

BLUE PEACE BULLETIN

VOL 3/2019

The Middle East Blue Strike List




Strategic Foresight Group

**In this issue
we list
terrorist
attacks made
on water
infrastructure
in the Middle
East from
September
2012 to the
present.**

BLUE STRIKE LIST



Strategic Foresight Group

INTRODUCTION

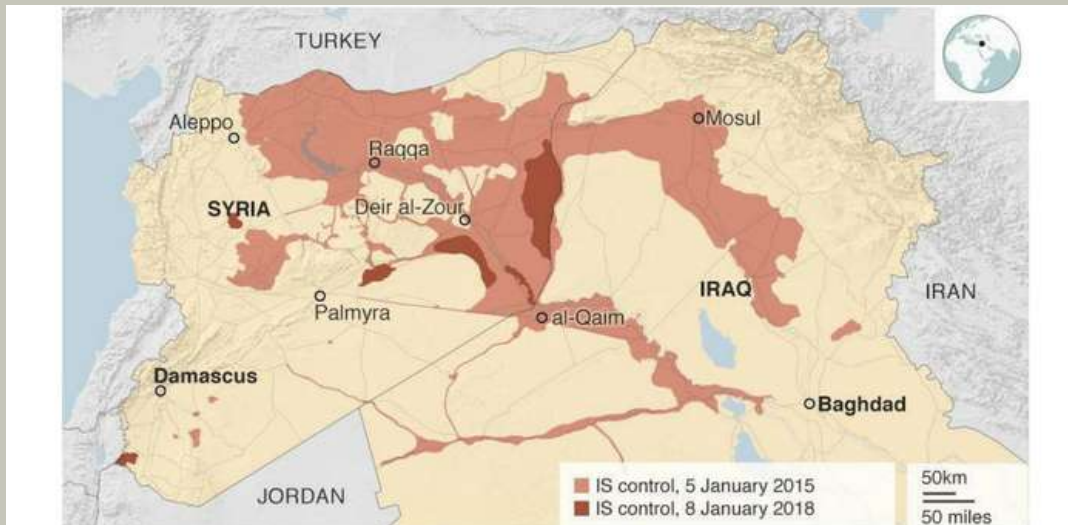
The Global High-Level Panel on Water and Peace has observed that the increasing tendency to use water resources and infrastructure as targets or as weapons in armed conflicts is of deep concern. In recent armed conflicts, states and non-state armed groups have destroyed and captured water installations. Water supply systems fail, supply lines are deliberately sabotaged or water resources are poisoned to intimidate civilians. Non-state armed groups capture dams and barrages, and use them to flood or starve downstream populations. Dams are used to shelter high-value prisoners, while poisoning water harms local civilian populations. This is more evident in the Middle East countries now than ever.

From 2013 to 2017, Islamic State (known as ISIS/IS/ISIL or Daesh) carried out a number of attacks which used water either directly or indirectly. The clashes between ISIS and various governmental/ non-governmental forces also led to lakes, rivers and other water bodies in both countries being diverted or poisoned, making water a deliberate or incidental weapon in the war. The airstrikes conducted by the United States of America (US)-led international coalition, Russian Forces or Syrian Armed Forces also hit and damaged water infrastructure, water pipes and led to millions of people in both countries getting sporadic and limited access to water.

The decline of ISIS in 2017-2018 can be correlated to their loss of control over territories with important water infrastructure. ISIS was defeated from their de facto capitals, Mosul in Iraq and Raqqa in Syria, which were the locations of the Mosul Dam and the Tabqa Dam, the two big water infrastructures that ISIS had seized. The map on the next page shows the territories held by ISIS between January 2015 (when they were at the height of their power), and January 2018.



Territories held by ISIS in January 2015 and January 2018



Map Source: <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-27838034>

ISIS may no longer pose a threat to the water in the Middle East. However, dangers in the region are still looming. Frequent clashes between the Turkish forces and the PKK have led to water and electricity supplies being cut off in villages in Turkey. The town of Afrin in Syria lost access to water for a week in March 2018 when the Turkish backed Free Syrian Army took control of the town from the Kurdish People's Protection Units (YPG).

The Hay'at Tahrir al-Sham (HTS) (affiliated to the Al- Al-Qaeda) are also still present in Syria and are gradually gaining power. Although there are no reports of HTS currently attacking water infrastructure, the group does control water and electricity supplies in Idlib. In the event that the group were to gain access to more territories, they could use the same tactics as ISIS of using water as a weapon in the Middle East region. Similarly, other terror groups in the future gaining power could implement the same tactics of using water as a 'weapon' in the Middle East or any other region.

This “Blue Strike List” provides details of attacks that have taken place between 2012 and 2018 in Iraq, Syria and Turkey. The attacks have been categorized into three types, either “Direct Target”, “Weapon” or “Indirect Target”, based on the kind of attack.

The three categories are defined as:

Direct Target - A direct target is a focused attack on water or water-related infrastructure, such as an attack on a dam or a water pipeline. For example, fighting between ISIS and anti-ISIS militias hit a water pipeline that cut off water supplies for 650,000 people in Mosul.

Weapon - A weapon is an attack where water is used or there is a threat to use water as a means of violence, such as threatening to cut off a water source or flooding of a region. For example, the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) controlled the water resources in the northern part of the Tigris River which provided the water for central and southern Iraq and KRG had threatened to cut off this source of water when it felt the Iraqi government had not followed through on promises to the KRG.

Indirect Target -An indirect target is an attack on areas surrounding water infrastructure without the express intention of hitting or damaging the water infrastructure, where water infrastructure is attacked incidentally. For example, the US-led coalition conducted airstrikes against ISIS in order to weaken ISIS's hold in the region, thereby destroying the main pipeline supplying water to Raqqa.

BLUE STRIKE LIST

Sr. No	Period	Country	Event	Direct Target	Weapon	Indirect Target
1.	July 2018	Syria	Artillery and missile shelling by the Syrian Armed Forces (SAF) were conducted on the western countryside of Aleppo targeting various sites, including the Water Resources Association	•		
2.	March 2018	Syria	Water to Syria's Afrin was cut for a week as Turkish troops and Free Syrian Army (FSA) fighters had seized the main dam and water plant from the People's Protection Units (YPG) militia in the Kurd-dominated region in northwest Syria		•	
3.	March 2018	Iraq	Islamic State for Iraq and the Levant (ISIS) placed a bomb near Fallujah dam which killed two Iraqi soldiers			•
4.	February 2018	Syria	Syrian or Russian warplanes bombed the towns of Sheikh Idris and Kafr Amin causing material damage to the water plants in both towns			•
5.	January 2018	Syria	Drinking water station in the town of Abu Hamam was captured by the Deirez-Zour Military Council (affiliated with Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF)) from the ISIS which had control over the town since 2014		•	

Sr. No	Period	Country	Event	Direct Target	Weapon	Indirect Target
6.	October 2017	Syria	The international coalition warplanes airstrikes targeted water wells at the outskirts of al-Tawassoia area north of the city, during a gathering of civilians to fill water. The targeted areas were under the control of the ISIS until two weeks prior to the attack and members of the group were still rumoured to be hiding around the area	•		
7.	September 2017	Iraq	The Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) controlled the water resources in the northern part of the Tigris River, which provided the water for central and southern Iraq and KRG had threatened to cut off this source of water when it felt the Iraqi government had not followed through on promises to the KRG		•	
8.	July 2017	Iraq	After Mosul's liberation from ISIS, the water system in Mosul remained booby-trapped		•	
9.	June 2017	Turkey	Clashes between Turkish armed forces and Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) resulted in electricity and water cuts to Sur, Diyarbakir		•	
10.	May 2017	Syria	The water tower in the ISIS-held Mansura town was reportedly blown up by ISIS	•		
11.	May 2017	Turkey	Curfews and clashes between Turkish armed forces and PKK in the Alipaşa and Lalebey neighbourhoods of the Sur district in Diyarbakir province, led to water and electricity supplies being cut off		•	

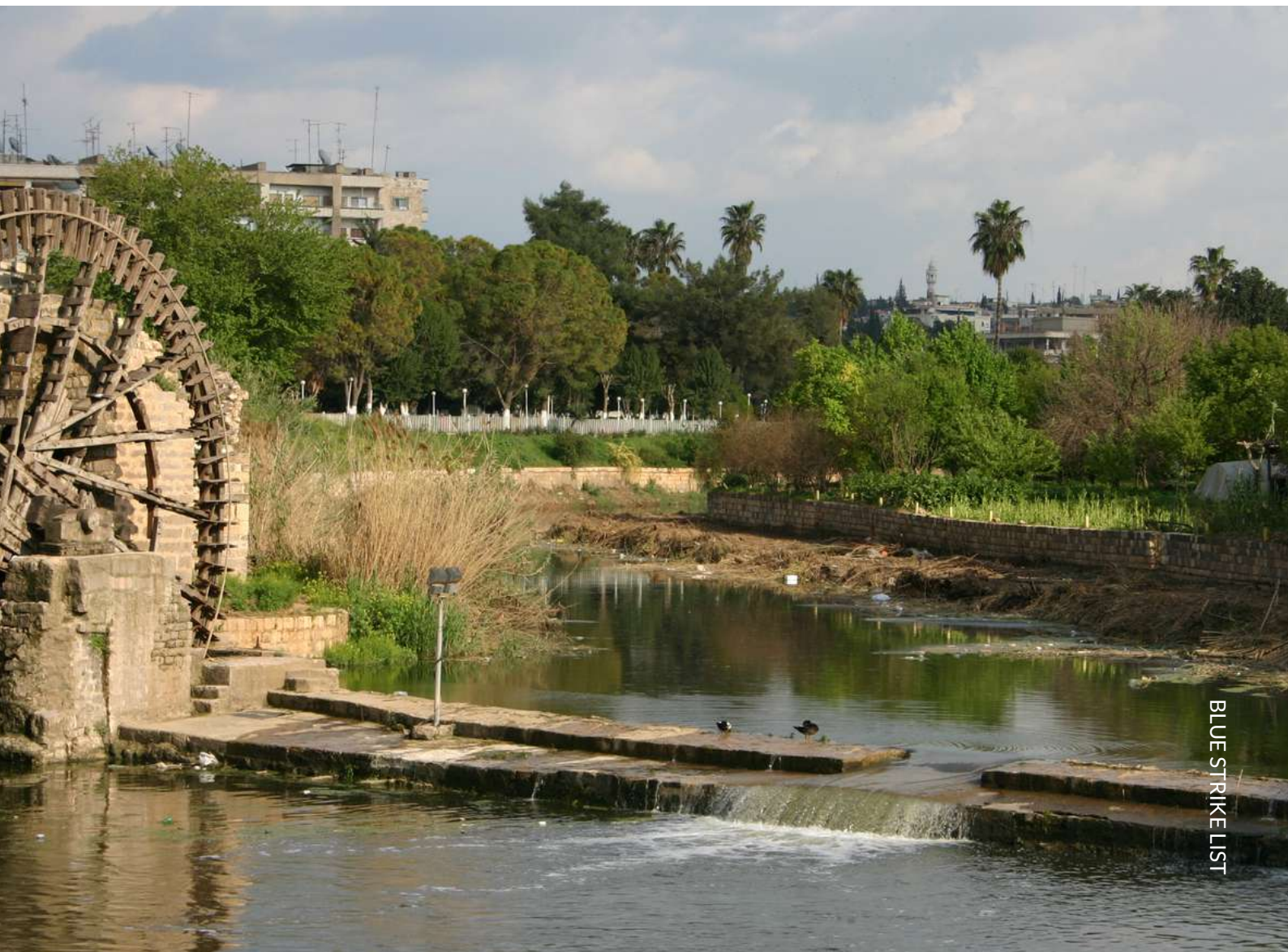
Sr. No	Period	Country	Event	Direct Target	Weapon	Indirect Target
12.	March 2017	Syria	SDF, backed up by US forces, led air attacks across the Euphrates River and Lake Assad so they could re-take control over the ISIS controlled Tabqa dam and neighbouring town and airfield	•		
13.	March 2017	Syria	Pumping station in Al Khafsa was suspended for two months due to fighting between SAF and ISIS		•	
14.	February 2017	Syria	ISIS flooded villages controlled by them in the DeirHafer Plain of east Aleppo to slow down the Syrian Army		•	
15.	February 2017	Syria	The US led coalition against the ISIS destroyed the main pipeline supplying water to Raqqa	•		
16.	January 2017	Iraq	ISIS turned off water supplies to 30 neighbourhoods in Mosul		•	
17.	December 2016	Iraq	ISIS cut electricity supplies to water stations in Mosul		•	
18.	December 2016	Syria	<p>SAF airstrikes on rebels were responsible for severing water supplies in Ain al-Fijah affecting 4 million - 5.5 million people in the Damascus region for weeks</p> <p>Throughout 2015-2016, rebels continued to periodically shut off the supply from the spring, resulting in water shortages in Ain al-Fijah and Damascus. Rebels had threatened to blow up the spring if government forces entered the region</p>		•	
19.	November 2016	Iraq	Fighting between ISIS and anti-ISIS militias hit a water pipeline that cut off water supplies for 650,000 people in Mosul			•

Sr. No	Period	Country	Event	Direct Target	Weapon	Indirect Target
20.	August 2016	Syria	2 million people in Aleppo didn't have access to running water due to fighting between government and opposition forces damaging the electricity networks required to pump water		•	
21.	July 2016	Syria	On 31st July, attacks struck the electricity transmission station which powered water pumping to the eastern and western parts of the city. Authorities were able to urgently restore an alternative power line on 4 August and the city's water system was functioning again. But in less than 24 hours, the intensification in fighting had damaged these lines, hampering all repair efforts. As a result, the whole city has been without running water for four days			•
22.	April 2016	Turkey	PKK allegedly bombed the main water pipeline in Mardin in Midyat district	•		
23.	January 2016	Turkey	In a curfew imposed by PKK in Diyarbakir, emergency services such as water supplies were cut off		•	
24.	December 2015	Turkey	In a curfew imposed by Turkish authorities in Sur, Diyarbakir, water and electricity supplies were cut off		•	
25.	September 2015	Turkey	Turkish armed forces cut off water and electricity supplies to Cizre, Sirnak province which is near the Syria-Turkey border		•	
26.	June/ August 2015	Syria	Water from the springs of Ain al-Fijah (one of the main sources of water for Damascus) were shut off by rebels		•	

Sr. No	Period	Country	Event	Direct Target	Weapon	Indirect Target
27.	June 2015	Iraq	ISIS closed the gates of a dam near Ramadi on the Euphrates river. ISIS redirected the flow of water to their advantage on the battlefield around the city of Ramadi. Additionally, ISIS closed one section of a diversion dam in a move that lowered water levels in one branch of the Euphrates and made it easier for the jihadists to manoeuver and launch attacks		•	
28.	June 2015	Iraq	ISIS closed the Ramadi barrage in Anbar province, reducing water flows to the Iraqi marshes and forcing the Arabs living there to flee		•	
29.	June 2015	Syria	Fighters from Jabhat al-Nusra, the Syrian branch of Al-Qaeda, bombed the main pipeline carrying water to the city of Aleppo from the Euphrates River. More than 100 people are sickened by contaminated water	•		
30.	May 2015	Iraq	Following the capture of the Ramadi Dam in May 2015, ISIS drastically reduced the water for the irrigation systems and treatment plants in the provinces of Babil, Karbala, Najaf and Qadisiya		•	
31.	May 2015	Syria	Islamist fighters in Aleppo cut off water to the government-held districts for almost a week, creating a humanitarian crisis and risking the lives of thousands in Syria's second largest city		•	
32.	April 2015	Iraq	ISIS seized the Tharthar dam near Fallujah and opened one of the dam's gates to flood nearby areas following an attack, which reportedly killed 127 Iraqi troops		•	
33.	February 2015	Iraq	ISIS militants attacked the Udham dam as well as Iraqi security forces around the dam area	•		

Sr. No	Period	Country	Event	Direct Target	Weapon	Indirect Target
34.	January 2015	Iraq	ISIS attacked the Mosul dam in Nineveh province	•		
35.	December 2014	Iraq	ISIS deliberately contaminated drinking water with crude oil in the Balad district of the Salahaddin governorate		•	
36.	December 2014	Iraq	Islamist militants diverted Al-Roz River, which supplied drinking water to 150,000 people and irrigated land, away from Bidoz district in the eastern province of Diyala		•	
37.	October 2014	Turkey	PKK allegedly attacked a hydroelectric plant in Kağızman district	•		
38.	August 2014	Iraq	ISIS gained control on Mosul dam		•	
39.	August 2014	Syria	Airstrikes by SAF hit water plant in Raqqa, cutting water supplies			•
40.	July 2014	Syria	35% of water treatment plants damaged due to airstrikes			•
41.	July 2014	Syria	Water pumping reduced by 90% due to damage caused by the Syrian conflict in DeirezZor			•
42.	July 2014	Iraq	ISIS gained control on Samarra Barrage		•	
43.	June 2014	Iraq	ISIS captured and cut off water to Mosul city		•	
44.	June 2014	Iraq	ISIS blocked water pipes in the predominantly Christian town of Qaraqosh		•	
45.	May 2014	Syria	Pipeline to Homs and Hama from Orontes attacked and damaged by ISIS	•		
46.	May 2014	Syria	Al-Khafsah water pumping station was attacked which affected 3 million people	•		

Sr. No	Period	Country	Event	Direct Target	Weapon	Indirect Target
47.	May 2014	Syria	Lake Al-Assad dried up since ISIS took control in January 2014		•	
48.	April 2014	Iraq	ISIS closed all eight of the Fallujah dam's 10 gates, flooding land upstream and reducing water levels in Iraq's southern provinces		•	
49.	February 2013	Syria	ISIS captured Tabqa dam		•	
50.	November 2012	Syria	ISIS captured Tishrin Dam		•	
51.	September 2012	Syria	During the Syrian civil war, the major pipeline delivering water to the city of Aleppo was badly damaged	•		



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