
Islamic State crisis: Kurds 'recapture key Kobane hill'

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The advances were made after a series of air strikes by the US-led coalition.

The hill, Tall Shair, was captured more than 10 days ago by IS militants, who have besieged the area for a month.

Later on Tuesday, US President Barack Obama will hold talks with military chiefs from more than 20 countries on how to combat IS in Syria and Iraq.

Correspondents say the meeting in Washington is the first time such high-ranking military officials from so many countries have come together since the US-led coalition was formed last month.

In a separate development, Turkish warplanes on Monday bombed Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) rebel targets in Hakkari province near the Iraqi border, causing "heavy casualties", Turkish media report.

If confirmed, this would be the first major air raid by Turkey on the PKK since a ceasefire was reached in March in 2013.

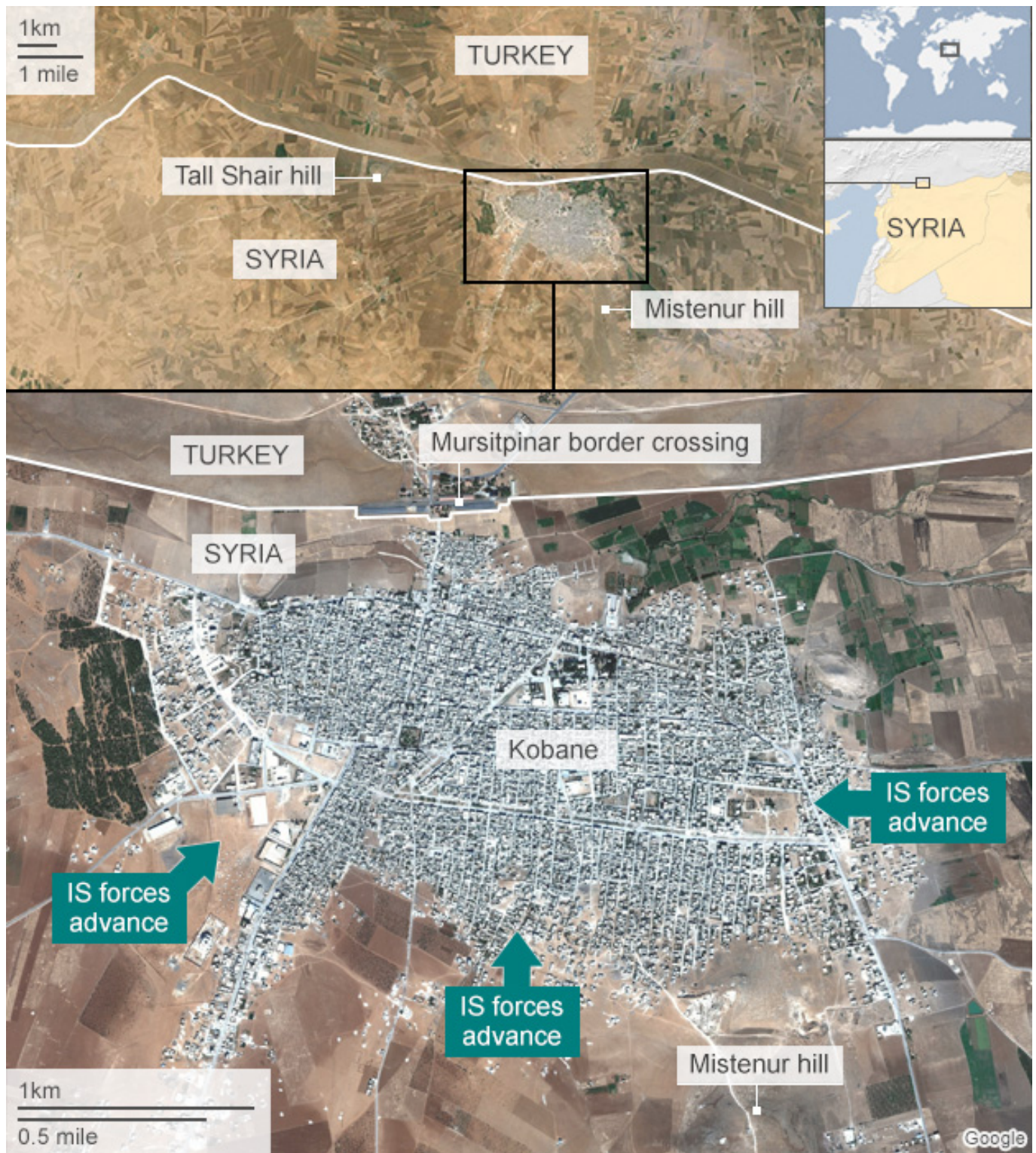
Suicide bombings

The battle for Kobane, a predominantly Kurdish town, has emerged as a major test of whether the coalition's air campaign can push back IS.

Two weeks of air strikes against IS targets in and around Kobane have allowed Kurdish fighters to slow the jihadists' advance, but Turkish and Western leaders have warned that the town is still likely to fall.



Tens of thousands of Syrians, most of them Kurds, have fled Kobane in the past month



On Tuesday morning sources in the Kurdish Popular Protection Units (YPG) told the BBC that they had regained control of Tall Shair hill-top, about 4km (2.5 miles) to the west and near an informal border crossing.

Heavy fighting was reported in the east and south of Kobane on Monday.

The Syrian Observatory for Human Rights, a UK-based activist group, reported that IS carried out three separate suicide bomb attacks.

One IS suicide bomber blew up an explosives-filled vehicle in the north of the town, near the

border, while the second targeted an eastern area where the main police station and government offices were located, it said. Later, a third bomber attacked a YPG position in the north-east.

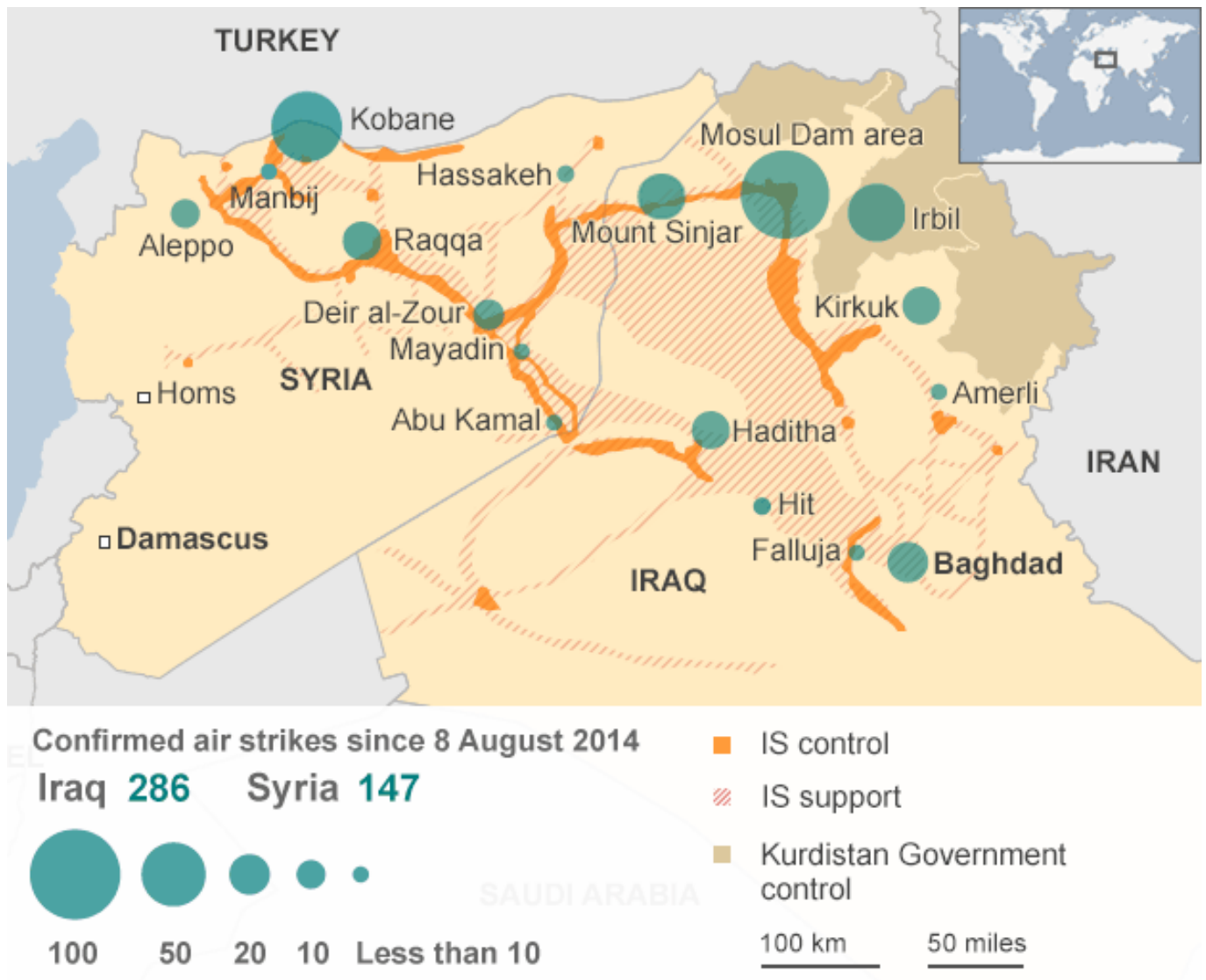
The Observatory said it believed IS now controlled about half of Kobane.

Capturing the town, from which more than 160,000 people have fled, would give the group unbroken control of a long stretch of the Syrian-Turkish border.

Iraq 'reprisals'

Hundreds of kilometres away in western Iraq, as many as 180,000 people have been displaced by fighting between IS militants and Iraqi forces in and around the city of Hit, [according to the UN](#).

IS, which controls large swathes of territory across Syria and Iraq, captured Hit earlier this month in an advance across Anbar province.



Source: Institute for the Study of War, US Central Command

Analysts say seizing Anbar would enable IS to establish a supply line to launch possible attacks on the capital, Baghdad.

Meanwhile, [a report by campaign group Amnesty International said](#) Shia militias in Iraq had kidnapped and killed scores of Sunni civilians in recent months in apparent revenge for IS attacks.

It said scores of unidentified bodies have been found in the cities of Baghdad, Samarra and Kirkuk, many still handcuffed and with gunshot wounds to the head, suggesting execution-style killings. Many others who disappeared remain unaccounted for, it added.



Shia militias have been at the forefront of the fight against IS in Iraq

Amnesty says the militias have taken advantage of an "atmosphere of lawlessness" but the Iraqi government "must act now to rein in the militias and establish the rule of law".

Iraqi Prime Minister Haider al-Abadi, who took office last month, has admitted to previous "excesses" by government forces and vowed to govern for all Iraqis.
