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ISIS Seizes Territory Intended for US-Turkey ‘Safe Zone’ in Syria

By Jason Ditz
August 27, 2015



ISIS gains are mounting in the Aleppo Province of Syria, with reports of heavy fighting overnight in which they routed the Free Syrian Army (FSA), seizing several villages and approaching the strategically important town of Marea, which is now a key base for FSA forces.

The capture is doubly inconvenient for the US and Turkey, as they have not only been backing the FSA in this region, but this area was a key part of the 60 mile “safe zone” they were intending to carve out of northern Syria, which is supposed to be “ISIS-free.”

It’s less ISIS-free than ever, and it’s largely the fault of the US and Turkey, as this territory was under the control of al-Qaeda’s Nusra Front earlier this month, but abandoned by them at the behest of Turkey, because it was to be a part of this “safe zone.”

The FSA moved into the area, with support from some of al-Qaeda’s Islamist bloc in the region, as a more palatable rebel faction to hold the region from the US perspective. That the FSA has failed repeatedly when confronted by other factions, however, meant they handed this region to a group who would never be able to defend it.

If the US and Turkey hadn’t started hyping this “safe zone,” the territory would never have been ceded by al-Qaeda, and they’ve been more effective at fighting ISIS, meaning the ISIS takeover would’ve been a much more difficult proposition.