



# **SYRIA'S REPUBLICAN GUARD**

## **GROWTH AND FRAGMENTATION**

**GREGORY WATERS**

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## SUMMARY

The Syrian Republican Guard (RG) has served as the backbone of the regime's fighting forces since protests first broke out across the country in 2011. Facing widespread defections and disobedience among the largely conscript-based Syrian Arab Army (SAA), the regime split the RG into its component battalions and companies and attached them alongside SAA units. While this strategy helped prevent defections and disloyalty within the SAA, it also ensured that the RG would remain divided as a force for the entirety of the war.

While the regime could not prevent the SAA from weakening, continuous efforts were made to augment the RG and expand its ranks. Auxiliary militias were formed from Dara'a to Aleppo, new brigades were trained, and special forces units were coopted under the Guard command. This report attempts to piece together the history of the five regiments, six brigades, and 46 battalions identified as now belonging to the RG.

## METHODOLOGY

This research is based entirely on publicly available Facebook posts from the personal profiles of RG commanders and fighters and from Facebook pages dedicated to posting media about specific Guard groups. To begin with, the author searched in Arabic for posts regarding RG brigades, regiments, and battalions known to him, and subsequently researched other units discussed in English-language media. As the author continued to use search terms incorporating or relating to “battalion” and “Republican Guard,” new RG units were identified.

When a unit was identified, all of its associated Facebook pages were fully examined for posts relating to deployments, commanders, and affiliations with other units. Next, the author searched variations of the group’s name on Facebook to find additional posts and information. The bulk of this research focused on identifying which battalions are affiliated with which brigades. Most posts only refer to brigade deployments, although simultaneous deployments across the country make it clear that these posts were actually referring to battalions within these brigades. Posts about specific battalions were more rare and largely came through martyrdom commemorations.

While this methodology has led to the most comprehensive record of the RG structure to date, it is limited due to its reliance on Facebook posts. Therefore, it is entirely possible that there are additional battalions not included in this report and that some unit affiliations are out of date or missing.

## OUTBREAK OF WAR

Joseph Holliday’s 2013 report on the 2011 structure of the SAA remains the most complete analysis of the SAA and RG structure today. According to his report, at the outbreak of civil unrest, the RG was composed of the 101st and 102nd infantry regiments, the 104th, 105th, and 106th mechanized brigades, and the 100th artillery regiment. Holliday claims that the overall strength of the Guard mirrored that of a traditional mechanized infantry division but with better equipment and greater emphasis on maintaining it at full strength. The bulk of the RG pre-war was garrisoned around Damascus.<sup>1</sup>

Holliday does not provide details on which battalions are affiliated with each RG brigade and regiment. However, at full strength, each mechanized brigade should have three mechanized battalions, one armored battalion, and one to two additional support battalions for a total of 3,500 men. Each regiment should have three infantry or three artillery battalions for a total of 1,500 men. Battalions range from between 300 to 500 men. Brigades should be commanded by major generals, regiments by brigadier generals, and battalions by colonels. This information—along with the rest of Holliday’s report—comes from extensive interviews with Syrian soldiers who defected between 2011 and 2013.<sup>2</sup>

As fighting intensified, RG units—along with Fourth Division brigades and battalions from the 14th and 15th Special Forces Divisions—were split into smaller groups and either attached to conventional SAA units or sent to the front lines on their own.<sup>3</sup>

RG brigades and regiments were deployed at the battalion level.

At times, entire brigades were deployed together; however, it was more common for individual battalions to be sent to separate fronts for extended periods. This deployment strategy, combined with the heavy losses endured by the regime's elite units, has led to the dissolution of unit affiliation throughout the RG. Thus, many RG battalions today appear to operate independently of the brigade or regiment with which they were affiliated in 2011.

For much of 2011 and 2012 the RG remained in the city of Damascus and its countryside. After reacting violently to widespread protests and fighting with armed opposition groups, some RG units deployed outside of the capital. The 104th Brigade's battalions have been split between Damascus and Deir ez-Zor since 2013, including a deployment to Aleppo in late 2012.

The 106th Brigade's 140th Battalion fought in Sheikh Saeed, Aleppo in April 2013. By March 2014, elements of the 102nd

Commando Regiment, including the 415th Battalion, had also deployed to Layramon, Aleppo. By 2012, RG units already appeared to be suffering manpower issues. A March 2013 Institute for the Study of War report estimates that the two RG battalions deployed in 2012 to Homs had only 300 men each, the smallest possible size for a Syrian battalion according to the pre-war doctrinal order of battle.<sup>4</sup>

The following table shows yearly RG unit deployments by region. The author did not search for complete deployment histories of every unit during this research. Rather, deployments were identified during the process of looking for unit commanders and relationships. Therefore, the following chart does not represent the full extent of known deployments during the war.



## RG UNIT DEPLOYMENTS BY REGION

<b>2012</b>		
104th Brigade	Feb 2012	Irbeen, East Ghouta, Damascus
104th Brigade	Sep 2012	Aleppo
104th Brigade	Nov 2012	Wadi Barada, Damascus
104th Brig Artillery Bat	Aug 2012	Al-Tal, Damascus
292nd Bat	Dec 2012	Daraya, Damascus
<b>2013</b>		
101st Commando Reg	Mar 2013	Adra, East Ghouta, Damascus
104th Brig	Oct 2013	Wadi Barada, Damascus
104th Brig	Oct 2013	Deir ez-Zor
105th Brig	Mar 2013	Daraya, Damascus
106th Brig	Apr 2013	Sheikh Saed, Aleppo
<b>2014</b>		
101st Reg 400th Bat	Permanent	Harasta, Damascus
102nd Reg	Jan 2014	Adra, East Ghouta, Damascus
102nd Reg 415 Bat	Mar 2014	Layramon, Aleppo
104th Brig	Feb-Apr 2014	Ayn al-Fijah, Damascus
104th Brig	Mar 2014	Wadi Barada, Damascus
104th Brig	Apr 2014	Jubaila, Deir ez-Zor
104th Brig	Apr 2014	Deir Qanun, Damascus
104th Brig Artillery Reg	Jan 2014	Wadi Barada, Damascus
105th Brig 358th Bat	Nov-Dec 2014	Jobar, Damascus
106th Brig	Mar 2014	Reef Damascus
106th Brig	Mar 2014	Deir ez-Zor
124th Brig 800th Bat	Mar 2014	Yabroud, Damascus
112th Bat	Dec 2014	Deir ez-Zor Airport

**2015**

101st Reg 3rd Bat	Nov-Dec 2015	Marj al-Sultan, East Ghouta, Damascus
101st Reg 400th Bat	Permanent	Harasta, Damascus
101st Reg 402nd Bat	Oct 2015	Harasta, Damascus
102nd Reg	Nov 2015	Aleppo
102nd Reg	Dec 2015	Khan Touman, Aleppo
147th Reg 512th Bat	Nov 2015	Sheikh Saed, Aleppo
103rd Brig U/K Bat	Oct-Dec 2015	Reef Latakia
103rd Brig 48th Bat	Nov 2015	Reef Latakia
104th Brig	Apr-Oct 2015	Deir ez-Zor
104th Brig	Nov 2015	Marj al-Sultan, East Ghouta, Damascus
105th Brig	Nov 2015	Marj al-Sultan, East Ghouta, Damascus
105th Brig 358th Bat	May 2015	Deir Salman, East Ghouta, Damascus
105th Brig 358th Bat	Dec 2015	Marj al-Sultan, East Ghouta, Damascus
106th Brig	Nov-Dec 2015	Khan Touman, Aleppo
106th Brig 137th Bat	March 2015	Douma, East Ghouta, Damascus
123rd Brig 629th Bat	Jan 2015	Aleppo
124th Brig	Nov 2015	Aleppo
124th Brig 800th Bat	Dec 2015	Maheen, Homs
258th Bat	Oct 2015	East Ghouta, Damascus
258th Bat	Nov 2015	Marj al-Sultan, East Ghouta, Damascus
1418th Commando Bat	Dec 2015	Marj al-Sultan, East Ghouta, Damascus

## 2016

101st Reg	Jan 2016	Reef Damascus
101st Reg 398th Bat	Jan 2016	East Ghouta, Damascus
101st Reg 400th Bat	Permanent	Harasta, Damascus
102nd Reg	Feb 2016	Tamoura Heights, Aleppo
102nd Reg	Aug 2016	1070 Apartments, Aleppo
102nd Reg	Oct 2016	Bustan al-Pasha, Aleppo
103rd Brig	Mar 2016	Reef Latakia
104th Brig	Feb 2016	East Ghouta, Damascus
104th Brig	Oct 2016	Tel Swan, Homs
105th Brig 358th Bat	Jan 2016	Marj al-Sultan, East Ghouta, Damascus
105th Brig 358th Bat	May 2016	Zabdean, East Ghouta, Damascus
105th Brig 358th Bat	Aug 2016	Rayhan, East Ghouta, Damascus
106th Brig	Feb 2016	Khanasir, Aleppo
106th Brig 3rd Bat <sup>5</sup>	Nov 2016	1070 Apartments, Aleppo
106th Brig 137th Bat	Oct 2016	Reef Aleppo
106th Brig 138th Bat	Aug 2016	Aleppo
124th Brig	Feb 2016	Raqqa
124th Brig 800th Bat	Sep 2016	Air College, Aleppo
124th Brig 872nd Bat	Feb-Jun 2016	East Ghouta, Damascus
124th Brig 872nd Bat	Sep-Nov 2016	Khanasir, Aleppo
292nd Bat	Apr 2016	Aleppo
401st Commando Bat	Jan 2016	Marj al-Sultan, East Ghouta, Damascus
401st Commando Bat	Aug 2016	Daraya, Damascus
416th Bat	Jun-Jul 2016	Marj al-Sultan, East Ghouta, Damascus
1418th Commando Bat	May 2016	Nawla Farms, East Ghouta, Damascus
1419th Bat	Oct 2016	Harasta, Damascus
1423rd Bat	Jul 2016	Douma, East Ghouta, Damascus



## 2017

101st Reg	Sept 2017	Hawsh al-Dawahra, Damascus
101st Reg 400th Bat	Permanent	Harasta, Damascus
102nd Reg	Jun 2017	Zahra, Aleppo
147th Reg <sup>6</sup>	Feb-Oct 2017	Aleppo
147th Reg 512th Bat	Sept 2017	Aleppo
103rd Brig	Aug 2017	Sukhna, Reef Homs
103rd Brig U/K Bat	Jun 2017	Palmyra, Homs
103rd Brig 46th Bat	Jul 2017	Palmyra, Homs
Coastal Shield Brig <sup>7</sup>	Apr 2017	Jabal al-Ahmar, Latakia
104th Brig	Jan 2017	Wadi Barada, Damascus
104th Brig	Jan-Nov 2017	Deir ez-Zor
104th Brig	Jan 2017	Wadi Barada, Damascus
104th Brig	Jan 2017	Harasta, Damascus
104th Brig	Aug-Sept 2017	Jobar, Damascus
104th Brig	Sept 2017	Harasta, Damascus
105th Brig 16th Bat	Jun-Dec 2017	Jobar, Damascus
105th Brig 358th Bat	Jan 2017	Ayn al-Fijah, Reef Damascus
105th Brig 358th Bat	Mar 2017	Jobar, Damascus
105th Brig 358th Bat	Apr 2017	Qaboun, Damascus
105th Brig 358th Bat	Aug 2017	Damascus
105th Brig 358th Bat	Nov 2017	Harasta, Damascus
105th Brig Reconnaissance Bat	Mar-Apr 2017	Qaboun, Damascus
106th Brig	Jul 2017	Ayn Terma, Damascus
106th Brig 3rd Bat	Nov 2017	Harasta, Damascus
124th Brig	Oct 2017	Reef Raqqa
124th Brig 872nd Bat	Feb 2017	Khanasir, Aleppo
83rd Commando Bat <sup>8</sup>	Jul 2017	Ruseifa, Aleppo
292nd Bat	Apr 2017	Qaboun, Damascus
800th Commando Bat <sup>9</sup>	Mar 2017	Jobar, Damascus
800th Commando Bat	Jul-Aug 2017	Sukhna, Homs
800th Commando Bat	Sept-Dec 2017	Deir ez-Zor
1417th Commando Bat	Jul 2017	Hawsh al-Dawahra, East Ghouta, Damascus
1418th Commando Bat	Jul 2017	Eastern Ghouta, Damascus
1424th Bat	Jan 2017	Ayn al-Fijah, Damascus

## 2018

101st Reg 398th Bat	Jan-Mar 2018	Harasta, Damascus
101st Reg 400th Bat	Jan 2018	Harasta, Damascus
101st Reg 400th Bat	Apr 2018	Yarmouk, south Damascus
101st Reg 400th Bat	May 2018	Quneitra
101st Reg 402nd Bat	Jan 2018	Harasta, Damascus
101st Reg 402nd Bat	May 2018	Douma, East Ghouta, Damascus
103rd Brig	Jan-Jun 2018	Boukamal, Der ez-Zor
104th Brig	Jan 2018	Harasta, Damascus
104th Brig	Jun 2018	Boukamal, Der ez-Zor
104th Brig 800th Bat <sup>10</sup>	Jun 2018	Deir ez-Zor
105th Brig 16th Bat	May 2018	Hajar al-Aswad, south Damascus
105th Brig 358th Bat	Mar 2018	East Ghouta, Damascus
105th Brig 358th Bat	Apr 2018	Hajar al-Aswad, south Damascus
105th Brig 712th Bat	May-Jun 2018	Dara'a
106th Brigade 3rd Bat	Jan 2018	Harasta, Damascus
106th Brigade 137th Bat	Jan 2018	Harasta, Damascus
106th Brigade 137th Bat	Apr 2018	Douma, Damascus
106th Brigade 138th Bat	Jan 2018	Harasta, Damascus
106th Brigade 140th Bat	Mar 2018	Jobar, Damascus
123rd Brig 629th Bat	Jan-Jun 2018	South Aleppo/North Idlib
83rd Commando Bat	Jan 2018	Harasta, Damascus
258th Bat	Mar-Apr 2018	East Ghouta, Damascus
401st Bat	Mar 2018	East Ghouta, Damascus
416th Bat	Apr 2018	East Ghouta, Damascus
1417th Bat	Mar 2018	East Ghouta, Damascus
1417th Bat	May 2018	Hajar al-Aswad, south Damascus
1419th Bat	Jan-Feb 2018	Harasta, Damascus
1421st Bat	Feb-Apr 2018	East Ghouta, Damascus

# SEVEN YEARS OF FRAGMENTATION

After seven years of civil war, the RG has both expanded and fragmented. As the table above illustrates, RG brigades and regiments were regularly split into battalion and company size sub-units, and simultaneously deployed to different parts of the country. The clearest example of this is the 104th Brigade. While most English-language media reported that the 104th was deployed in Deir ez-Zor as of 2012 or 2014, the first martyrdom announcement from Deir ez-Zor discovered by this author was on Oct. 14, 2013. Over the next four years, martyrs from the 104th Brigade were regularly announced on both the Deir ez-Zor and Damascus fronts, indicating that the brigade's battalions had been split. Unfortunately, the author was not able to determine which battalions make up the 104th Brigade.

At the same time that the RG was dismantled and thrown into the heat of battle, the organization leveraged its prestige to create a number of axillary units recruited from specific locales across the country. Loyalist fighters in north and west Aleppo formed the Qadesh (Popular Security and Support Forces) in December 2013. The unit operated under the supervision of the RG and reportedly fought alongside the National Defense Force, Syrian Resistance, and Baath Brigades on the Aleppo front. Qadesh fighters received no salaries for the first two months of fighting, but in February 2014 they were set to begin earning between \$150 and \$225 per month. The Qadesh were almost certainly folded into the 30th Division in December 2016. Around the same time, the pro-regime Iraqi militia *Liwa Abu al-Fadl al-Abbas* (Lafa) also affirmed its affiliations with both the Qadesh and the RG.<sup>11</sup>

Portions of Lafa long deployed in Damascus would later merge with the 105th Brigade. Lafa's commander, Abu Ajeeb, is regularly pictured alongside RG commanders in Damascus, including the overall commander of the Guard, Maj. Gen. Talal Makhoul.

In 2014 the largely Shi'a *Liwa Sayf al-Haq Assad Allah al-Ghalib* formed in the Sayyida Zainab shrine area of Damascus and deployed to Damascus city and its countryside.<sup>12</sup> In the same year Muhammad al-Meqdad, a Shi'a man from Dara'a, formed *Fawj al-Karbala'i* and subsequently deployed to Aleppo, Damascus, Homs, and Deir ez-Zor.<sup>13</sup> RG efforts to mobilize fighters in the Qalamoun region north of Damascus in late 2014 led to the formation of the highly important *Quwat Dir' al-Qalamoun* (QSF).<sup>14</sup> QSF fighters were heavily recruited from both loyalist and reconciled towns—towns that had surrendered to the regime under certain conditions—in the region.<sup>15</sup> In May 2015 the RG in Latakia formed the Coastal Shield Brigade as “a local front militia.”<sup>16</sup> The brigade appears to be the same as the 103rd Brigade. In a rare late-war development, the RG set up *Ittihad Jaysh al-Asha'ir* (Union of the Army of the Tribes) in October 2017 and *Jaysh al-Asha'ir* (Army of the Tribes) in Dara'a in December 2017.<sup>17</sup>

Much effort was also expended on sustaining and expanding Guard units. This is most evident in the creation of the 30th Division in January 2017.<sup>18</sup> Not only did it incorporate all RG units in Aleppo under a single nominal command, but it was also intended to integrate the non-state militias in the city into the RG structure. While the 30th Division likely exists more as an administrative unit than anything else, this rebuilding effort was important enough to the regime that Maj. Gen. Ziad Ali Salah, the deputy commander of the entire RG and the overall military commander of the 2016 Aleppo offensive, was placed in charge of the 30th Division

until November 2017 when his deputy, Brig. Gen. Malik Alia, took over.<sup>19</sup> It is difficult to determine the exact structure of the 30th Division, in large part because it exists more on paper than in reality. The units listed in the order of battle are based on those that have previously fought in Aleppo and were present at the time of the final offensive in late 2016, as well as from various Facebook posts that claimed affiliation. The 30th Division order of battle should thus be taken as an approximation.

Additional expansions are evident in the creation of new brigades and the cooption of several special forces units into RG ones. The 123rd and 124th Brigades and their respective battalions, the 629th and 872nd, appear to have formed between 2014 and 2015. Meanwhile, the 47th and 147th Regiments and the 83rd Battalion started the war as special forces units before gradually joining the Guard's 30th Division.

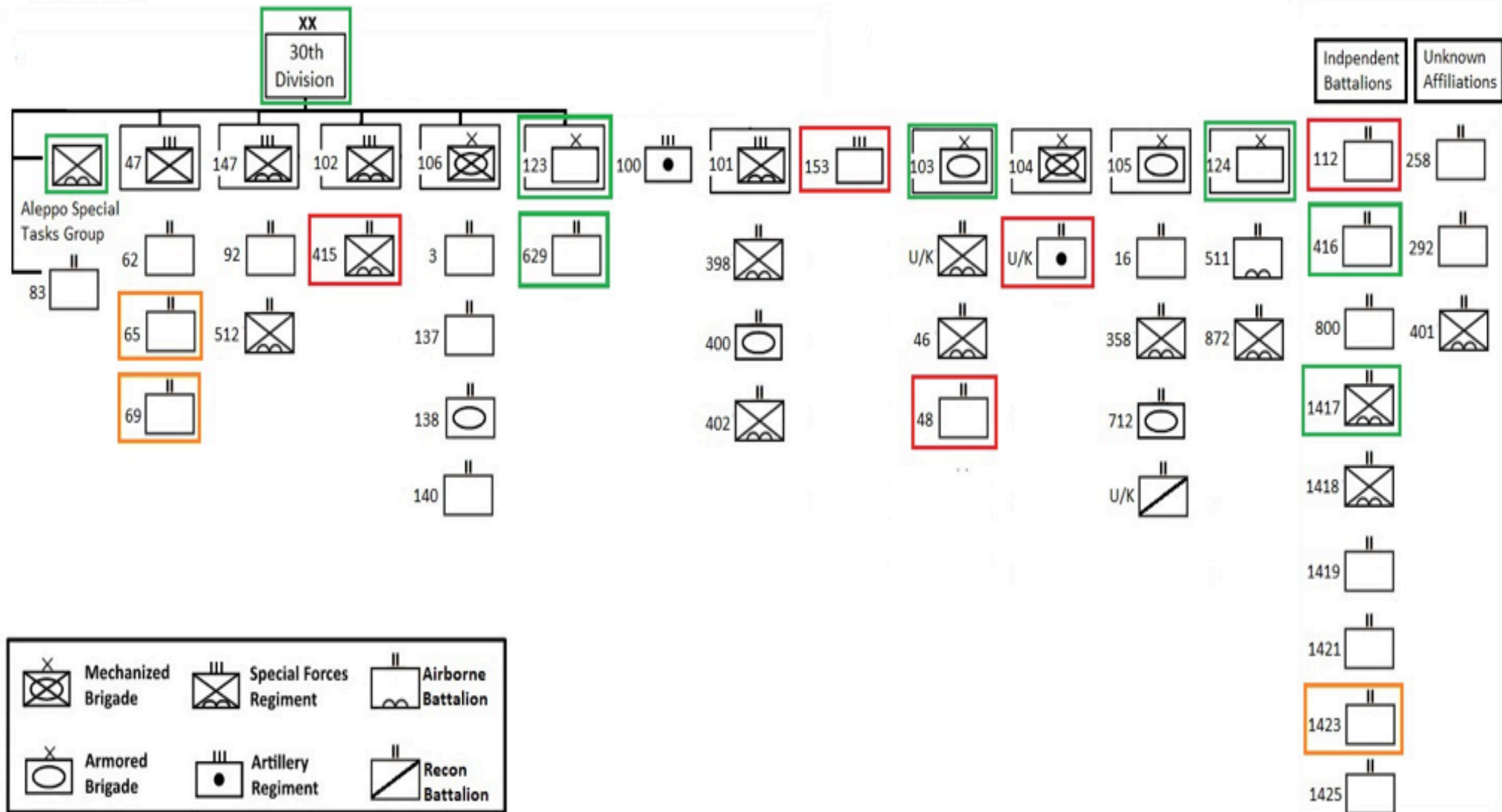
The following figure shows the RG's order of battle based on open source information. As noted above, the exact composition of the 30th Division is not clear. Likewise, several of the "independent battalions" may in fact have brigade affiliations. The 1419th and 1423rd Battalions may be affiliated with the 105th Brigade, while the 112th and 258th Battalions may be affiliated with the 104th Brigade. All unit labels—such as "armored" or "special forces"—are based on the types stated in the unit's posts and therefore should be viewed with caution. Green boxes indicate units that appear to have been created after 2011, orange boxes indicate units with no Facebook posts identified after 2016, and red boxes indicate no posts after 2015. This helps show both the expansion and possible collapse of various RG units.



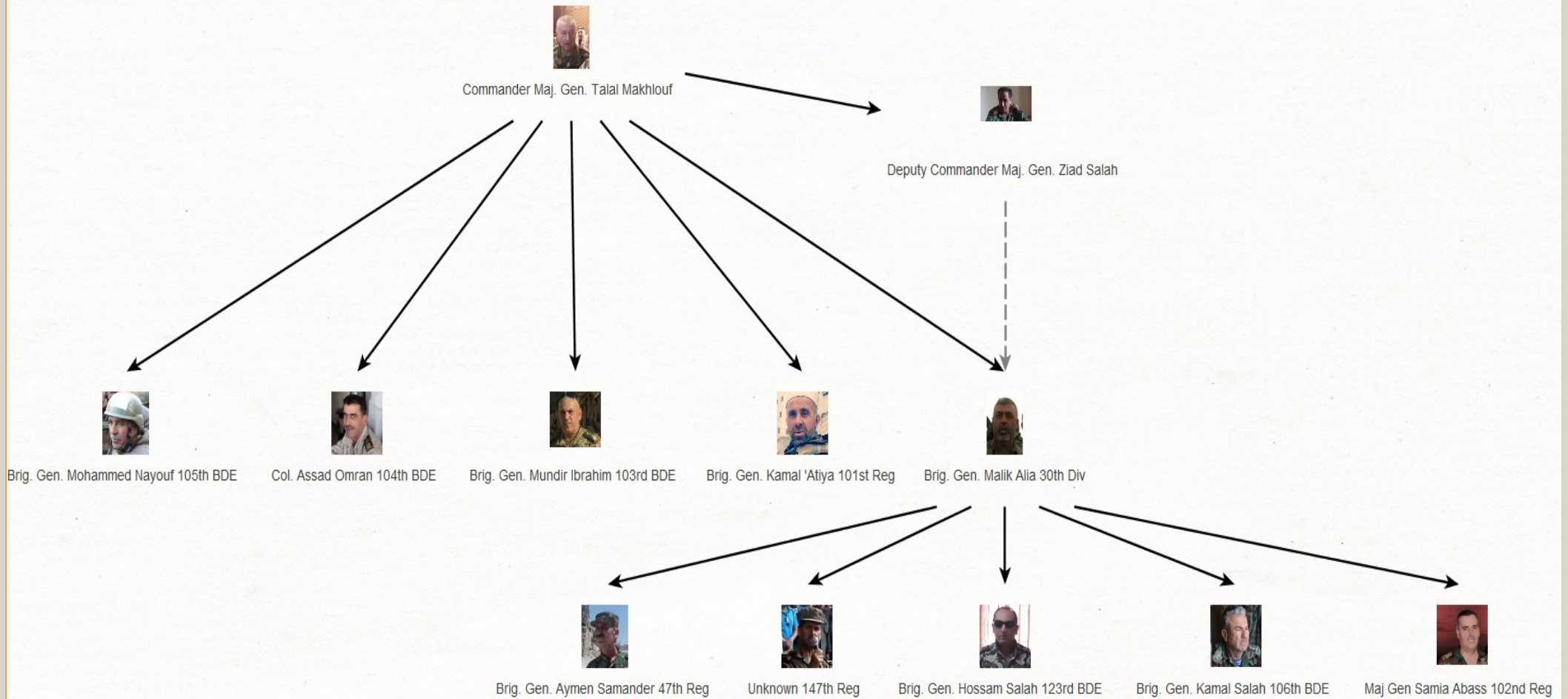
Maj. Gen. Ziad Salah (left) and Brig. Gen. Malik Alia (right)



Abu Ajeeb (right) with Maj. Gen. Talal Makhlof (second from left) outside Douma, East Ghouta, in April 2018.



A full order of battle charts the regiments, brigades, and battalions of the Republican Guard.



Listed are the known commanders of all the Republican Guard regiments and brigades except for the 100th Artillery Regiment, the 153rd Regiment, and the 124th Brigade. The dashed line connecting Ziad Salah and Malik Aila indicates Aila's history of serving as Salah's second in command.

## BATTALION COMMANDERS

\*  
\*  
\*  
The following section details 14 currently living RG battalion commanders: their names, pictures if available, units, and any relevant information about them. Note that not all of the RG battalions in the order of battle above have publicly known commanders, indicating that they may be small, insignificant, or no longer exist.



## MAJ. KHALID GHASSAN ALI

UNIT: 358th Special Tasks Battalion, 105th BDE

NOTES: Maj. Ali personally met with Syrian leader Bashar al-Assad during Assad's tour of the East Ghouta battle on March 18, 2018. He also regularly appeared alongside LAFA commander Abu Ajeeb throughout 2018.



## COL. MARID AL-MOHAMMED

UNIT: Reconnaissance Battalion, 105th BDE

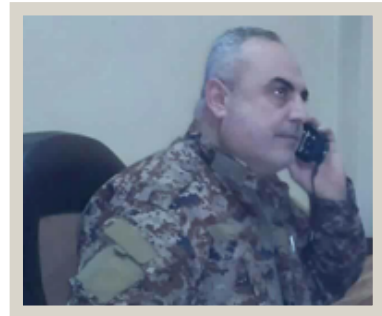




## COL. WADHAH AL-SALAH

UNIT: 16th Battalion, 105th BDE

NOTES: Commander of the Jobar sector of Damascus as of January 1, 2018.



## MAJ. MUNHIL IBRAHIM AL ANSAN

UNIT: 1417th Battalion



## 'AMAD HAMOUD

UNIT: Aleppo Special Tasks Group, 30th Div.



## LT. COL. MUSTAFA SULEIMAN

UNIT: 1421st Battalion

NOTES: Lt. Col. Suleiman was promoted to commander of the 1421st Battalion on January 2, 2018 but was imprisoned at the end of February for the failed attack in Zariqiyah, East Ghouta that led to 70 deaths in his unit.



## COL. BASIL MARA'I

UNIT: 398th Battalion



## COL. WAHID KHEIRBAK

UNIT: 1424th Battalion



## MAJ. BASIL AL-GHASH

UNIT: Aleppo Special Tasks Group, 30th Division

NOTES: Maj. al-Ghash took command after the imprisonment of Lt. Col. Suleiman. Al-Ghash is referred to as “the hero of the [March 2017] Jobar attack” in which he and his men were reportedly surrounded but did not surrender. Al-Ghash also personally greeted Assad during his visit to the East Ghouta front in March 2018.



## COL. ASIF 'AMAR

UNIT: 800th Battalion



## COL. IYAD SALOUM

UNIT: 511th Battalion, 124th BDE



## MAJ. TAMAM 'ABAS MUNSAB

UNIT: Chief of Staff to 511th Battalion,  
124th BDE



## COL. YASSIR ZAHRA

UNIT: 872nd Battalion, 124th BDE



## COL. BIHA 'AISA

UNIT: 65th Battalion, 47th Regiment



# ENDNOTES

- 1 Joseph Holliday, "The Syrian Army Doctrinal Order of Battle," Institute for the Study of War, February 2013.
  - 2 Joseph Holliday, "The Syrian Army Doctrinal Order of Battle," Institute for the Study of War, February 2013.
  - 3 "The Regime's Military Capabilities: Part 1," Institute for the Study of War, May 26, 2015.
  - 4 Joseph Holliday, "The Assad Regime: From Counter-insurgency to Civil War," Institute for the Study of War, March 2013.
  - 5 The 3rd Battalion shifted from the 101st Commando Regiment to the 106th Mechanized Brigade by late 2016.
  - 6 The 147th Special Forces Regiment and its affiliated battalions joined the new Republican Guard 30th Division in early 2017. Prior to this it operated as an independent SF regiment in Aleppo since at least 2013.
  - 7 Likely the same as the 103rd Brigade.
  - 8 The 83rd Special Forces Battalion joined the new Republican Guard 30th Division in early 2017 as an independent battalion. Prior to this it operated as an independent SF battalion in Aleppo since at least 2013.
  - 9 The 800th Commando Battalion was previously affiliated with the 124th Brigade. However, this affiliation blurred in 2017 with most posts making no reference to any parent brigade.
  - 10 The 800th Commando Battalion appears to be affiliated with the 104th Brigade in 2018.
  - 11 Aymenn J al-Tamimi, "Liwa Abu al-Fadl al-Abbas and the Republican Guard," Aymenn Jawad Al-Tamimi's Blog, May 29, 2018.
  - 12 Aymenn J al-Tamimi, "Liwa Sayf al-Haq Assad Allah al-Ghalib: A Republican Guard Militia in Sayyida Zainab," Syria Comment, September 16, 2016.
  - 13 Aymenn J al-Tamimi, "Fawj al-Karbala'i: Republican Guard Affiliate," Aymenn Jawad Al-Tamimi's Blog, January 1, 2018.
  - 14 Aymenn J Al-Tamimi, "Quwat Dir' Al-Qalamoun: Shifting Militia Links," Aymenn J Al-Tamimi's Blog, January 17, 2017.
  - 15 Gregory Waters, "The Growing Role of Reconciled Rebels in Syria," International-Review.org, April 21, 2018.
  - 16 Aymenn J al-Tamimi, "The Coastal Shield Brigade: A New Pro-Assad Militia," Syria Comment, July 23, 2015.
  - 17 Aymenn J al-Tamimi, "Fawj al-Karbala'i: Republican Guard Affiliate," Aymenn J Al-Tamimi's Blog, January 1, 2018.
  - 18 Kheder Khaddour, "Syria's Troublesome Militias," Carnegie Middle East Center, November 5, 2018.
  - 19 A full biography of Ziad Salah can be found here.
  - 20 @GregoryPWaters, Twitter, June 19, 2018,12:28pm.
  - 21 @GregoryPWaters, Twitter, June 19, 2018,12:28pm.
  - 22 @GregoryPWaters, Twitter, June 19, 2018,12:28pm.
- Cover Photo: Republican Guard fighters take cover on the Ayn Terma front, Damascus, in November 2017.
- Photo 1: Major Khalid Ghassan Ali of the 105th Brigade, 358th Battalion with his soldiers in Harasta, Damascus in November 2017.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Gregory Waters received his B.A. with Honors in Political Economy and Foreign Policy in the Middle East from the University of California, Berkeley, in 2016. Since then he has researched and written about the Syrian civil war and extremist groups, primarily utilizing Syrian community Facebook pages for his projects. His past work has involved tracking combat death in Syria. He works as a research consultant at the Counter Extremism Project, has previously been published by Bellingcat and openDemocracy, and currently writes about Syria for the International Review.

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