goo.gl/vfZjiNp> , Self-Management Announces the formation of the Syriac Women's Military Council in Qamishlo, Arenioz, Date: 31/08/2015, link: <https://goo.gl/DmZXtb>, A Christian Militia Splits in Qamishli, Location: Carnegie Endowments, Date: 06/03/2014, Link: <https://goo.gl/giD3W1> , Death of fighter of the Syrian Sotooro forces in the city of Hasakah, Location: Ara News, Date: 16/05/2015, <https://goo.gl/z91CXg>

Asayish and the YPG. One of the most well-known Sotooro commanders is Malki Rabu, who is a member of the Syriac Military Council. There are approximately 1,000 Sotooro fighters in different parts of Qamishli and Hassaka.⁽⁸⁴⁾

Sotooro - The Regime

It is known as “The Protection Office” and is part of the Civil Peace Council that is made up of the Youth of Mother Syria formed on December 2, 2012 and the Christian Civil Society. They are all linked directly to the Syriac Orthodox Church.⁽⁸⁵⁾ They are directly aligned with the Syrian regime and are considered to be part of the the National Defense Forces (NDF), the militia loyal to the regime. The members are present in some Syriac neighborhoods in Hassaka and Qamishli, and there are estimated to be between 300 and 400 fighters. The most prominent leader is Ahiqar Issa, the public relations officer of the Sotooro. These Sotooro also formed groups in the Christian villages in Homs when ISIS moved in and took the town of Mheen.⁽⁸⁶⁾

Assyrian Forces

Assyrian forces are split along political lines into the following political groups:

1. Assyrian Democratic Organization (ADO), headed by Moshi Koria. They are members of the main Syrian opposition group, the National Syrian Coalition for Opposition and Revolutionary Forces.
2. Assyrian Democratic Party (Syria Branch) under the leadership of Ninoos Kina Eisho and then Wael Mirza who joined the Syrian Democratic Council.⁽⁸⁷⁾

The Assyrian military groups are split as follows:⁽⁸⁸⁾

1) Nattoreh Forces - The Assyrian People’s Guard

The group adopted the title of the Assyrian People’s Guard. It is led by Robert Eisho. There is no specific date for the creation of the Nattoreh Forces, but some sources say it began on October 1, 2011. These sources estimate that the group comprises 100 to 200 fighters. The Assyrian Church in Syria denies that it has any official relations with any military bodies.⁽⁸⁹⁾ Despite this denial, the Nattoreh Forces and the Assyrian Council of Khabur protect the

⁽⁸⁴⁾ The Assyrian Democratic Organization responds to the National Council of the Nehren River (Duronoye), Source: Ankawa, Date: 09/04/2012, link: <https://goo.gl/FH24K3>

⁽⁸⁵⁾ The Bishop of Sweden and Scandinavia calls for the support of the Sotooro forces in Qamishli, Kurdistan, Syria. Location: Rudaw, Date: 02/10/2016, <https://goo.gl/gwLqMo> For more information visit: "When the homeland is hardened", the site of: Ankawa, Date: 14/09/2013, <https://goo.gl/Ok46PE> , For more information visit: Syria's Syrian militants are divided between the regime and the Kurds, 10/11/2015, link: <https://goo.gl/VjtBFg>

⁽⁸⁶⁾ On 18/1/2016, a reconciliation meeting was held between the PYD and the Sotooro (Christian) militias, in the presence of Patriarch Afram Kareem, under the auspices of the Assad regime, under the banner of the Syrian flag, in the city of Qamishli. In attendance on behalf of the Assad regime from Damascus was Brigadier General Mohammad Deeb Zeitoun, a senior intelligence officer with the Assad regime. He is known as the liaison officer between the regime's forces and the local militias formed by the regime after the outbreak of the Syrian uprising, and the patriarch, Afram Karim, and the military commander and head of the protection office for the Sotooro militias in Hasaka governorate. (Joan Ibrahim) commander of the so-called Asayish in Jazira Canton, Aharq Rachid Iss. Sotooro is a reserve of the Syrian Arab Army in the region of Jazira Source: Roj Ava News, Date: 26/01/2016, link: <https://goo.gl/ZcAhjf> , Who are the Sotooro, which Assad gave access to the countryside of Homs ?, Source: Sooria Man, Date: 06/11/2015, <https://goo.gl/mE8jkm>

⁽⁸⁷⁾ The Council of Democratic Syria visits the battle fronts of the Wrath of the Euphrates", Source: Hawar, Date: 13/11/2016, link: <https://goo.gl/qXsAeW>

⁽⁸⁸⁾ Assyrian Democratic Organization, Source: Carnegie, link: <https://goo.gl/3CmW2e> . For further information about the party, please see: Meeting with Ninoos Ishou, Head of the Political Bureau of the Assyrian Democratic Party in Syria. <https://goo.gl/sDMQyu>

⁽⁸⁹⁾ The forces of the Khabur Guard Council are rebuilding their command in Tel Tamer. Source: Ara News, Date: 11/05/2015, link: <https://goo.gl/vZ5JKC>

church's official ceremonies and celebrations, especially when Assyrian religious figures are present.⁽⁹⁰⁾

2) Khabur Guard Forces

This group is led by Rueel Sulaqa and operates under the Council of the Khabur Guard Forces, which is chaired by Shamoun Kako.⁽⁹¹⁾ These forces are politically aligned with the Assyrian Democratic Party and were previously part of the Sotooro of the Syriac Union before they broke ties over the death of their leader Dawood Antar. By the end of 2015, these forces were in complete coordination with the YPG.⁽⁹²⁾ Their force number is estimated to be between 75 and 150 fighters. Some of them were with the SDF when taking Manbij.

Both groups are concentrated in the Tal Tamer area and the nearby villages on either side of the Khabur River. There are also some near churches in Hassaka, Malkiye (Dereik), and Qamishli.

PART TWO: Internal Security Forces: Asayish Rojava

There are a number of internal security structures that operate in DAA territory. They fulfill various security roles, including police and counterterrorism forces—and everything in between.

First: Central Administration: Asayish Rojava

Asayish Rojava formed alongside the People's Council of West Kurdistan in the majority Kurdish areas. They started operations when the regime pulled its troops out of Kobani, Rumeilan, and Malikiyah. They set up checkpoints at the entrances and exits of the cities and in the important population centers. The People's Council of West Kurdistan formed an academy in 2012 to graduate a class of trainers who would train the Asayish in Kocarat in Malkiye. They graduated their first class of 48 on October 22, 2012, and the official announcement of the formation of the Asayish came on July 24, 2013. In Afrin, the first Asayish activities were reported on November 20, 2012.⁽⁹³⁾ We could not find any statements or other information about the formation of the Asayish in Afrin. In Hassaka, the Sotooro and Assyrian forces operate under the Asayish.

Since its creation, the Asayish has been public about its allegiance to the Kurdish Supreme Committee, created by the Kurdish National Council and the People's Council of West

⁽⁹⁰⁾ Al-Nattoreh forces were established on 1/10/2011 under the banner of the People's Committee. They started working as a security committee in Tal Tamer (permanent checkpoints and moving patrols). The group formed as the area was in crisis. Khabour and Assyrian villages. Intervention Group participated in the Liberation of the Khabour Campaign, the Campaign of the Milibia, Alhouh Campaign, the Shadadi Campaign, the Tal Hamees Campaign, the Ain Isa Campaign, the Rural Raqqa Campaign, the Manbij Campaign. Source: Assyrian National People's Committee, Date: 01/07/2016, link: <https://goo.gl/shSkdh>

⁽⁹¹⁾ Directorate of the Nattoreh Forces visit Comrade Shimon Kaku, Chairman of the Assyrian Guard of Khabur, source: People's Committee of the Assyrian Guard, Date: 20/12/2016, link: <https://goo.gl/Xpqam>

⁽⁹²⁾ Report: Christian militias looted the villages of Tal Tamer west of Hassaka, Source: Ara News, Date: 19/10/2015, link: <https://goo.gl/fnvghb>

⁽⁹³⁾ Graduation of the first batch of students of the Academy of Asayish in Deirik, Source: Furat Agency, Date: 22/10/2012, link: <https://goo.gl/m2fC4B>, The graduation of a new batch of Asayish in Afrin, 27/03/2013, Link: <https://goo.gl/5izoK6>, Thousands in Afrin attend the funeral of the Asayish member Lattat Ali Seydou, date: 20/11/2012, link: <https://goo.gl/ejrqxY>

Kurdistan.⁽⁹⁴⁾ Now they are aligned with the Syrian Democratic Council and the Legislative Committee of the DAA.⁽⁹⁵⁾

Asayish Rojava are commanded by the General Committees of Jazira and Kobani cantons and in coordination between the two commanders, Ciwan Ibrahim and Itan Farhad. Ciwan Ibrahim's position is constantly changing, so at the time of publication of this report, it is not possible to confirm his current position. There are sub-commands in the different geographical areas. In Qamishli, they are commanded by Aslan Qamishlo.⁽⁹⁶⁾ In Kobani, they are headed by Baran Dereik.⁽⁹⁷⁾ They operate independently from the Qamishli Asayish. In Afrin, the Asayish are commanded by Jakerkhween Mamo,⁽⁹⁸⁾ who is also supported by Huseyin Bayram. Bayram plays a significant role as the head of the Internal Affairs Committee of the Asayish in Afrin.⁽⁹⁹⁾

The Asayish's roles and responsibilities became clearer five years after their formation. So far, these are the branches they established:

1. Traffic police.
2. Counter Terror Forces (HAT).
3. Women's Asayish.
4. Checkpoint Security.
5. General Security.
6. Anti-organized Crime.

The Asayish have been able to open more than 45 official posts by the end of 2016 in the different DAA cantons:

1. 21 in Jazira.
2. 5 in Kobani
3. 19 in Afrin.

There are also more than 195 permanent checkpoints in Rojava.

It was difficult to find information on the Asayish training camps due to the way that the courses are numbered and identified. There are even times when courses are not even announced. As such, we are adopting the Asayish estimate, which puts their own numbers at 10,000 to 12,000 members in mid-2017, since not all of its members participate in military combat operations such as traffic police.⁽¹⁰⁰⁾

⁽⁹⁴⁾ About Asayish: Basic information about Asayish, Source: Asayish Rojava Website: <https://goo.gl/GHKSYN>

⁽⁹⁵⁾ Ciwan Ibrahim, The Iranian project is more dangerous than Daesh and we do not mind if the Peshmerga enter Rojava. Date 27/07/2017 : Link : <https://goo.gl/eFoNVq>

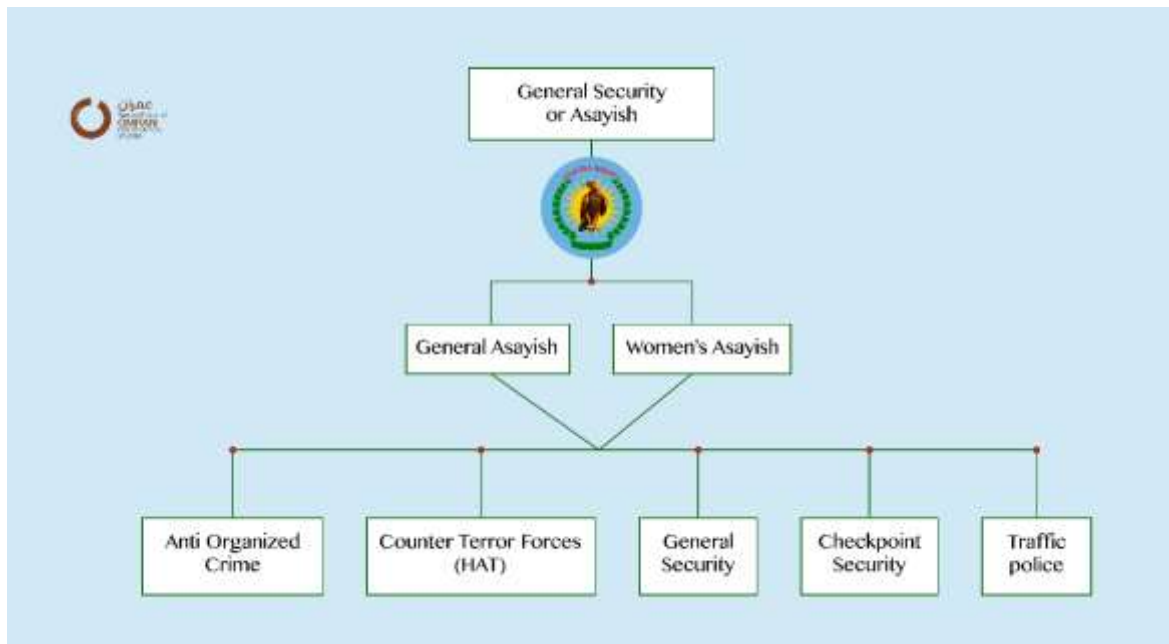
⁽⁹⁶⁾ Ciwan Ibrahim holds a meeting for Asayish in Qamishli. Source: Asayish 15/10/2014, Link: <https://goo.gl/W7eJdJ>

⁽⁹⁷⁾ Asayish Kobani end their fourth training course. 16/01/2016, Link: <https://goo.gl/gqpxrx>

⁽⁹⁸⁾ Asayish Afrin announce increased security measures after the Qamishli explosion. Source Ara News, Date: 05/06/2016, <https://goo.gl/aXnvnL>

⁽⁹⁹⁾ Graduating a new group of Asayish in Afrin, Source: Afrin Canton, 01/12/2014, link: <https://goo.gl/gLrzXQ>

⁽¹⁰⁰⁾ Rumeilan: Asayish forces reveal their annual report for 2016 through a press conference and "Kurdstreet" releases the full text to the public. Date: 29/12/2016, link: <https://goo.gl/zyNsgo> . Organization at Work but a Lack of Security, Location: Ronahi, Date: 09/08/2017, link: <https://goo.gl/NKv1Yi>



Graph (3): Shows the structure of the Generak Security Administration or the Asayish

Some critics claim that the Asayish serve as the DAA’s enforcers against any political opposition or media coverage that undermines the DAA’s agenda. The Asayish are also responsible for chasing down members of the ENKS and preventing them from conducting any public events. They also fought back protesters supporting the ENKS and destroyed their offices, as well.

Many journalists were also detained by the Asayish. The offices of Radio ARTA FM were raided in 2014 and again in September 2016. Safqan, the manager of the station was kidnapped by masked assailants; they threatened to kill him and burn the station down. The Asayish denied any connection to the incident and committed itself to following up on the matter. Eventually, they announced that they had caught the culprits but did not try them in an actual court or announce their true identities. Most Kurdish-majority areas regularly experience cases of arson, kidnapping of public personalities, and threats to officials. These cases are never followed up on or filed in an official manner. On July 18, 2017, sources close to the Kurdistan democratic party leader Abdurrahman Abo claimed that the Asayish entered his social media accounts after they confiscated his laptop and cell phone.⁽¹⁰¹⁾

⁽¹⁰¹⁾ Asayish forces arrest dozens of young men during their return from the funeral in Qamishli, Ara News, Date: 14/11/2015: <https://goo.gl/m9TUZV> The following links can be reviewed to make some accusations against Asayish, Al-Kurdi in Al-Qamishli, a day after its opening, Source: Arta FM, Date: 19/04/2017, link: <https://googl/V7q3qw> , About Sardar's abduction, Source: Bergaf, Date: 13/11/2016 , link: <https://goo.gl/ed1eSe> , Sefqan behsa şewitandina Arta FM kir Saqqan talks about the details of the kidnapping and burning of Arta FM headquarters, Source: YouTube account, Date: 06/04/2016, link: <https://goo.gl/JXfmGC> , Unknown assailants burned the office of the Kurdish Council in Amude Source: Arta FM, Date: 11/03/2017, link: <https://goo.gl/Erxfze> , Sfğan Orkish Speaks to Asadbers about the raid of the ARTA Radio station at ARTA FM site: Adar Press, Date 19/02/2016, Link: <https://goo.gl/jxDRff> , Asayish announce the end of the investigation into the fire incident Arta FM, site: solution, date: 19/05/2016, link: <https://goo.gl/HM9b5Y> , Asayish PYD The Iraqi Kurdish flag is being insulted in his day in the town of Kerki in the same source. Date: 12/17/2012 / 2015, link: <https://goo.gl/YnCXRN> , exchange of accusations between "self-management" and officials in Radio " Arata.fm and Zaarana set fire to the radio station. Website: KurdStreet, Date: 27/04/2016, link: <https://goo.gl/x44PJQ> , Asayish Afrin takes over accounts of leading Syrian Kurd opposition Date: 18/07/2017, Source: nrk, Link: <https://goo.gl/CyadQd>

Asayish Administrative Offices

1. Criminal Investigations.
2. Social Services (Police).
3. Internal Security and Civil Peace.
4. Development, Training, and Media.
5. Finance.
6. Administration.
7. Legal.
8. Supervision and Inspection.



Graph (4): Shows the administrative offices of the Asayish

Conditions for Joining

In the Asayish's own bylaws, they explain that it is the right of any citizen living in West Kurdistan to join the Asayish regardless of ethnicity, race, or religion. The most important conditions are that the recruit must be a Syrian who has lived in West Kurdistan for at least 5 years. The recruit also must be at least 18 years of age but not older than 40. The recruit must have a clean criminal record and a positive moral upstanding in the community. There are other conditions that include physical fitness and work conditions.

Second: Traffic Police "Traffic Rojava"

The traffic police, known as "Traffic Rojava," are responsible for ensuring safety and security on the roads and organizing traffic. They also issue citations to traffic-law violators. They took over these jobs from the Asayish who were doing much of this inside the populated cities. The traffic police are organized with a General Administration that is overseen by the Asayish and the local administrations of the individual traffic police officers.

The Traffic Rojava started in 2013 with 200 traffic police in 11 stations. Now, in Jazira and Kobani there are between 500 and 600 police officers who have been trained for one month.

Two of the known commanders of the Traffic Rojava are Mohamad Omar and Asad Huseyin. In Afrin, the traffic police were formed on May 27, 2016.⁽¹⁰²⁾

Third: Counter Terrorism Forces (SWAT): HAT

These forces are the SWAT forces, and they are responsible for any security situations that arise in Rojava including kidnapping, terrorism, suicide attacks, capturing fugitives, and intelligence. They also support the YPG Special Forces and SDF in their operations.

HAT was formed in all three cantons—first, in Jazira with the first class of 50 graduating on August 12, 2015; second, in Jazira with a class that graduated on July 6, 2016*. It included 350 to 400 personnel.

HAT in Kobani formed on October 30, 2016 with 45 members. It was led by Baran Qamishlo. His title is HAT commander for Jazira and Kobani.

In Afrin, the first HAT class graduated on October 19, 2016 with 25 members. The second class graduated on March 6, 2017 with 59 members.⁽¹⁰³⁾

Fourth: Women's Asayish

The Women's Asayish is directly connected to Asayish Rojava administratively. It operates under the Asayish General Command through small offices, like the one opened in Amude with three female members in November 2012. More Women's Asayish centers started opening at the start of 2013, including the main headquarters in Qamishli City on October 11, 2013. There is a total of 27 Women's Asayish centers, 13 in Jazira, 11 in Afrin, and 3 in Kobani. From their establishment to the end of 2016, they gathered 655 members, according to the group itself. In 2017, they opened new centers in Manbij and Rural Raqqa, but there is no information on their actual numbers as of yet. They have similar roles and responsibilities as the male Asayish. They focus more on the security situations that involve women, such as underage marriage, prostitution, rape, kidnappings, suicide, and general public indecency. They also participate in military operations such as raids, searches, and in actual battlefronts when needed. The Women's Asayish had their first public meeting on October 26, 2016 with 500 members present from Jazira and Kobani.⁽¹⁰⁴⁾

Fifth: Civilians' Defense Forces “Hêzên Parastina Cewherî” (HPC)

The HPC gets its name from the DAA concept of “core of society.” Based on this, they are responsible for protecting their neighborhoods from any attacks or other security threats present in the area. To do this, they manage checkpoints on the main roads leading into neighborhoods. They investigate individuals that they perceive to be a threat. They support the YPG and YPJ

⁽¹⁰²⁾ Traffic Police of Jazira Canton holds its annual meeting in the city of Qamishli, Asayish Rojava, date: 25/12/2014, link: <https://goo.gl/D5nUE3>

⁽¹⁰³⁾ (Internal Security Forces) Functions and Duties, previous source, date: 18/01/2016, link: <https://goo.gl/u6QTa4> For further information, please visit: First installment of Asayish Rojava, Source: Internal Security Authority, Date: 13/08/2015, link: <https://goo.gl/jVY4oL> , Asayish Rojava: Graduation Ceremony of a new counterterrorism force 6/7/2016, source, 06/07/2016, link: <https://goo.gl/QA3cZH> , Graduation of the first batch of HAT forces in the Kobani Canton, Source: Hawar Agency, Date: 30/10/2016, link: <https://goo.gl/LvJalf> , Afrin graduates second HAT course, Source: YPG, Date: 06/03/2017, link: <https://goo.gl/fDvqeZ>

⁽¹⁰⁴⁾ Asayish women solve 37 cases in a month, Source: Hawar Agency, date: 23/05/2014, link: <https://goo.gl/AZVCsz> , Asayish women's forces in Rojava reveal the outcome of its activities during 2016, Location: Ronahi , Date: 18/01/2017, link: <https://goo.gl/A3zGS2> , In memory of the loss of Brittan, Women's Asayish hold their first conference, Hawar Agency, Date: 25/10/2016, link: <https://goo.gl/PfZd3A>

on battle fronts. They coordinate with the commands of the Asayish and other units to eliminate all threats and conflicts in various cities and cantons. They are also responsible for protecting public property and other assets, as well as organizing them in such a way that moves society towards a “more free, moral and democratic state.”⁽¹⁰⁵⁾

The HPC depends on people’s commune “Kominat,” or neighborhood, councils to recruit volunteers on a city level. They are organized as follows:

1. Groups.
2. Saraya.
3. Brigades.

The HPC City Command is made up of nine individuals and is one of the councils of the commune or “Kominat.”

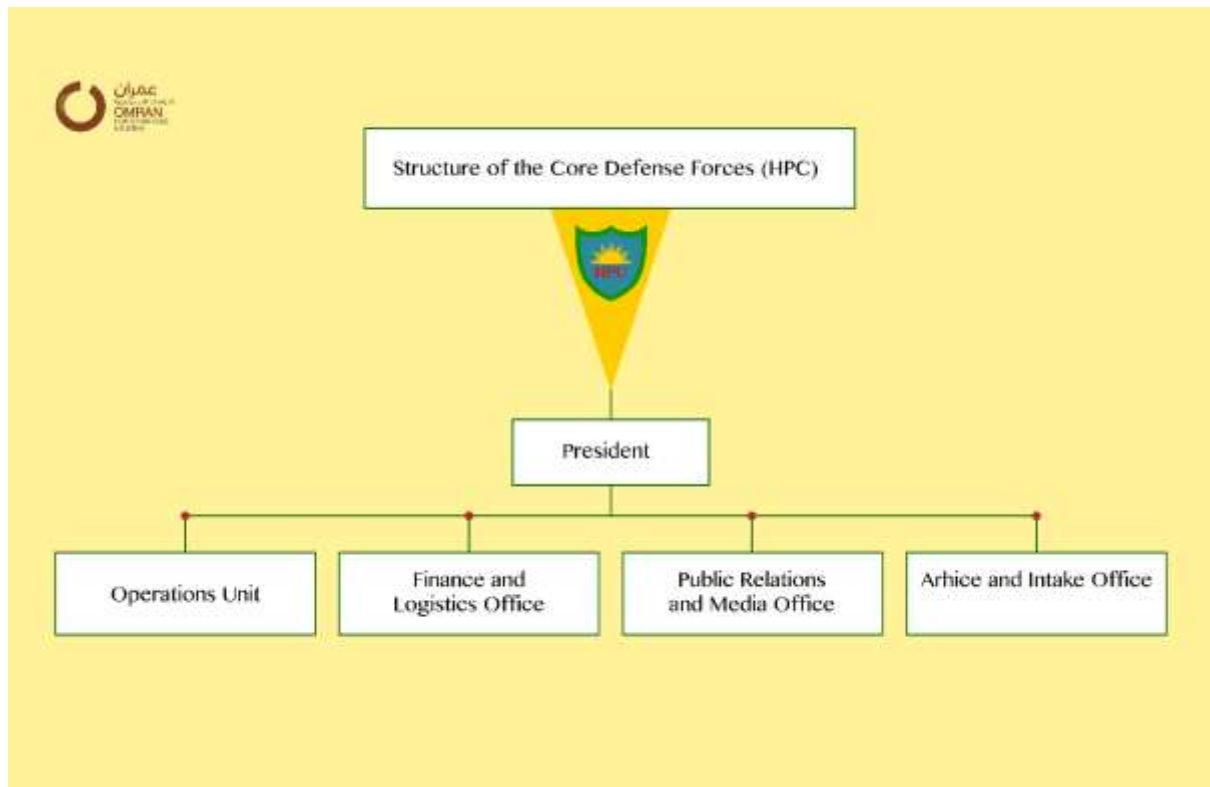
The Self Protection Councils held their first meeting of the HPC in Qamishli City on February 22, 2015, and included two main groups, one with male and one with female members. The Core Women’s Protection Units were later changed to the Women’s Protection Units. They are responsible for:

1. Organizing women in the cities, towns, villages, and streets in special councils with four offices: Protection, Intelligence, Training, and Solving Women’s Problems.
2. Building Women’s Protection Centers to solve women’s issues before they are sent to court. The organization STAR, run by the HPC, operates all of TEV-DEM’s women’s organizations. ⁽¹⁰⁶⁾ The Command of all the Women’s Military Units believe Abdullah Ocalan is their General Commander of the Democratic Society and follow his teachings and ideology religiously.⁽¹⁰⁷⁾

⁽¹⁰⁵⁾ The HPC is a voluntary community force whose mission is to protect the people, Source: Furat Agency, Date: 21/09/2015, Link: <https://goo.gl/YNKyrN>

⁽¹⁰⁶⁾ Formation of two Komitas and their councils. Source: Hawar Agency, 22/04/2015: Link: <https://goo.gl/GW8aQS>

⁽¹⁰⁷⁾ Ideological academies continue to open courses and graduate trainees, previous source, Date: 31/05/2015, link: <https://goo.gl/gAZO3H>



Graph (5): Shows the structure of the Core Protection Forces HPC

Sixth: Other organizations

There are some other organizations which conduct security operations in the DAA which we note here:

Checkpoint security

This department is part of the Asayish Rojava. It operates the checkpoints at the entrances and exits of a majority of the cities. The officers check all the travelers, coming and going, and inspect vehicles, freighters, and identities. They also check for fugitives and youth who have failed to report for mandatory military service and those who have been called for mandatory service.⁽¹⁰⁸⁾

Asayish General Security

This is quite a murky group and its exact position and role in the Asayish are unclear. The representative Ali Huseyin said that the group was responsible for ensuring safety and security. He added that they pursue crimes related to drugs, murder, kidnapping, forgery, and theft. He continued saying that they pursue people who are planning assassinations, as well. He clarified that they pursue any group which poses a threat to the DAA. He ensured that their efforts were in complete coordination with the Asayish.⁽¹⁰⁹⁾

⁽¹⁰⁹⁾The forces of Asayish Rojava. "The Security Agency Disarms a Landmine," Source: Asayish, Date: 02/05/2015, 2016, link: <https://goo.gl/rZLx9P>

Anti-Organized Crime Branch

The Anti-organized Crime Branch conducts its operations in coordination with the Asayish General Security but focuses on a specific type of case. According to their sources, they follow up on cases that pose a threat to the general security and involve crimes that are cross border or regional in nature. Such crimes include producing and distributing narcotics, arms trading, smuggling goods or raising the prices, or monopolizing the market by hoarding goods. They graduate their members from the Muhyadin Academy.⁽¹¹⁰⁾

Asayish Demining Specialists and the Rojava Mine Control Organization

The Asayish Demining Specialists are responsible for removing mines from areas that were previous battlefronts or were previously under enemy control. They also operate in the cities with active battlefronts and assist in deactivating different types of explosives left by ISIS in homes, cars, and other devices. ISIS has been known to booby trap streets homes and entire neighborhoods when they retreat from a position. The demining specialists operate under the DAA and in coordination with an organization known as the Roj Mine Control Organization (RMCO). It formed on August 1, 2016, and its headquarters are in Ras Al Ain. They have cleared a total of 51 km² and 8,740 mines and explosives in Syria. They have 45 technicians, 14 of which were trained by international trainers who issued them professional certifications upon completion. This training happened by way of the British organization MAG in agreement with the YPG and YPJ and Geneva Call on June 6, 2014. Their stated mission is to carefully deal with anti-personnel mines and demining operations.⁽¹¹¹⁾

⁽¹¹⁰⁾ The Asayish confiscate and destroy a large quantity of narcotics in the city of Afrin in Aleppo, location: Smart News, date: 20/07/2017, link: <https://goo.gl/e8cK8H>, for more details please check the links: Monopolists of the Mazot, Location: Asayish, Date: 07/08/2017, Link: <https://goo.gl/tmQTmh>, Office for Combating Organized Crime Struggles in Arms Trade, Date: 28/02/2017, Links: <https://Goo.gl/sKKoFQ>, Promo - Division of Organized Crime - raid of Hasaka, site: Asayish Rojava, Date: 05/04/2016, link: <https://goo.gl/ywmp1p>, Shahid Mohieddin Academy for Rehabilitation and Training of Force Officers Asayish graduated a special training course in the fight against crime, Date: 11/08/2014, link: <https://goo.gl/GPrWCn>, Graduation of the course of security officers at the Martyr Mohiuddin Academy, Date: 28/03/2017, link: <https://goo.gl/uXDJ4u>

⁽¹¹¹⁾ The announcement of the first de mining organization in Roj Ava. Source: Hawar, Date: 14/08/2016. Link: <https://goo.gl/y9VX7L>. The signing of two agreements with the Geneva Call, dated 06/06/2014, link: <https://goo.gl/h1xZrf>, Asayish Rojava forces. Work organization and security, Date: 09/07/2017, link: <https://goo.gl/eXvEmi>, a mine clearance organization active in Rogva, Date: 22/08/2016, link: <https://goo.gl/QR8yJV>, Roj Mine Control Organization (RMCO), Source: Roj Mine Control Organization, Date: 2016, link: <https://goo.gl/KpxAtY>, an organization that trains its demining members in areas under "autonomous administration", Date: 15/07/2017, link: <https://goo.gl/18BPJQ>

Organizational Structure of RMCO



Graph (6): Shows the structure of the ROJ Demining organization RMCO
Structure of the ROJ Demining organization

Part Three: The Military Coalition: Syrian Democratic Forces

There is no doubt that the security structures described previously are the backbone of the DAA, but the coalitions that the YPG established with other groups in the area are key to the security situation there. The SDF, of which the YPG forms the main force, was formed as a culmination of political and military factors in the Syrian file and in the war on terror. This was apparent once the international coalition made them their main partner and put them in charge of the operations on the ground. This increases the importance of this alliance compared to others and pushes us to better understand its structures and capacity for sustainability.

Formation and Organizational Structure

The SDF came only two weeks after the Russian intervention in September 2015. Two days after the SDF's formation on October 12, 2015, the spokesman of the US Department of Defense announced that C17's landed Hassaka delivering more than 100 containers, carrying ammunition, small arms, and hand grenades, totaling 50 tons.⁽¹¹²⁾ Some sources claim this delivery was organized by Lahor Sheikh Jinki, the nephew of Jalal Talbani, the late leader of the PUK. This was the second time US forces delivered weapons by air. The first time, US forces dropped supplies to the YPG in Kobani on October 20, 2014.⁽¹¹³⁾

The SDF is a coalition of groups, including Arab tribes and groups from the YPG-led Euphrates Volcano operation from late 2015. The announcement of its formation came at the same time the YPG were moving into Arab-majority areas in rural Hassaka, Raqqa, and Afrin. Only 11

⁽¹¹²⁾ The conflict in Syria: US planes drop weapons for fighters fighting the "Islamic State" organization in Hassaka, BBC News, 12/10/2015, link: <https://goo.gl/NqtzSX>. You can also review: News about the arrival of the first shipment of American weapons to the Kurdish People Protection Units, Sham Network, Date: 12/10/2015, link: <https://goo.gl/SdJuJW>

⁽¹¹³⁾ US aircraft "dropping weapons and supplies" to the Kurdish fighters in Ain Al Arab, Source, date: 20/10/2014, link: <https://goo.gl/1GzkY9>

days after announcing the cancellation of a Pentagon program to send opposition fighters from Syria to train in regional countries, instead they joined a group of “moderate” armed opposition groups with the SDF on September 29, 2015.⁽¹¹⁴⁾ The program took a huge blow when the Pentagon’s group of 60 trained fighters were attacked by Nusra Front. Some were killed and others taken prisoner, and there were even some who joined Nusra Front.⁽¹¹⁵⁾

The inaugural meeting of the SDF took place on October 10, 2015. Its bylaws specified its goals as the desire to free Syria—the nation and the people—to protect them against any attacks or terrorism that threatens their existence. The group claims the right to legitimate self-defense, which is protected by international human rights law, and to abide by all international treaties related to armed conflicts including the Geneva Conventions.⁽¹¹⁶⁾

Syrian Democratic Forces Numbers

The SDF does not announce any of their official numbers. It is also difficult to rely on estimates made by different media outlets. Some commanders also exaggerate the real numbers in their statements to local media. There is no clear and accurate estimate as to the number of fighters or groups that have joined the SDF. There were two waves of people joining the SDF. The first wave was when individual groups all joined together; they were able to gather around 60,000 to 70,000 fighters in total. Then, in the beginning of 2016, the youth who were taken for mandatory service were simply placed under commands directly under the SDF instead of into the smaller groups. From the beginning of 2016 to August 2017, there were 6,000 new fighters added to the SDF from the DAA’s mandatory military service recruits, including both men and women.

We can see from the list below the number of both recruits or volunteers who joined the mandatory training courses held by the DAA and SDF in northern Syria. The dates, locations, and names of some of the leaders in attendance are presented, as well.⁽¹¹⁷⁾

⁽¹¹⁴⁾ America stopped the training program of the moderate Syrian opposition, Source: The Orient News, date: 29/09/2015, link: <https://goo.gl/Bs1eyC>

⁽¹¹⁵⁾ US officials: Syrian rebels trained by the coalition handed over their weapons and equipment to the Nusra Front, CNN, Date: 26/09/2015, link: <https://goo.gl/iVJc6U>

⁽¹¹⁶⁾ Approval of the internal order of the Syrian Democratic Forces after its unanimous approval, Source: SDF, Date: 25/01/2016, link: <https://goo.gl/35r8rK>

⁽¹¹⁷⁾ The Syrian Democratic Forces Release a Batch of Fighters, Source: Hawar, Date: 02/01/2016, Link: <https://goo.gl/g1YUUpd> , 158 new fighters join the SDF, Date: 23/06/2016 , Link: <https://goo.gl/WkWzDJ> , New batch of fighters join SDF, Date: 05/07/2016, link: <https://goo.gl/xTG88r> , 300 fighters join Syrian Democratic Forces , Date: 21/11/2016, link: <https://goo.gl/NMwKtW> , 366 fighters join the Wrath of the Euphrates and prepare to go to Raqqa, Date: 16/12/2016, link: <https://goo.gl/PjV4z7> , 270 fighters join the Wrath of the Euphrates, date: 12/12/2016, link: <https://goo.gl/b39j1a> , 274 fighters joined the ranks of the Syrian Democratic Forces, Date: 03/01/2017, link: <https://goo.gl/6mAlv3> , 132 fighters join the forces of democratic Syria, Date: 23/01/2017, link: <https://goo.gl/uPAEmd> , 253 of the Arab component join the Syrian Democratic Forces, Date: 05/02/2017, link: <https://goo.gl/Rk7iFT> , 251 fighters join the Syrian Democratic Forces, Date: 03/02/2017, link: <https://goo.gl/8uHHpC> , At graduation ceremony. Coalition leader praises the victories of the regime, link: 02/03/2017, link: <https://goo.gl/ViUyBD> , 165 fighters joined the campaign of Wrath of the Euphrates, Date: 16/02/2017, link: <https://goo.gl/ivBDBg> , 110 fighters who are fighting and promising to protect Manbij, Date: 15/03/2017, link: <https://goo.gl/QqurMA> , 257 fighters join the Wrath of the Euphrates after completing a training course, Date: 07/03 / 2017, link: <https://goo.gl/tWWDHu> , join 19 fighters for the ranks of the Syrian Democratic Forces, Date: 06/03/2017, link: <https://goo.gl/ky9EwV> , 244 young people join the SDF, Date: 09/03/2017, <https://goo.gl/3c79WN> , Graduation of 220 Raqqa fighters, Date: 31/03/2017, <https://goo.gl/euSwuW> , 200 fighters from the Sons of Raqqa join the Wrath of the Euphrates Campaign, Date: 01/04/2017, <https://goo.gl/CqGYWL> , These youth joined the Deir Ezzour military council, 245 fighters join the military Deir Ezzour Council Date: 03 / 04/2017, <https://goo.gl/yGp7PH> , 250 young women joining the ranks, Date: 05/05/2017, <https://goo.gl/jop4Rq> , 28 fighters of the Arab component join SDF, Date: 22/05/2017, link: <https://goo.gl/uThfji> , Ending the First Leadership Course in SDF, Date: 17/06/2017, link: <https://goo.gl/ktdfS6> , join 96 fighters from Raqqa to Qods, Date: 26/06/2017, link: <https://goo.gl/DC8VAa> , 250 fighters from Raqqa join the SDF, Date: 2017, L. Armada: <https://goo.gl/Ew8MpT> , 216 fighters from Raqqa join the SDF forces, Date: 22/06/2017, link: <https://goo.gl/6oME7f> , 250 fighters joined the ranks, Date: 05/07/2017, link: <https://goo.gl/tcDJZA> , 180 fighters join the ranks of the Syrian Democratic Forces, Date: 15/07/2017, link: <https://goo.gl/wSs6UG> , 228 fighters join the ranks of the Syrian Democratic Forces, Date: 23/07/2017, link: <https://goo.gl/PjJWAZ>

Military Training Camps				
Course Name	Area	of trainees #	Name of the leader	Date
Aziz	Ain Issa	20		2016/01/02
Atallah	Bagara and Jboor tribes in Shadadi	158	Erbil Abdullah	2016/06/23
Can Fida	Shadadi	49	Bahram Zaradasht	052016/07/
Haji Khan	Ghanim Khalaf Academy in Shadadi	300	Qahraman Hassan	2016/11/21
Laith Ata	Izzet Camp in the –Raqa trainees were split into 7 groups	366	Abdul Qadir Hafidali	2016/12/16
Ahmad Tal Abyad	⁽¹¹⁸⁾ Abu Layla Academy "Sons of "Raqa	270	Commander of the Euphrates Martyr Brigade	2016/12/12
Masoud Fatimi	Sons of Raqa Diab Ghanem Academy	274	Abdul Qadir Hafidali	2017/01/03
Mustafa Mustafa	Sons of Raqa Abu Layla Academy	132		2017/01/23
Dal Sheer	Sons of Raqa Aziz Academy	253		2017/02/05
Sarhad Suro	Sons of Raqa Diab Ghanem Academy	251		2017/02/03
Kamal Ajaj	Sons of Raqa Diab Ghanem Academy	250	Khairi Mohamad	2017/03/02
5	Sons of Raqa Abu Layla Academy Fadaan Tribal members	165	Abdo Raqaqi	2017/02/16
6	Sons of Raqa Abu Layla Academy	110	Abu Amjad Adnan	2017/03/15
Dalbreen	Sons of Raqa Aziz Academy	257		2017/03/07
Zilan		19		2017/03/06
Kevara 7	Sons of Raqa Abu Layla Academy	244	Delsuz Ahmad	2017/03/09
8	Sons of Raqa Abu Layla Academy	220	Haidar Ahmad	2017/03/31
Jakdar	Sons of Raqa Aziz Academy	200	Sheikh Ahmad Shahada	2017/04/01
Turki Arisha	Sons of Deir Ezzor	245	Khairi Mohamad	2017/04/03

Qura Jookh	Daughters of Raqqa and Kobani	250	Furat Cihan	2017/05/05
8	Raqqa Kalta Village	100		2017/05/13
Showrash	JaziraKhabat Academy in Tal Kojar	28	Musatafa Jaziri	2017/05/22
First Commanders Course	Aziz Arab Academy	38	Haqi Kobani	2017/06/17
Atiq	Ain Issa Raqqa	96		2017/06/20
Jakar	Aziz Academy Tal Abyad	250		2017/06/23
12	Sons of Raqqa Abu Layla Academy	216	Jarniya and Fawaz Sadiq Tabqa	2017/06/22
Idris	Hassaka Diab Ghanim Academy	250		2017/07/05
Freedom Fighters	Sons of Raqqa Abu Layla Academy	180	Mahmoud Ismail	2017/07/15
Caya Kobani	Tal Abyad Aziz Academy	228	Mohamad Shahada	2017/07/23
Courses 32		Total 5400	Estimates are based on information gathered from public sources within the DAA	

Table 10: Shows the mandatory training courses held by the SDF and the DAA in northern Syria

SDF Structure

- The Military Council is made up of representatives from each of the military groups in the SDF. It is the highest military authority over these forces. It makes the strategic decisions about war and peace and elects a General Commander and the General Command of the SDF. It decides the priorities and goals of the operations according to the current situation on the ground and factors that are in the general interest of the command.
- The General Commander of the SDF is elected directly by the Military Council and heads the council's meetings, as well as the General Command. He heads up all General Command operations and gives all orders. He conducts two Military Council meetings per day. He also appoints the spokesman of the SDF.
- The General Command of the SDF is made up of 9 to 13 members, according to the need. They are elected by the Military Council and must include a female member. It is responsible for carrying out all of the orders of the Military Council, as well as distributing, organizing, training, and commanding the SDF's forces. They also plan battles and execute

⁽¹¹⁸⁾ These fighters are natives of Raqqa who joined the SDF as a group. Most fighters from Raqqa joined via the Sons of Raqqa. All references to the Sons of Raqqa are to this specific group.

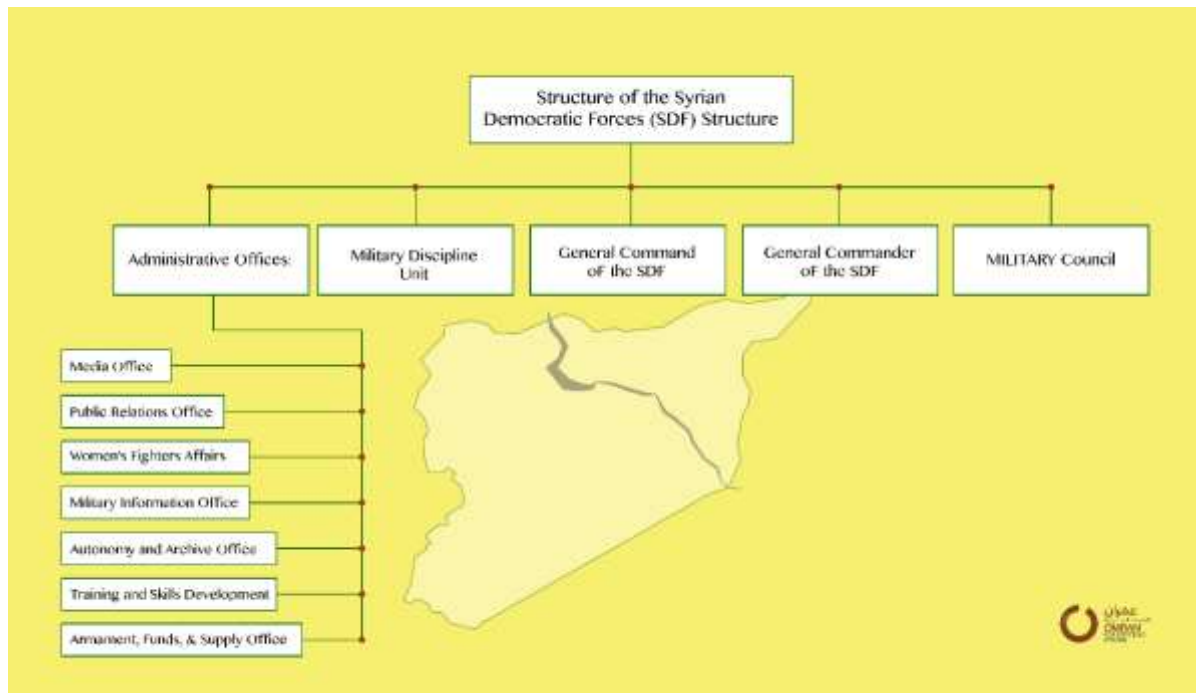
missions on the ground. The General Command's orders are mandatory on all SDF troops. No group can carry any operations without authorization from the General Command.

- The Military Discipline Council is made up of 5 to 7 members, who are appointed by the Military Council. They are responsible for eliminating any conflicts that may arise between the groups or individual members of the SDF. They hold the groups accountable for their actions and performance in operations.

Administrative Offices:

- The Public Relations Office is responsible for building and developing national and international relations on all levels with all democratic and social powers including military groups, tribes, and national figures; with the aim of using all resources available in battle. It is forbidden for any group to develop their own diplomatic or external relations without the knowledge of the Public Relations Office and approval from the General Command.
- The Preparation and Training Office aims to prepare the basic infrastructure of the forces, including the preparation of training programs (theoretical, political, military, and other). The office also is responsible for preparing necessary means for schools, academies, institutes, and preparing training teams, books, and training publications as necessary. The office is responsible for the entire training process aimed at creating a true fighter who believes in the goals and principles of the Syrian Democratic Forces and adheres to its internal regulations.
- The Information Office organizes and manages the media war. It coordinates with the information offices belonging to the groups affiliated with the Syrian Democratic Forces. It directs its media activities and prevents any group from issuing content independently.
- Autonomy and Archive Office prepares the identification records of all members, officers and officials of the Syrian Democratic Forces.
- The Office of Finance, Armaments and Supplies regulates finances through the development of appropriate budgets to reconcile the needs and potentials. Armaments and supplies are considered to be controlled and rationed, especially in light of limited possibilities and as a material value for the revolution.
- The Military Information Office includes trained personnel to collect information by all means available to serve the military forces in their operations and campaigns, including the use of the necessary technologies and human resources.
- The Office of Women's Combat Affairs organizes the affairs of the fighters in the ranks of the Syrian Democratic Forces and works to organize and develop the participation of women in the defense process.⁽¹¹⁹⁾

⁽¹¹⁹⁾ Rules of Procedure of the Syrian Democratic Forces, Source: Democratic Union Party, Date: 03/02/2016, link: <https://goo.gl/A8PGV3>



Graph (7): Shows the structure of the Syrian Democratic Forces

Forming the Regiments

The SDF was not interested in forming regiments in the same way that the YPG did. There is one exception and that is for 200 fighters of the Jheesh Tribe in Hassaka which has its own group called Alaa Muhammad Diab. The group joined the SDF on January 26, 2017.⁽¹²⁰⁾ It is not clear why the SDF's plan to form regiments has been delayed, but it is apparent that the biggest obstacle now is its inability to get the different groups to unite. The SDF that was formed in 2015 is actually the Military Council of a number of groups that were already working together. To create organized regiments these groups would need to completely integrate, which is not likely in the near future. There have been many issues between the YPG and some of the groups that joined the SDF, especially when non-YPG groups recruit new members into their ranks, instead of into the SDF directly. In order to look more like a professional military, the YPG and the SDF are trying to prevent such actions by requiring any newcomers to join the ranks of the SDF directly.

⁽¹²⁰⁾ Youth of the Jaheesh clan make their first group and join SDF, Source: Hawar, Date: 26/01/2017, link: <https://goo.gl/DzjExF>



Graph (8): Presents information including a short summary and the flags of the main groups that joined SDF.

Second: Main Military Forces in the SDF

1. Founding Forces

The YPG, YPJ, and the YPG-affiliated Sotooro participated in the founding meetings of the SDF. They were joined by the following forces:

- Jaysh al Thuwar: Formed on May 3, 2015 through the combination of seven different groups:
 - Tajammo' Thuwar Homs, led by Lieutenant Colonel Abdul Elah Ahmad.
 - Shams al-Shamal Brigades formed on April 16, 2015, led by Brigadier General Mohamed Hamo. After their announcement, a number of notable groups joined them. Their leader, Faysal Abu Layla, was killed in the Manbij offensive on June 5, 2016.

After his death, they lost many fighters. They now have some 1,000 fighters. They operate under the Manbij Military Council. ⁽¹²¹⁾

- Special Missions Brigade, led by Abu Ali Bard.
- The Kurdish Front, led by Salah Jibo.
- 777th Regiment, led by Abu Arab.
- 99th Brigade, led by Ahmad Muhammad Sultan aka Abu Alaraj.
- Liwa Sultan Selim, led by Abdul Aziz Mirza. ⁽¹²²⁾

Jaysh al Thuwar is one of the groups closest to the SDF. It includes Arabs and Turkmen. When the group joined the SDF, it brought the following groups:

- Kurdish Front.
- 99th Infantry Brigade. ⁽¹²³⁾
- Special Operations 455th.
- Seljuk Brigade.
- Ahrar al Zawiya.
- Liwa Sultan Selim.
- Liwa Shuhada Atareb.
- Liwa Qa'qa.
- Free Men of the North.
- Liwa al Hamza.
- Saraya Al Nukhba: Yusef Qazhal, Southern Storm, Sunna Falcons, Waed Sadiq, Fighting Truth.
- Free Fighters Movement, led by Abu Monther.
- The Grandsons of Othman.
- Freeman of Aqrab 313th, led by Captain Ghiath Aziz.
- Democratic North.
- Maghaweer Homs, led by Abdul Munim Sheikh.
- Maghaweer Sfeira, led by Ahmed Abu Firas.
- Ahrar Kaeaba, led by Hamo.
- Martyr Aarif Qasem.
- Tribal forces, led by Abu Juma al Binawi.
- Women's Protection Units.
- Qadisiyah Forces.

Jaysh al Thuwar is currently led by Abdul Malik al Bard, also known as Abu Ali. The group is estimated to comprise around 4,000 people. ⁽¹²⁴⁾ These include 500 Arab fighters.

⁽¹²¹⁾The information about the Northern Sun Brigades was taken from the following sources: Statement of formation of the "Northern Sun Brigades" in Aleppo and its countryside, Location: YouTube Account, Date: 16/04/2014, link: <https://goo.gl/7x3abZ>, Several battalions in the Eastern Aleppo Front join with the Northern Sun Battalions 21/4/2014, Source: Northern Sun Account, Date: 21/04/2014, Link: <https://goo.gl/9yhiWB>, Martyrdom of the Northern Sun Brigades Commander due to his wounds, Source: Rudaw, Date: 05/06/2016, link: <https://goo.gl/aC52aN>

⁽¹²²⁾ Formation of Jaysh Al Thuwar. Source: Hawar. Date: 04/05/2015. Link: <https://goo.gl/t1m1nt>

⁽¹²³⁾ Statement of formation of the 99th Infantry Brigade of the Syrian Revolutionary Front, Location: Al-Majalah on YouTube, Date: 28/03/2014, link: <https://goo.gl/BVhPTW>. For more information about the brigade, please visit: Commander of the rebel army: Our priority is Daesh and we reject the safe area, Source: Kulna Shuaraka, Date: 01/01/2016, Link: <https://goo.gl/Ha7VFX>

⁽¹²⁴⁾ In the recent period, Jaysh al Thuwar graduated the fourth session of its forces. According to our research, it happened according to the following sequence: First 28/05/2015 Second 26/08/2016, Third 17/02/2017, Fourth Wednesday 17/07/2017 The total number of these courses is approximately 120. For more details, please see: Commander of the rebel army: Our priority is the organization of the state and

- Syriac Military Council (MFS) has an estimated 1,000 fighters. It was described under the Christian Forces section. ⁽¹²⁵⁾
- Sanadeed Army is a military formation that is part of the Shimmar Tribe, led Hmeidi Daham al Jarba. Sheikh Hmeidi is a co-leader of Jazira since June 10, 2014. His son Bandar Hmeidi Al Daham heads up the Sanadeed Army that is present in Hassaka province. They started to form in 2013 as the opposition took the Yarubiya crossing with Iraq. At that time, Jarba started to form what was called Jaysh al Karama. With help from the YPG, they took the border crossing in October of the same year. They changed their name to Sanadeed Army in mid-2014 and on June 10, 2014, ISIS took the border crossing and the place where the Sheikh lived, forcing them all to leave. There are estimated to be between 2,000 and 4,000 thousand fighters. ⁽¹²⁶⁾
- Raqqa Revolutionary Front is headed by Ahmad Otham bin Alloush, nicknamed Abu Issa Raqqa. He spearheaded the formation of the Euphrates Volcano Operation Room at the end of 2014. It was first based in Ain Issa north of Raqqa and from there it planned and executed its attacks to the south. Currently they operate around the Kobani city limits and have approximately 1,000 fighters. ⁽¹²⁷⁾
- Gathering of the Al Jazire Brigades formed at the end of 2014. It is led by Ahmad Al Musa. The fighters are mostly tribal members of the Sharabia tribe. There are approximately 800 fighters, but some consider this an exaggeration; their actual numbers may be much less. ⁽¹²⁸⁾
- Liwa al Tahrir announced its formation in Ras al Ain on September 12, 2014. The group is led by Abu Mohamad Kafar Zeita. It is estimated to have around 200 fighters. They had some problems with the SDF on September 2, 2016. This will be touched upon in a coming section on tensions between the YPG and Liwa al Tahrir. ⁽¹²⁹⁾

2. Forces that joined after SDF formation

A number of military groups joined SDF after it was announced. The most notable one is the Free Officers Gathering. ⁽¹³⁰⁾ The largest group to join was the Manbij Military Council, which was made up of Thuwar Manbij, Liwa Jund al Haremein, Gathering of the Euphrates Brigades,

we reject the safe zone. Source: Arabic 24, Date: 31/12/2015, link: <https://goo.gl/xncgrb>, Jaysh Al Thuwar: We have nothing to do with the "Kurdistan" and our aim is to fight "Daesh" and Assad, Source: Ennab Baladi, date: 06/01/2016, link: <https://goo.gl/jjx54M>, Abu Ali Bard. "The Taffenist Rebellion" PYD ally, previous source, Date: 12/02/2016, link: <https://goo.gl/QAATqW>

⁽¹²⁵⁾ Who are the Sotooro that the regime helped to het to Homs? alSouria.net, 06/11/2015, link: <https://goo.gl/6fAUJX>

⁽¹²⁶⁾ "Daesh" controls "Rabia" on the Iraqi border and has its eyes set on the border Yarubiya, location: Zaman Al Wasl, link: <https://goo.gl/4R5WwT>, the links can be reviewed for more details, an Arab Sheikh close to Saudi Arabia, Al-Jazeera »Kurdish in Syria, Website: Al-Hathat News, Date: 11/07/2014, link: <https://goo.gl/fuA6xa>, Report on the Sindh forces of the Arab Shammam tribe, Source: YouTuvbe via Mohamad Huseyin, 19/11/2014, link: <https://goo.gl/qetAFc>, Commander of the Sanadeed Army: Our confidence in the Kurds is based on our historical relations. We support federalism in Syria, Location: Rudaw, Date: 13/10/2016, link: <https://goo.gl/XtEFV1>

⁽¹²⁷⁾ 500 fighters join Liwa Thuwar Raqqa, Source: Hawar, Date: 11/11/2015, Link: <https://goo.gl/oMBHZq>, For more information see the international coalition's position towards the YPG. You can see Commander of Liwa Thuwar Raqqa: We are a part of Syria and we are not part of the separatist Kurds. Source: Al Monitor, Dae 18/03/2016, Link: <https://goo.gl/PTmm6>

⁽¹²⁸⁾ More than 800 fighters from the Sharabiya clan are fighting in the ranks of the "Syrian Democratic" forces. Source: KurdStreet, 08/12/2015, link: <https://goo.gl/Uk8vTV>, and visit the link: Commander of the Jazira Brigades Gathering invites young people to join SDF, Source: Furat Agency, Date: 25/05/2016, link: <https://goo.gl/XGwC9n>

⁽¹²⁹⁾ The announcement of the formation of Liwa al Tahrir in Ras Al Ain in Al Hasakah (video), Source: Tweet Book, Date: 14/09/2014, link: <https://goo.gl/Rw8xcc>

⁽¹³⁰⁾ A faction split from the FSA and joins the Syrian Democratic Forces in its first year, Source: Ara News, Date: 13/10/2016, link: <https://goo.gl/Hnt4eG>

Liwa al Qusay, Turkmen of Manbij Brigade, the Northern Sun Brigades (mentioned above),⁽¹³¹⁾ and the Tribal Army. There were also some less significant groups, in both size and power, that joined after the SDF was announced. These include Liwa Suqoor Raqqa⁽¹³²⁾, Special Forces 455th, Liwa Qa'qa, Liwa Ain Jalout, Aleppo Tribal Forces, Liwa Shuahada Jaza, Liwa Shuhada Tal Hmees, Liwa Shuhada Tal Brak, Liwa Shuahada Karhouk, Liwa Shuahada Mabrouka, Liwa Shuhada Hassaka, Liwa Shuhada Rawi, Ahrar Jarabrus Brigade, Euphrates Martyrs Brigade, Sad Martyrs Brigade, Gathering of Jarabrus Euphrates Brigade, Sad Martyr's Brigade, Martyr Kathim Arif Brigade, and Thuwar Arfad.^{(133) (134) (135)}

3. Elite Forces allied with SDF

These forces are allies of the SDF but have not officially joined the SDF ranks. They were formed in 2015. They are led by a defected Syrian brigadier general Abu Hani. The group first announced its operations at the start of 2016 in the desert area between Damascus and the Syrian-Iraqi border, around the Tanf border crossing. In 2016, and in coordination with Jaysh Maghaweer al Thawra (formerly the New Syrian Army), the Elite Forces were moved from the positions above to Hassaka province near Shadadi on the provincial border between Hassaka and Deir Ezzor.⁽¹³⁶⁾ A political deal was announced at the end of 2016⁽¹³⁷⁾ between DAA and the Sooria Al Ghad Movement, headed by Ahmad Al Jarba who controlled the Elite Forces. They officially joined the international coalition's fight against ISIS with an official announcement from the US Department of Defense without having to join the Syrian Democratic Forces.⁽¹³⁸⁾ They are estimated to be between 300 and 500 fighters, mostly from the Shaitat Tribe.⁽¹³⁹⁾

Third: External Support

There are three main sources of external support and they are armament, foreign military bases and American support for the SDF.

Armament Support

The first foreign arms support to the YPG, which is the backbone of the SDF, came in the form of military and political support on a local and international level. That happened when tens of Peshmerga from Iraq travelled across international borders to reach Kobani through Turkey. The US-led international coalition forces also airdropped weapons to the YPG around the same time. At the time, the YPG and the DAA controlled a thin strip of land between Malkiyeh on

⁽¹³¹⁾Six revolutionary factions join SDF in Kobani within six months, Source: Hawar Agency, Date: 16/03/2016, link: <https://goo.gl/TxJgbq>, About the formation of the Manbij Military Council can be reviewed: Video: Formation of "Military Council of the city of Manbij and its countryside" with the support of the forces of "Mesad", Source: Agency Smart, Date: 03/04/2016, link: <https://goo.gl/pjCt1h>

⁽¹³²⁾ Commander of the Suqoor Raqqa: the two fronts will meet soon near "Bleikh", Source: Hawar, Date: 09/11/2016, link: <https://goo.gl/4dDrqK>

⁽¹³³⁾ Martyrs Brigades Al-Sad announces its joining the Sun Shams Brigades, the previous source, Date: 04/02/2016, link: <https://goo.gl/1pwhpj>

⁽¹³⁴⁾ Who is the Furat Grapes Brigades ?, previous source, date: 22/11/2015, link: <https://goo.gl/sBfga3>

⁽¹³⁵⁾ Graduation of the first battalion of the Arfad Tal Rifa'at, previous source, Date: 10/07/2016, link: <https://goo.gl/pA7Pcj>

⁽¹³⁶⁾ The Elite Forces The military wing of the Syrian Future Movement liberates areas and undertakes to continue fighting, Location: Al-Ghad Al-Soury, Date: 18/04/2016, link: <https://goo.gl/JBfP6Z>

⁽¹³⁷⁾ Tayar ak Ghad and the DAA on a solution for the future of Syria, Source: Al Monitor, Date: 30/09/2016, link: <https://goo.gl/UOQXq6>

⁽¹³⁸⁾ Syrian forces join the international coalition officially, Location: Syrian News, Date: 12/12/2016, link: <https://goo.gl/gwaipx>

⁽¹³⁹⁾ Who is the "New Syrian Army" which took control of the border crossing of "Al-Tanf"?, Source: Orient News, date: 03/05/2016, link: <https://goo.gl/P32HpD>. Syria's Tayar al Ghad Agrees to Change Regime and Fight Terrorism, Website: ARTA AM, Date: 11/09/2016, Link: <https://goo.gl/X9wQ6B>

the Iraqi border all the way to Ras al Ain. The width of this narrow land strip is only 35KM wide at Tal Hmees.

Direct armament came only two days after the SDF was formed. American C17s landed in DAA territory delivering 50 tons of ammunition and small arms. The support increased when the SDF launched operations to the south and southeast of Hassaka. They also began operations from Kobani towards Ain Issa and to the west towards Sireen. American support came with the condition that they change their name. They were asked to make a name that was politically secular and carried the word “democracy.” This strategy was pursued because such a group was missing among the opposition forces; the new name would not specify a particular ethnicity and was supposed to tame Turkish fears. General Raymond Thomas confirmed all of this in a speech at an Aspen Institute Security Conference in Colorado. He said, “We were aware of the Turkish concerns in 2015, and we told them [YPG] specifically they must change their name. What would you like to be called other than the People’s Protection Units?” The next day they announced their new name to be the Syrian Democratic Forces. They used the word democracy in their name in order to acquire more legitimacy.⁽¹⁴⁰⁾

American Support to the SDF

American Support to the SDF came in a number of forms:

- 1) Continued air cover during the battles for Raqqa and before that Shadadi, Al Houli, and Manbij
- 2) Guaranteed protection to the YPG and SDF from any potential attacks by the Assad regime. This was the case when DAA Asayish faced off with regime soldiers and NDF. During the fighting, US jets flew in to prevent regime jets from flying near the city. After that, the US military decided on October 19, 2016 to send fighter craft to protect its military advisors that were attacked by regime jets while embedded with Kurdish forces in Syria.⁽¹⁴¹⁾
- 3) Sending experts, advisors, marines, and other military personnel to SDF-controlled territories. It is thought that there are 10 US bases in northern Syria and 2,000 to 3,000 members of the international coalition forces.
- 4) Consistent and direct armament to the SDF. On that note, the pace of arming the SDF has not slowed down since its creation. Turkish sources say that between June and July of 2017, 809 semi-trucks entered SDF areas in northern Syria. Over the past two years, over 300 trucks filled with ammunition, arms, and supplies have been delivered by the international coalition every month.⁽¹⁴²⁾
- 5) Both American administrations have tried to manage Turkey's concerns and even more so in recent times. Washington repeatedly gave Turkey assurances about the type of weapons and training and the parties who would receive them. Turkey insisted that such support did not reach groups that Turkey declared as terrorist groups. In the case of the SDF, the YPG, its main

⁽¹⁴⁰⁾ US general ordered the YPG to change their name, Source: Reuters, Date: 22/07/2017, link: <https://goo.gl/Sid458>

⁽¹⁴¹⁾ US aircraft over Hassaka. Damascus: Ashayish are responsible for the tension, Source: Russia Today, date: 19/08/2016, link: <https://goo.gl/vSRQhx>, and visit Brett McGurk, previous source, date: 29/06/2017, link: <https://goo.gl/sfijZa>

⁽¹⁴²⁾ Pictures: US military reinforcements from Iraq to Syria, Source: Micro Syria, Date: 08/01/2017, link: <https://goo.gl/9CXdfz>

fighting force, is directly related to the PKK. The Americans also promised that they would pull their troops out of Syria once the fight against ISIS was finished, using the American weapons that were provided.⁽¹⁴³⁾ At one point, the Americans denied providing heavy weapons, like tanks, to the SDF according to Anadolu Agency.⁽¹⁴⁴⁾

It is important to note that at many times the American positions were conflicting or uncoordinated. At times, a promise would be made to pull troops out and then another message would be made by US Defense Secretary Jim Mattis, suggesting that there is a possibility for future assistance to the YPG. He explained that the United States may be forced to continue to support the YPG with weapons, even after pushing ISIS out of Raqqa.⁽¹⁴⁵⁾ American forces went beyond just providing military support but also acting as a dividing force when Turkish forces reached the border of Manbij City with its Euphrates Shield Forces and the SDF in the city. American troops also conduct regular patrols near the Turkish border in Tal Abyad and Ras Al Ain. During his tenure Ash Carter requested that efforts be focused on fighting ISIS in northern Syria and to avoid clashing with SDF forces in October 2016.⁽¹⁴⁶⁾

6) American and other high-level officials made regular visits to YPG-controlled areas. These officials included Brett McGurk, the US Envoy and head of the international coalition to fight ISIS, in 2017. In addition, the former French Foreign Minister Bernard Kouchner and the former US Ambassador to Croatia Peter Caprice visited in 2016.⁽¹⁴⁷⁾ Also, an adviser to the US Chief of Staff visited Kobani in 2017. Then, before the start of the Raqqa operation, the CENTCOM commander visited the SDF on the ground.⁽¹⁴⁸⁾⁽¹⁴⁹⁾

These six main types of support were coming with consistent support from the command of the international coalition and increased arms support to the SDF and YPG.⁽¹⁵⁰⁾

Foreign Military Presence

The western presence in northern Syria is not made up of only international fighters who joined the YPG but also around 500 foreign advisers sent by the United States and France and some from the United Kingdom. They were sent to train the YPG and the SDF. In order to protect these personnel and to ease the operations in eastern Syria, the United States decided to build a number of military bases.

US Bases in Rural Hassaka:

1. Military Base and Rumeilan Airport: It was originally an agricultural airport, which was renovated for landing airfreight carriers.
2. A base that is between Tal Baydar and Tal Tamer north of Hassaka City.

⁽¹⁴³⁾ Turkey welcomes the commitment of America to withdraw weapons from the Kurds of Syria, Source: New Gulf, Date: 23/06/2017, link: <https://goo.gl/rVB3wm>

⁽¹⁴⁴⁾ America denies sending weapons to the protection forces of the Kurdish people, Source: Al Jazeera Net, Date: 03/08/2017, link: <https://goo.gl/CH8QMU>

⁽¹⁴⁵⁾ America may arm units to protect the Kurdish people even after the retaking of Raqqa, Reuters, Date: 27/06/2017, link: <https://goo.gl/2UV7Ej>

⁽¹⁴⁶⁾ US Department of Defense: We asked Turkey not to engage the SDF, Source: alsouria.net, Date: 30/08/2016, Link: <https://goo.gl/8Z7q1N>

⁽¹⁴⁷⁾ European-American Delegation in Rojava, Source: Hawar Agency, Date: 20/11/2016, link: <https://goo.gl/ZVrjkg>

⁽¹⁴⁸⁾ Advisor to the Chief of Staff of the United States of Kobani confirms that their forces have not dealt with hard such fierce fighters as the SDF, Source: News24, date: 06/04/2017, link: <https://goo.gl/resGrS>

⁽¹⁴⁹⁾ Commander of US Central Command in the Middle East in Rojava for coordination in the liberation of Raqqa, Source: Boer Press, Date: 22/5/2016, link: <https://goo.gl/fVuxms>

⁽¹⁵⁰⁾ Washington decides to provide the Syrian Kurds with weapons, Source: Al Jazeera Net, Date: 09/05/2017, link: <https://goo.gl/zVeDJW>

3. A base near Mabrouka Village west of Ras al Ain.
4. Shadadi Base.

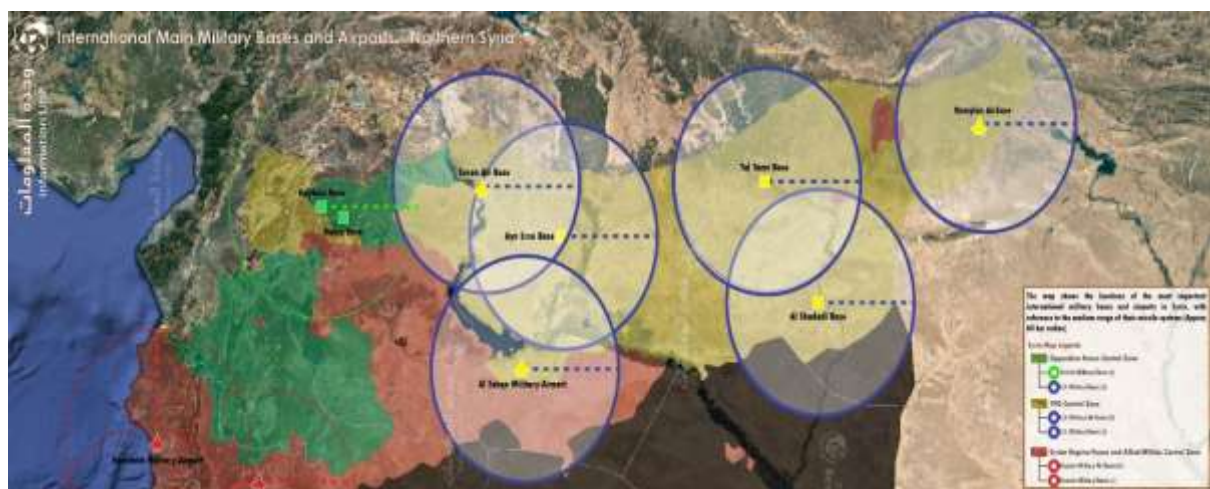
US Bases in Rural Aleppo:

1. The Kharab Ishq base in an area northwest of the town of Ain Issa and southeast of Kobani. It is near the French cement factory Lafraj. The base is being expanded to include training grounds and helicopter hangars.
2. A military checkpoint near Mashtanoor in Kobani.
3. Royarya: an agricultural airport near Kobani.
4. A military base near Sireen that includes a military airport.
5. Two Operations Command Centers in Manbij City; one near Ain Dadat and the other in Athriya.
6. Tabqa Military Airport.

US Bases in Rural Raqqa:

1. Ain Issa Base.
2. Tal Abyad Base.

In addition to these bases, there are many other moving military positions around the cities, which provide the SDF with logistic support to the forces on the front lines.⁽¹⁵¹⁾ Map 2 shows where the military bases are spread and their capacity to provide complete air cover on the entire northern border. The coverage area is estimated to be a radius of 60 km for each military base. The presence of these bases and their protection allows them the ability to conduct training and maintain superior fire power and air coverage over the areas they are in.



Map (2): The most important foreign military bases in northern Syria including US bases

⁽¹⁵¹⁾ Anadolu Agency publishes in detail the places of the US bases in Syria. Washington, DC reacts after these blocked areas were disclosed, Source: alsouria.net, Date: 20/07/2017, link: <https://goo.gl/o6wGBb> , You can review the report: US military bases in Syria. Source: Tasnim Agency, Date: 27/11/2016, link: <https://goo.gl/bZ1kaj> , report: Turkey reveals secret information about 10 US bases in Syria (map), Source: Russia Today, date: 20/07/2017, link: <https://goo.gl/VzHbYK>

Fourth: Internal Relations of the Syrian Democratic Forces

The Syrian revolution has seen many years of coalitions and changing alliances among the armed groups despite the closely aligned interests and ideologies across the groups. Most of the groups were unable to weather the storm and sustain operations in the face of the mounting differences and tensions among the armed groups and their regional and international backers. Similarly, the SDF faced its own challenges and tensions, which we will discuss here.

We do not need to dig too deep into the history of how the SDF was formed to realize that problems were sure to arise. The SDF was formed as a coalition of a number of forces including Arab tribes and others that formed in Raqqa and northern rural Aleppo. There are also groups with a religious identity, like the Christian forces. Some of the groups were built on a national oppressed identity, cloaked as a worldview, and the obvious culprit here is the YPG.

Going back to the SDF, we should note that there was some struggle to gain consensus among the members of the military coalition about what types of military organization should be applied. Some of the groups that formed in Raqqa and northern rural Aleppo and joined the SDF were opposition groups that were fighting to push the regime out of their areas. These groups were besieged by ISIS or JN, which resulted in their alliance with the YPG in order to ensure their survival and to help them face the terror groups.

At the end of 2014, the Euphrates Volcano Operations Room was formed in Kobani as a result of major differences with other opposition groups, especially JN, which resulted in the formation of Jaysh al Thuwar in Aleppo in mid-2015.⁽¹⁵²⁾

Some of the problems that arose at the formation of the SDF still exist but have been put on hold until further notice. There is the issue of the flag raising. A majority of the opposition groups that joined SDF agree on raising the “revolution” flag—the one with green, white, black stripes and three stars. However, the Sanadeed Army, Christian forces, and the YPG reject using this flag. Furthermore, most of these opposition groups were fighting the regime at one point during the revolution until they fell out with some other opposition groups. This was especially the case with Jaysh al Thuwar when they tried to take Azaz, Tal Rifaat, and Marea’ in February and March 2016. At the same time, the regime was successful in separating rural Aleppo from the city.

A number of conflicts arose between some SDF groups and other groups, especially the YPG. There are also many reasons for these conflicts. Some of them are a result of the way the SDF was formed. This is especially true for the conflict between the YPG and the Sanadeed Army and the Liwa al Tahrir. Also, during the Raqqa operations there were conflicts between the Elite Forces of the Al Ghad Party and the YPG. Later on, we will explain how these conflicts were used to increase tensions between the YPG and the other groups.

⁽¹⁵²⁾ Announcement of Jaysh al Thuwar , Source: Jaysh al Thuwar, Date: 08/05/2015, Link: <https://goo.gl/b9XAqY>

Conflict with the Elite Forces

The Elite Forces joined the fight for Raqqa alongside the SDF with 65 fighters. After only 35 days, there was a problem between the SDF and the Elite Forces, resulting in the retreat or “expulsion” of the latter from the fighting. According to local sources, they were reported to have been fighting in Mashlab, Sinaa, Bab Baghdad, the Old City in Raqqa, and Hamrat, east of the city. The two sides told different versions of the story. The SDF spokesman at the time, Talal Silo, who has since defected from the SDF, said that the claims about the retreat of the Elite Forces from east Raqqa was incorrect. However, Elite Forces sources confirmed that they had left. There were a number of subsequent statements made to local media outlets about the Elite Forces pulling out of fighting positions. The Elite Forces suspect this was done to put a stop to their influence and to prevent it from taking over the administration of Raqqa. The SDF statements dismissed accusations that they were forced out of the fronts and instead left their positions to try and compete with the SDF forces there. Some evidence for this argument is found in a report that says Elite Forces opened their ranks to volunteers and encouraged people to join their group. This increased concerns with the YPG leadership about the Elite Forces’ leadership infiltrating the YPG’s ranks and convincing Arab YPG fighters to leave and join the Sanadeed Army.⁽¹⁵³⁾

The conflict between the Elite Forces and the YPG shows how far the YPG would go to prevent any group from gaining the upper hand, even in the media, on the SDF. The YPG also consistently enforces the rule that no group can make its own deals outside of the General Command.

Conflict Between the YPG and the Sanadeed Army

The Sanadeed Army is the main Arabic force that has the longest standing relationship with the YPG. The Sanadeed Army was formed at the end of 2013. The forces were the best option for Sheikh Hmeidi Daham al Hadi. His tribe avoided engaging in conflict with the regime from the start of the revolution. He was able to take control of his tribal territories in Jazira. Jarba was also the preferred option for the YPG to face the tribes that were split between pro-regime and opposition supporters. Jarba was able to take control of the Yarubia border crossing from the opposition and JN who were controlling it at the time. Then, the Sanadeed Army retreated when ISIS moved in during June 2014.⁽¹⁵⁴⁾

The year 2015 was one of cooperation and collaboration between the Sanadeed Army and the YPG. They worked together in most of the battles in Hassaka province, including rural Tal Hmees and Tal Brak.⁽¹⁵⁵⁾ They also worked together to take Tal Abyad and then Raqqa. One sign of the strength of this alliance is the DAA building a special cemetery for Sanadeed Army fighters killed in action on June 11, 2015.⁽¹⁵⁶⁾

⁽¹⁵³⁾ With regard to the problems with the Elite Forces we drew from the following sources: 35 days after the Battle of Raqqa. Syrian forces withdraw from sites in the Old City and East of Raqqa following a dispute with the Syrian Democratic Forces, Source: Syrian Observatory for Human Rights, Date: 08/07/2017, link: <https://goo.gl/81J9mA> , The differences between the factions of the battle of Raqqa and negotiations to restore the "Elite Forces" to the battle fronts, Location: Middle East, Date: 10/07/2017, link: <https://goo.gl/C9At4X> , Elite forces withdraw from the front lines with the Syrian Democratic Forces, : Ettihad Press, Date: 14/04/2017, link: <https://goo.gl/mvvnf3>

⁽¹⁵⁴⁾ File: Sanadeed Forces. The emergence and alliance with the Kurdish forces and then withdrawal, Source: Ettihad Press, date: 12/11/2016, link: <https://goo.gl/HThfrg>

⁽¹⁵⁵⁾ Qamishli: YPG forces continue their military campaign to control Tel Brak and Tal Hamees, Source: Ara News, Date: 02/03/2015, link: <https://goo.gl/3JNc9a>

⁽¹⁵⁶⁾ Autonomous Administration begins with the construction of a cemetery for the victims of the Sanadeed Army in the countryside of Hassaka, Spurce: Ara News, Date: 11/06/2016, link: <https://goo.gl/PXpYpG>. Kurdish People Protection Units continue to advance towards Tel Abtd north of Syria, Source: alsouria.net: Date: 27/05/2015, link: <https://goo.gl/1Cuj9w>

This strong relationship and alliance with the YPG did not prevent problems from arising between the two sides. The first problems arose on November 29, 2015, when Sharabeen fighters in the YPG and the Sanadeed Army stood toe to toe. They converged at the Tahoona Checkpoint near the Tal Alo village, where Sheikh Hmeidi Daham al Hadi lived. The problem started when Sharabeen fighters asked an old lady to remove her face cover in order to verify her identity. Nearby were some fighters from the Sanadeed Army.⁽¹⁵⁷⁾ This eventually resulted in the detention of 25 Sanadeed Army fighters who came to back up their fellow fighters. This event passed without further incident. Then on October 22, 2016, the YPG and the Asayish detained 25 Kurdish fighters from the Sanadeed Army and took them to the mandatory military service camp in Tal Baydar. Their Sanadeed Army identification documents were ripped apart and they were forced into the ranks of the YPG. Sheikh Daham responded by threatening to pull all the tribal fighters out of the YPG in protest to the detentions and the fact that Kurdish forces would not allow any Kurdish fighter from joining any group outside of its control. It seems as though the Kurdish fighters in Sanadeed Army joined because they were escaping the mandatory military service of the DAA. The third conflict between the two sides arose when the YPG attempted to take the unofficial border crossing on the Iraqi border "Tharraya" near the town of Yarubiya/Tal Kojar. Of course, the DAA rejects anyone other than their own border security forces to control any border crossing on DAA territory. The conflict was eventually resolved in a deal, of which the details are unknown.⁽¹⁵⁸⁾ The fourth incident took place on December 5, 2017 and resulted in the death of a Sanadeed Army fighter because his vehicle refused to stop at the Tahoona Checkpoint for a search.⁽¹⁵⁹⁾

There are some main trends that we can pick out from what we have observed. These trends include increased tension and conflict between the Sanadeed Army and the YPG as the threat of ISIS diminishes, an increase in support from the international coalition to create and maintain the SDF, and the YPG preventing all other groups from recruiting and growing their ranks or helping Kurdish fighters escape mandatory service. The tribal issues also caused some conflicts among the Arab fighters in the YPG on the one hand and the Sanadeed Army on the other. It is also clear that the DAA would not allow any party other than itself to control border crossings. Despite these issues the alliance between the two never stopped. However, this does not mean that their relationship could survive future disruptions.

Conflicts between the YPG and the Jabhat Thuwar Raqqa

The Jabhat Thuwar Raqqa - formerly Liwa Thuwar Raqqa - is one of the oldest allies of the YPG. They had a significant role in taking Raqqa and pushing the regime out in March 2013. That situation did not last long. ISIS moved into the city by October 17, 2013, after battling with the opposition groups, especially Liwa Thuwar Raqqa in December 2014. The group went to Sireen in an agreement with JN. That agreement also fell through due to Liwa Thuwar

⁽¹⁵⁷⁾ A dispute between the Arab elements of YPG and the Sanadeed forces in Jal Agha in Hasakah, the same source, Date: 01/12/2015, link: <https://goo.gl/zQw1Yz>

⁽¹⁵⁸⁾ (A dispute between the "Sanadeed" and "People Protection Units" at an illegal crossing with Iraq, Source: Smart News, Date: 05/07/2016, link: <https://goo.gl/ZqzAx2> , You can also see, Kurdish: Arrest of elements of the forces of the Sanadeed and Daham is angry, Source: Ettihad Press, date: 22/10/2016, link: <https://goo.gl/Wrjc4J>, A dispute between the Arab elements of YPG and the Sanadeed Army in rural Jal Agha in Hassaka, Source: Ara News, Date: 01/12/2015, Link: <https://goo.gl/g1KJpV>

⁽¹⁵⁹⁾ The Asayish kill a member of the Sanadeed Army in the countryside of Hassaka, Source: Kulna Shuraka, Date: 05/12/2016, link: <https://goo.gl/8kMzb5>

Raqqa's relations with the YPG. However, JN insisted that the split came due to a lack of structural relationship between the two.⁽¹⁶⁰⁾

Liwa Thuwar Raqqa moved into Kobani with nearly 800 fighters and was a founding member of the Euphrates Volcano Operation Room on September 10, 2014.⁽¹⁶¹⁾ They stayed with the YPG in Kobani until the ISIS siege was broken, and it turned into an offensive operation. On June 25, 2015, Ain al Arab was raided by ISIS fighters who committed a massacre, killing 251 people and injuring 300.⁽¹⁶²⁾ Some Kurdish sources blamed members of Liwa Thuwar Raqqa of easing the passage of ISIS fighters by giving them paperwork that showed they were actually part of Liwa Thuwar Raqqa.⁽¹⁶³⁾

The Euphrates Volcano operations expanded, and they took Tal Abyad on June 15, 2015. At that time, a disagreement arose when the DAA announced that the city was part of the Kobani Canton. Abu Issa refuted this claim in a meeting he held with tribal leaders in the city. They released a statement stating that they rejected any steps taken to change the administration of the city and rejected dealing with any party that was aiming to split apart Syria and its territories. As the Euphrates Volcano operations gained more territory in rural Raqqa, it was clear that the intention was to take the capital of ISIS. Jabhat Thuwar Raqqa announced the formation of the Tribal Army, which also faced trouble with the YPG when it demanded that the tribes hand over 70 percent of Tal Abyad. The group also added some conditions on how the area should be administered. As a result, the Tribal Army issued a statement that demanded the removal of all Kurdish forces and an international investigation into crimes, including murder and other offenses, carried out by the YPG. Following this, Jabhat Thuwar Raqqa was forced to disband the Tribal Army and did exactly that on January 4, 2016.⁽¹⁶⁴⁾

More problems arose when the DAA decided to form the Civilian Council in Raqqa on April 18, 2017. The head of the Political Office of Liwa Thuwar Raqqa rejected this action and denied any relation with the council. He insisted that it "did not represent the sons of Raqqa."⁽¹⁶⁵⁾ The main battle for Raqqa was announced on June 6, 2016. This was a time of great conflict between the YPG and Liwa Thuwar Raqqa. The main reason was that the announcement of the battle did not include Liwa Thuwar Raqqa or Liwa Ahrar Raqqa as participants. Also, the Asayish on June 21, 2017 detained three Liwa Thuwar Raqqa fighters. Ahmad Abu Tayf, one of the Liwa Thuwar Raqqa commanders, said that this was one of the

⁽¹⁶⁰⁾ Leader of the Nusra Front: Reveals the background of the Daesh control on Raqqa, Source: Kulna Shuraka, Date: 01/02/2014, link: <https://goo.gl/JLPJyr> . Statement about Liwa Thuwar Raqqa, Source: Just Paser, Date: 04/16/2014, link: <https://goo.gl/87gE9E>

⁽¹⁶¹⁾ Introduction to "Abu Issa Thawar al-Raqqa", the most prominent Kurdish ally and number one Daesh enemy, Source: Watan FM, Date: 27/06/2015, link: <https://goo.gl/cwhTpK>

⁽¹⁶²⁾ Documentary report on the massacre of Kobani (Ain al-Arab) on 25 June 2015, Location: Rojava, News, Date: 14/07/2015, link: <https://goo.gl/Jim5FU>

⁽¹⁶³⁾ Kurdish sources accuse Thuwar Raqqa of facilitating the infiltration of Daesh into Kobani, Source: Arabic 21, date: 01/07/2015, link: <https://goo.gl/7eRDx7>. New details about Daesh entering Kobani and the escape of the commander of Liwa Thuwar Raqqa, Source: Orient News, date: 03/07/2015, link: <https://goo.gl/xVFCVU>

⁽¹⁶⁴⁾ Thuwar Raqqa refuse to allow Tal Abyad and Slook to join the Kurdish Cantons, Source: Zaman al-Wasl, date: 26/08/2015, link: <https://goo.gl/Q5MerC> . The dispute between the Kurdish units and Thuwar Raqqa to dissolve the tribal army in northeastern Syria, Location: Ayam Sooria, Date: 07/01/2016, link: <https://goo.gl/ercLmL>

⁽¹⁶⁵⁾ The New Arab: Raqqa residents reject the Syrian Democratic Council:: It is not a spoil of war, date: 20/04/2017, Link: <https://goo.gl/aKtZs7> . As for the announcement of the Raqqa Council see the link about The formation of Raqqa civilian council after the liberation of the city, date: 18/04/2017, link: <https://goo.gl/9JJNmD>

ways that the YPG were putting pressure on our fighters to prevent them from entering the administrative borders of the city.⁽¹⁶⁶⁾

The last conflict between the two groups took place when Liwa Ahrar Raqqa and Liwa Al Tahrir conducted a military coup in their positions near Ain Issa and around Tal Abyad. Liwa Thuwar Raqqa also reappeared north of Raqqa. At the same time, Saraya al Qadisiya attacked a YPG patrol on the international highway on September 2, 2016. Liwa Thuwar Raqqa also raised its flag on checkpoints the group oversees at the entrance to Abu Sura village, west of Ain Issa.⁽¹⁶⁷⁾

We can identify the following main trends from the conflicts between the YPG and Liwa Thuwar Raqqa—and its related groups:

1. Liwa Thuwar Raqqa leadership rejecting the YPG leadership role in its areas, since it is a Kurdish group and does not represent their interests.
2. The YPG's willingness to work with Liwa Thuwar Raqqa because of its influence among the tribes, especially during the fight for Kobani.
3. Liwa Thuwar Raqqa wants to create a military structure specifically for Raqqa and Tal Abyad that is not under YPG control, which the YPG will never accept.
4. Liwa Thuwar Raqqa lost much of its organizational and military prowess due to the SDF and YPG's efforts to encourage people to defect, besieging the Arab forces, and detaining leaders.
5. The YPG always avoids direct military conflict with Liwa Thuwar Raqqa.
6. There is the possibility of future conflicts arising among SDF fighters that have relations with Liwa Thuwar Raqqa.
7. The tribes of Raqqa are different than the tribes in Jazira. Mainly, the Jazira tribes are pro-regime and others are with the DAA. There is a small third group that is opposed to both sides but they are minute. Whereas in Raqqa, with no regime presence, the tribes are either loyal to the DAA or opposed to it. This will likely result in future conflicts.

The Conflict with Liwa al Tahrir and Jabhat Ahrar Raqqa

Liwa Al Tahrir formed in Ras al Ain towards the end of 2014, under the leadership of Abdul Karim al Abid Abu Muhammad Kafar Zeita. They joined the SDF and set up their base in a village called Kantari, near Sulook and north of Raqqa. On September 1, 2016, it was reported that there were clashes between Liwa Al Tahrir and the YPG near Kantari. Abu Muhammad, the group's commander, appeared in a video posted online accusing the YPG of taking over the decision-making mechanism in the SDF and threatened to pull out if the issue was not dealt with. Liwa Al Tahrir's military commander Abu Ali explained that the skirmishes were a result of the group's refusal to fight opposition groups around Manbij, east of Aleppo. Liwa Al Tahrir was also taking issue with the "forced removal of Arabs from their homes in areas that were taken by Kurdish militias." Abu Ali complained that Free Syrian Army groups present around Tal Abyad did not support them in their military operations against the YPG.

⁽¹⁶⁶⁾ The groups participating with SDF in the Raqqa battle, Media Office of the Syrian Revolution Forces, Date: 06/06/2017, link: <https://goo.gl/hyvtDY>, The Asayish detain three Thuwar Raqqa members in Raqqa's Ain Issa, Source: Smart News, date: 21/07/2017, link: <https://goo.gl/GdnWtq>

⁽¹⁶⁷⁾ Thuwar Raqqa raise the revolution flag in Kurdish areas in Raqqa, Source: Smart News, date: 02/09/2016, link: <https://goo.gl/Jsgn3u>

Eventually, Liwa Al Tahrir was forced to retreat to Turkish territory and then later moved to Euphrates Shield territories.⁽¹⁶⁸⁾

On September 2, 2016, the YPG besieged and attacked Liwa Ahrar Raqqa, led by Farhan Al Askar. There were reports that he had defected from the SDF and took over the towns of Al Qadiriya, Hamdanat, Kardoushan, Arif, Diribiya, and Abu Tabat after fighting with Kurdish forces. Other sources said that he had escaped to Turkey. In fact, Askar released a statement denying his defection and was later spotted participating in SDF operations in Tabqa.

The incident that took place on September 2, 2016 with the commands of Liwa Al Tahrir, Liwa Ahrar Raqqa, and Liwa Thuwar Raqqa is one of the most important events that clarifies the DAA project in northern Syria between Ras al Ain and Tal Abyad. The defection of Liwa Tahrir came at a time when critical battles were taking place north of Manbij between the YPG and Euphrates Shield forces. At the same time Turkish forces were building up their heavy artillery and military vehicles on the border across from Tal Abyad. The Turks were also moving in heavy artillery and moving their barbed wire further before the SDF announcement of the battle for Raqqa. The head of the PYD stated that the SDF, including the YPG, will not participate in the battle for Raqqa without international guarantees of protection from a Turkish “stab in the back.”

It is important to note here that Liwa Al Tahrir took control of the Tal Abyad border crossing on June 16, 2015, only a day after ISIS was pushed out. The Liwa raised the revolution flag above the border crossing since its fighters were able to reach there before anyone else. This resulted in a conflict between Liwa Thuwar Raqqa and the commander of Liwa Al Tahrir Abu Muhammad Kafar Zeita was detained and Liwa Thuwar Raqqa took control of the border crossing.⁽¹⁶⁹⁾

We can gather some main trends from the conflict between these parties:

1. It seems as though the YPG lost trust in Liwa Thuwar Raqqa after its attempt to take the border crossing on its own.
2. It is unclear who started the conflict since the Liwa made statements expressing its intention to take Tal Abyad and nearby areas.
3. The YPG tried to push groups with questionable loyalty away from the border areas.
4. There could be future problems with groups that deal with the YPG but don't have exclusive loyalty to the group.

⁽¹⁶⁸⁾ Find out the reasons and objectives of the Kurdish forces raising American flags in Tal Abyad, Source: Orient News, date: <https://goo.gl/HQRhP6> "Liwa al Tahrir" splits from the "Syrian Democratic Forces" (video), Source: Arabic 21, date: 02/09/2016, link: <https://goo.gl/4nk67K> , With the advance of the Turkish army, Arab faction splits from the Syrian Democratic Forces, Source: Aram News, date: 02/09/2016, link: <https://goo.gl/Z5TfiE> . And on the subject you can see links. Saleh Muslim: "Battle of liberation of Raqqa will not begin unless there are guarantees of no attack from the back ", Source: FMF Date: 23/10/2016, link: <https://goo.gl/NkFTQ8> . And learn about the reasons and objectives of Kurdish forces raising American flags in Tal Abyad, Source: Orient News, Date: 17/09/2016, link: <https://goo.gl/giS4LD> , and the Liwa Ahrar Raqqa joins the Syrian Democratic Forces Liwaa Ehrar El Raqqa tevli QSD'ê b, Source: Hawar Agency YouTube, Date: 18/03/2016. Link: <https://goo.gl/5gdjZ6>

⁽¹⁶⁹⁾ Commander of Liwa al Tahrir arrested in Tal Abyad only one day after taking control, Source: Orient News, 16/06/2015, link: <https://goo.gl/im2ozZ>

Conflicts with Liwa Suqoor Raqqa

Suqoor Raqqa was founded while the YPG were in control of Tal Abyad. They participated in fighting Tabqa, north of Raqqa and are led by Fayad Ghanem. They had a problem with the YPG and Jaysh al Thuwar that started with skirmishes between Thuwar Raqqa and Suqoor Raqqa after one of the commanders, Khalil Mako, also known as Abu Yamen, announced his intention to form a group called the Gathering of the North. He announced his loyalty to the Assad regime. This is reason enough for fighting to break out between the two groups. Nobody was killed and only a few people were injured. Thirteen Suqoor Raqqa fighters were detained on February 22, 2017, and within a week, Liwa Thuwar Raqqa was formed. A special group formed to raid and pursue regime “shabeeha;” they raided the Suqoor Raqqa offices when they raised the regime flag above the buildings. Their fighters were removed from 18 fighting positions on the front lines with ISIS.

Dealing with the Gathering of the North did not stop the accusation against Suqoor Raqqa’s loyalty to the regime despite the international coalition targeting its buildings on April 13, 2017. Locals considered the strikes to be an attack that was meant to help in the fight for Raqqa and not on the regime contrary to the explanation that says the strike was to stop the regime from starting its own group in the area. The incident could also be explained as an attempt by the YPG to weaken the presence of any Arab forces among the SDF. This resulted in Suqoor Raqqa stopping all of its participation in Raqqa operations; the group has not been active for two months, despite its strong presence in Raqqa City. The group is still accused by opposition groups to be pro-regime and Baathist.⁽¹⁷⁰⁾

Conclusion

In this file, we find a number of conclusions and important issues related to the security and military structures of the Democratic Autonomous Administration. The summary of which we present below:

- The military bodies of the DAA derive their authority from a combination of factors consistent with the nature of the totalitarian political orientation of the party and which drives their desire to control all the activities in the DAA.
- The beginnings of the formation of the military forces affiliated with the DAA can be traced back to two periods. The first is reflected in the formation of small cells after the 2004 uprising in some villages but did not develop to form any PYD military faction in the period preceding the revolution in Syria. The military is linked to the PKK which is responsible for recruiting young men and women. The second period can be traced back to the PYD forming

⁽¹⁷⁰⁾ Commander of Suqoor Raqqa: Soon there will be clashes near Bleij, Source: Hawar, Date: 09/11/2016, link: <https://goo.gl/SCXD XR> , You can also see The clashes between Thuwar Raqqa and Suqoor Raqqa after the latter announced their loyalty to the regime, Source: Micro Syria, Date: 22/02/2017, Link: <https://goo.gl/uETM Fo> , The Liwa Thuwar Raqqa form SWAT teams to pursue regime shabeeha. Same source. 26/02/2017, link: <https://goo.gl/SuYbZq> , Thuwar Raqqa eliminate Northern Brigade and the Democratic Union and marginalizes Suqoor. Source: Zaman Al Wasl, Date: 23/2017, Link: <https://goo.gl/YQgNCw> , Ambiguity about the details of the end of the battle of Tabqa in favor of the SDF militias, Source: Durar Shamiye, Date: 11/05/2017, link: <https://goo.gl/pJBYsP> , Is the bombing of the Suqoor Raqqa impossible for the regime?, Source: Al Modon, Date: 15/04 / 2017, Link: <https://goo.gl/5NASfF> , Hussein Abdul Aziz: Who is the Ruler of Raqqa?, Location: Kulna Shuraka, Date: 28/02/2017, Link: <https://goo.gl/FHxYzf>

organized cells for military action within the ranks of the so-called "Youth Revolutionary Movement" under the command of Khabat Deirik.

- Despite the military control of the military structures of the DAA, the result of a combination of internal factors (such as the balancing between the regime and the DAA for the sake of stability) and external factors (such as support of the international coalition), but this does not take away from the autonomous nature of these formations.
- The YPG and YPJ represent the foundation of the DAA's military forces. These units initially relied on PKK elements for intellectual and military training.
- There is no significant conflict as of yet about the military formations announced by the YPG.
- The HPX and the Christian forces are also significant powers in the DAA territories.
- There are also a number of foreign elements supporting YPG operations who come from a number of different nationalities, backgrounds, and ideologies. At the forefront of which are the leftist Turks, especially from the Communist-Leninist-Marxist Turkish leftist party.
- There is no doubt that the above-mentioned security and military structures constitute the main forces of the DAA. However, the military alliance established by the YPG with other forces in the region constitute an additional dimension within these structures. This cannot be ignored since the YPG are the main force of this international coalition that has been assigned to lead the operations on the ground.
- American support to the SDF is one of the main reasons for its sustainability. The American support came in different forms and aimed to develop and enhance the fighters' skills and the group's capacity. First, the US provided air cover during battle so that the YPG would be protected from attacks. Then, the US sent advisers, trainers, and marines to SDF territories. US support for the YPG included a consistent supply of weapons and ammunition, as well as building several permanent military bases in various parts of northern Syria.
- There are a number of conflicts between the groups that operate under the SDF and especially with the YPG. These conflicts are being deferred to be dealt with at a later date.
- The regime's decision to pull its troops out of Kobani and Hassaka at the end of 2012 was the catalyst that pushed the YPG to expand its military structure. The second catalyst was the fighting in Ras al Ain from the end of 2012 until mid-2013. During this fighting, the YPG was able to "establish their right to defend" this territory.
- Another factor that propelled the YPG from being merely a local group to a key partner of the international coalition to fight ISIS was the Battle for Kobani. During and after the battle, the YPG received unmatched international media coverage, propelling them into the hearts and minds of the international audience. This was enough to rationalize the international community's partnering with the YPG on the ground to fight IS.

- YPG operations have changed and are in an advanced stage of fulfilling the PYD project of “Democratic Autonomous Administration.” This process started in 2013 and was well on its way after the Battle of Kobani at the end of 2014. During this time the PYD made into laws the rules that are derived from the Social Contract. The parties related to the PYD and the DAA decided to make it the official law of the areas they control.
- The DAA benefited from having a unified ethnic makeup, since many of the minorities living in Kurdish areas left between 2012 and 2015, so they were only dealing with Kurdish people. This changed slightly when the SDF was formed. At that time the YPG was focused on preventing any group from recruiting new members into their ranks instead of directly into the SDF. The SDF also paid special attention to adding Arab fighters to its ranks. Some estimates claimed that the Arab fighters made up half of some of the SDF fighting groups.
- The way that non-Kurdish forces operate within the military forces of the DAA could be a stabilizing factor in the short term, especially allowing youth from Arab-majority areas to join the ranks in areas where the SDF has expanded its control. However, in the long term, such a strategy will cause serious instability when the fight against ISIS ends, since they will not be viewed as legitimate “state” organizations.

Regardless of consensus about the justification and rationale for the existence of the DAA’s military structures, the military and security structures of which the YPG make up the main force are all linked to the PYD and their totalitarian ideology. The result is military structures that are tools for political parties with specific agendas to execute local policies that have negative effects on a local and regional level. The capacity and sustainability of these organizations is mostly dependent on the consistency of their foreign backers.

Appendix: The Administrative, Legal, and Executive Structures of the Autonomous Administration

"The Charter of the Social Contract for the North of Syria," issued by the DAA, considers the Syrian State to be a free, democratic, independent, and sovereign state, and its parliamentary system is democratic, pluralistic, and consensual. The city of Qamishli in Jazira is the capital. The three provinces are headed by general coordinators comprising the heads of the three executive councils of the three provinces (Al-Qamishli, Kobani, and Afrin)⁽¹⁷¹⁾, which was formed on March 27, 2014.

- **Joint Governance (Presidency of the Region)**

The joint presidency is composed of two heads, one man and one woman, and so far this position has been formed in Jazira Canton only. It has not been formed in Kobani and Afrin. Candidacy for election to the Supreme Constitutional Court is open according to several conditions. On July 10, 2014, Hamidi Daham Hadi and Hadia Ali Yusuf were elected as joint governors of the province. The two governors pass laws which pass through the Legislative Council; they also issue general amnesty. The Executive Council also submits to the joint governors.⁽¹⁷²⁾

- **Legislative Council (Parliament)**

The Legislative Council was formed following the merger of the two councils, the General Founding Council and the Follow-up Committee, to complete the Autonomous Administration project under the name of the Provisional Legislative Council on December 2, 2013. According to the rules of procedure of the Legislative Council, every 15,000 electoral votes represent one representative in the Council, and the structure of the Council consists of⁽¹⁷³⁾:

1. The Joint Presidency of the Legislative Council (man and woman).
2. The Chamber of the Legislative Council: consists of two men and a woman.

Committees:

1. Committee for Social Affairs, Labor, and Martyr Affairs.
2. Religious Affairs Committee.
3. Committee for Self-Protection and Defense.
4. Women's Committee.
5. General Services Committee.
6. Committee of Education and Youth.
7. Energy Committee.
8. Legal and Human Rights Committee.
9. Local Management Committee and Municipalities.

⁽¹⁷¹⁾ One year after formation: Democratic autonomous administration is the ideal system for governance, Source: Hawar, 21/01/2015, link: <https://goo.gl/Me1gTq>

⁽¹⁷²⁾ The Executive Committee puts the constitution before the community court in Jazira Canton, source: Smart News, date: 05/04/2016, link: <https://goo.gl/sKw1xM>

⁽¹⁷³⁾ Bylaws of the Legislative Committee of the Democratic Autonomous Administration in Jazira, Syria. Voted on during the second session, Source: Legislative Committee of Jazira Canton, date: 31/03/2014, link: <https://goo.gl/y5dmMU>

10. Committee on Finance and Economics.
11. Committee on Culture and Environment.
12. Committee on Foreign Relations.⁽¹⁷⁴⁾

- **Executive Council (Government)**

The Executive Board consists of several agencies (ministries) that increase in number and decrease from district to province, as well as according to the needs of each province. Sometimes, the bodies are merged or separated. For example, there were originally 23 bodies, which were reduced to 16 bodies that fell under the presidency and deputies of the Executive Council in April 2016:⁽¹⁷⁵⁾⁽¹⁷⁶⁾⁽¹⁷⁷⁾

1. The families of martyrs.
2. The defense body.
3. Internal body.
4. External body.
5. The Education Authority.
6. Women's body.
7. Economic Authority.
8. Municipalities Authority.
9. Finance Authority.
10. Energy Authority.
11. Health Authority.
12. Culture Authority.
13. The Justice Commission.
14. Youth Authority.
15. The Antiquities Authority.
16. Social Affairs Authority.

- **The Social Justice Council (formerly the Judicial Council)**

This was initially called the Judicial Council, according to Decree No. 21 of 2015 and in accordance with the provisions of the Social Contract and the approval of the Legislative Council in its sessions No. 39_41_42_46 for the year 2015. There was a decision made to make major changes, including changes to the structure and laws of the Judicial Council in the Jazira canton, the level of legal systems within the judicial body, and the level of designations and laws. The Social Justice Council replaced the Judicial Council, the Office of Social Justice replaced the People's Court, the Commission of Excellence replaced of the Appellate Body and the Investigation and Prosecution Office of the Public Prosecution. The Council consists of 17 members distributed to five committees:

1. Judicial Inspection.
2. Management of the peace.

⁽¹⁷⁴⁾ Structure of the Legislative Committee and the names of the individuals in the various positions on the Council, previous source, date: 08/12/2015, link: <https://goo.gl/9HbcMy>

⁽¹⁷⁵⁾ The Social Contract of the Democratic Autonomous Administration in Jazira Canton in Syria. Voted on during the first session. Precious source. Date: 02/12/2015, link: <https://goo.gl/jtzkGj>

⁽¹⁷⁶⁾ Formation of the new Executive Committee of Jazira Canton. Previous Source, Date: 02/04/2016, <https://goo.gl/BC1JbP>

⁽¹⁷⁷⁾ Confirming the agrees to structure for the new Executive Committee, Precious Source, date: 03/04/2016, link: <https://goo.gl/VnY2RN>

3. Investigation and prosecution.
4. Media.
5. Archive.

Its function is to supervise the institutions of the Social Justice Council from the courts, the district reconciliation committees, and the women's reconciliation commissions. There are 10 courts in Jazira canton and are distributed among the cities of Deirik, Karaki, Trabeh Sabia, Jal Agha, Qamishli, Amude, Dibasiyeh, Sari Kaneh, Hassakah, and Tal Tamer. There are two courts under construction. Official languages are Arabic, Kurdish, and Syriac. ⁽¹⁷⁸⁾

- **Electoral Commission**

According to the charter of the social contract, it is "an independent, competent body that regulates the legal obligations to conduct the public affairs of the elections. It is composed of a number of members in each district, consisting of eighteen members appointed by the Legislative Council." It supervises the conduct of the electoral processes of the Legislative Council. It supervises the local council elections if they are held. ⁽¹⁷⁹⁾

- **Local councils**

The Social Contract considers that the cantons of the DAA consist of administrative units. The organization of the administrative units is based on the application of the principle of decentralization of powers and responsibilities. According to article 52, each DAA canton has local councils formed by direct elections. And the Legislative Council ratified the Local Councils Law in March 2014, but no elections were held for the local councils. "The Popular Councils of the Democratic Movement for Society" are currently in the process of functioning. ⁽¹⁸⁰⁾ According to the Local Councils Law, the governorate of Hasakah is divided into three administrative areas, Al-Hasakah, Al-Qamishli, and Malikiyah, each with different sub-regions according to population density. ⁽¹⁸¹⁾

⁽¹⁷⁸⁾ The new court system in Jazira Canton. Structure and Mechanisms, Source: Boer Press, date: 16/06/2016, link: <https://goo.gl/oBWx2o>

⁽¹⁷⁹⁾ Riad Ali: the court system in the DAA is politicized and the courts are not ideal and lack lawmen and judges, Source: SWEDISH center for KURDISH studies, date: 11/06/2017, link: <https://goo.gl/kPkwf3>

⁽¹⁸⁰⁾ Jazira Canton delays elections for local councils in Hassaka, Source: Rehab News, date: 11/04/2015, link: <https://goo.gl/DUFJKQ>

⁽¹⁸¹⁾ Who said that Democratic Autonomous Administration was the property of the PYD?, Previous Source, date: 16/03/2016, Link: <https://goo.gl/4P3bcK>



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