
Caught on camera: US Special Forces on ISIS frontline in Syria

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Trends [Islamic State](#)

A photographer for Agence France-Presse (AFP) took pictures of the American special operatives in what The Washington Post identified as the village of Fatisah, roughly 30 miles (48 km) north of Raqqa. Kurdish fighters from the People's Protection Units (YPG) – part of the US-backed Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) fighting against Islamic State (IS, formerly ISIS/ISIL) in northern Syria – identified the men as Americans.

The SDF launched a push against the IS capital this week, following the secret visit to the northern Syrian region by General Joseph Votel, head of the US Central Command (CENTCOM).

The Post's [Checkpoint](#) blog confirmed the identification, noting that one of the images shows three men operating a 40mm Mk 47 automatic grenade launcher, a specialized weapon used by US Special Operations units.

There were more than a dozen US troops in the village, according to the photographer. The White House has admitted to the presence of up to 300 US operatives in Syria.

[@DrPartizan_Raqqa](#) K24 footage of the US Special Forces today around Northern Raqqa, with the YPG/YPJ patches on their uniform.



[@jenanmoussa](#) Pics of U.S. soldiers, wearing Kurdish YPG patches, fighting ISIS in [#Syria](#), N. [#Raqqa](#) countryside. V [@afp](#) [@akhbar](#).



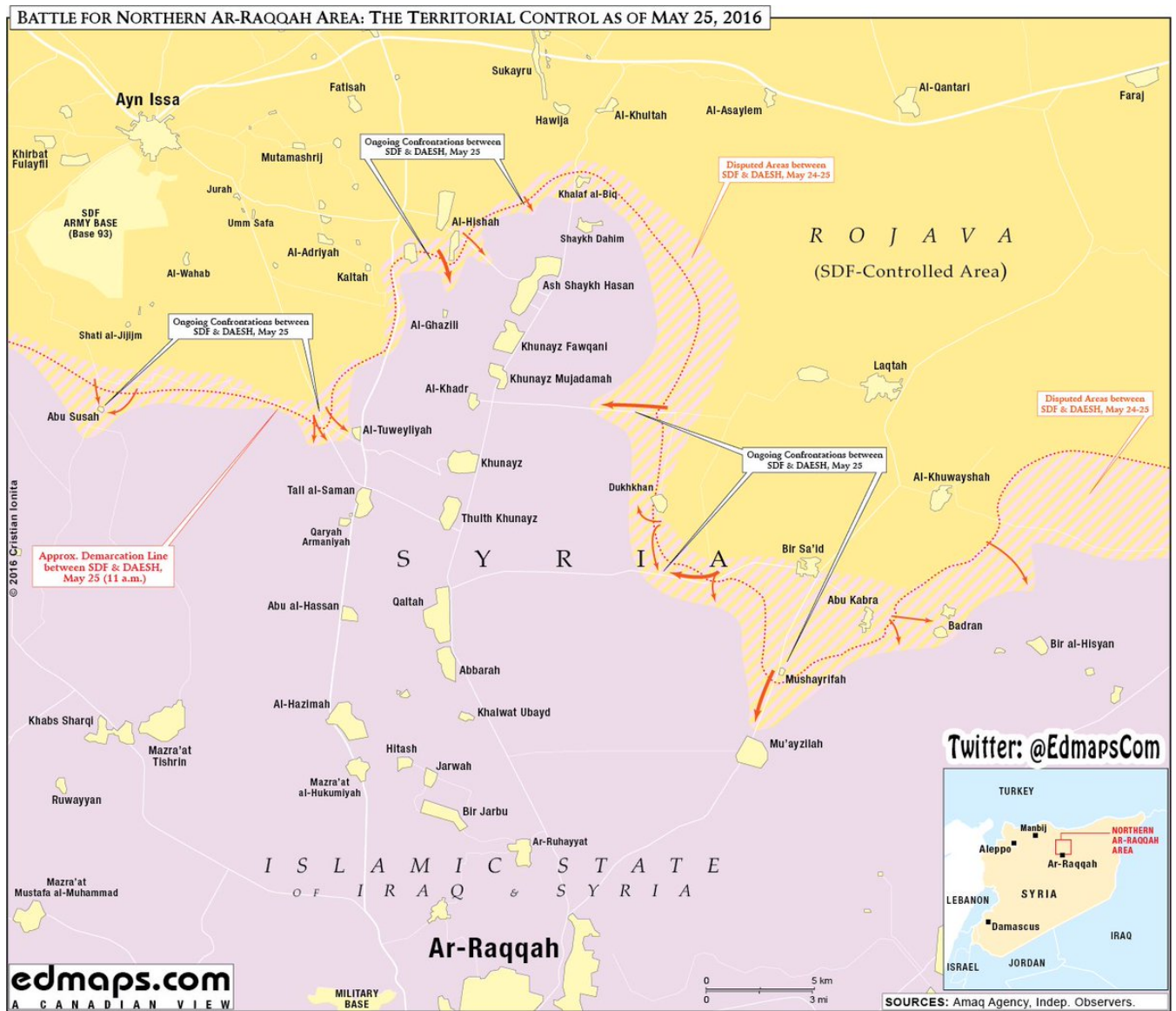
Cook also ducked repeated questions from reporters on whether the troops that were supposed to advise and assist the local militia were actually taking part in combat on the front lines.

"They are not on the forward line. They are providing advice and assistance," Cook said, adding that their *"advise-and-assist role has not changed."*

Pressed to explain the distinction between the front line and the forward line, Cook replied, *"I don't have a yardstick for you. This is a fluid situation."*

The village of Fatisah is not exactly on the front line of SDF operations against IS. It can be seen in the upper left corner of this map of combat operations north of Raqqa, made by a Canadian cartographer following the war in Syria.

[@EdmapsCom](#) [#Syria](#) North [#Raqqa](#) overview [#map](#) May 25 [#SDF](#) major attack against [#IS](#) [#ISIS](#) [#DAESH](#)
http://edmaps.com/html/syrian_civil_war_in_maps.html...



Another controversy about the US troops' presence in Syria went unaddressed at the Pentagon briefing.

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While the Russian expeditionary force was deployed to fight IS at the official invitation of the Syrian government, no such invitation was extended to the US troops. Washington has refused any cooperation with Damascus, insisting on a change of government that would favor the rebels backed by US allies Turkey and Saudi Arabia.