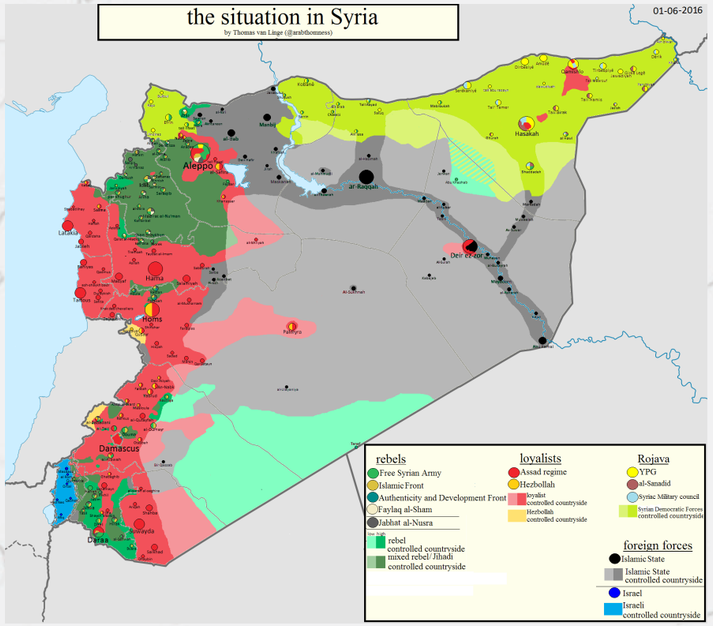
# The Nusrah Front

## Background

- The Nusrah Front was formed in 2011 when al-Qa'ida in Iraq (AQI) leader Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi—now the leader of the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS)—sent AQI operative Abu Muhammad al-Julani to Syria to organize an al-Qa'ida affiliate.
- In 2012, the US State Department designated the Nusrah Front a terrorist organization. It remains one of the most capable al-Qa'ida groups because of its battlefield experience and alliances with various rebels.
- In 2012 and 2013, al-Qa'ida leader Ayman al-Zawahiri dispatched an elite group of senior al-Qa'ida fighters to Syria. This group, referred to as the Khorasan Group, serves as a liaison to al-Qa'ida senior leaders.
- In 2013, the Nusrah Front severed its ties with ISIS and declared allegiance to al-Qa'ida. The group is committed to ousting Syrian President Bashar al-Assad's regime and fighting ISIS in Syria.




*Map from Peter Van Ostaeyen:*
*https://pietervanostaeyen.com/2016/06/01/syria-map-update-dd-june-1-2016/*

## Threat to New Jersey: Low

***The Nusrah Front remains focused on overthrowing President Assad and establishing an Islamic emirate in Syria.*** The Nusrah Front has conducted no attacks against the United States and places greater emphasis on defeating the Assad regime as compared to global jihad.

- Since 2012, the Nusrah Front has built an effective alliance with other rebel factions to fight Assad's government, according to Julani's statements.
- The Nusrah Front's focus on building an Islamic emirate in Syria revolves around winning the support of the Syrian people. If the Nusrah Front defeated Assad's forces, the group would likely focus on building a strong governance system in the country, as well as a base of operations for al-Qa'ida.
- The Nusrah Front is predominantly composed of local Syrian fighters, according to the Institute for the Study of War, and al-Qa'ida supports the group financially.

*Flag of the Nusrah Front*

## Intelligence Gaps

- How are individuals in the United States supporting the Nusrah Front?
- Under what conditions would the Nusrah Front leadership break off from al-Qa'ida?
- Under what conditions would US persons attempt to join the Nusrah Front?

## US Nexus

- Since the start of the Syrian conflict in 2011, at least 150 US persons have traveled to Syria and Iraq. Since 2015, at least two individuals have attempted to travel to Syria to join the Nusrah Front.
- Moner Mohammad Abu-Salha, a US citizen from Florida, became the first American to conduct a suicide bombing in Syria on the Nusrah Front's behalf. He was trained in Syria in 2012 and returned to the United States before rejoining the Nusrah Front in 2014. On May 24, 2014, Abu-Salha drove a vehicle-borne improvised explosive device into a restaurant in Idlib, Syria, filled with Syrian soldiers.
- The Nusrah Front publishes an English-language magazine on its activities in Syria, focusing on recruiting individuals from Europe and the United States.

*Al-Risalah; the Nusrah Front's English-language magazine*

### *Contact Information*

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