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Russia's War in Syria

**The Inside Story of
Putin's Military
Intervention in the
Syrian War**

TIM RIPLEY

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RUSSIA'S WAR IN SYRIA

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Back Ground Material

Related to Chapter 9

*The Battle of Palmyra, February to March
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Battle of Palmyra, February-March 2016

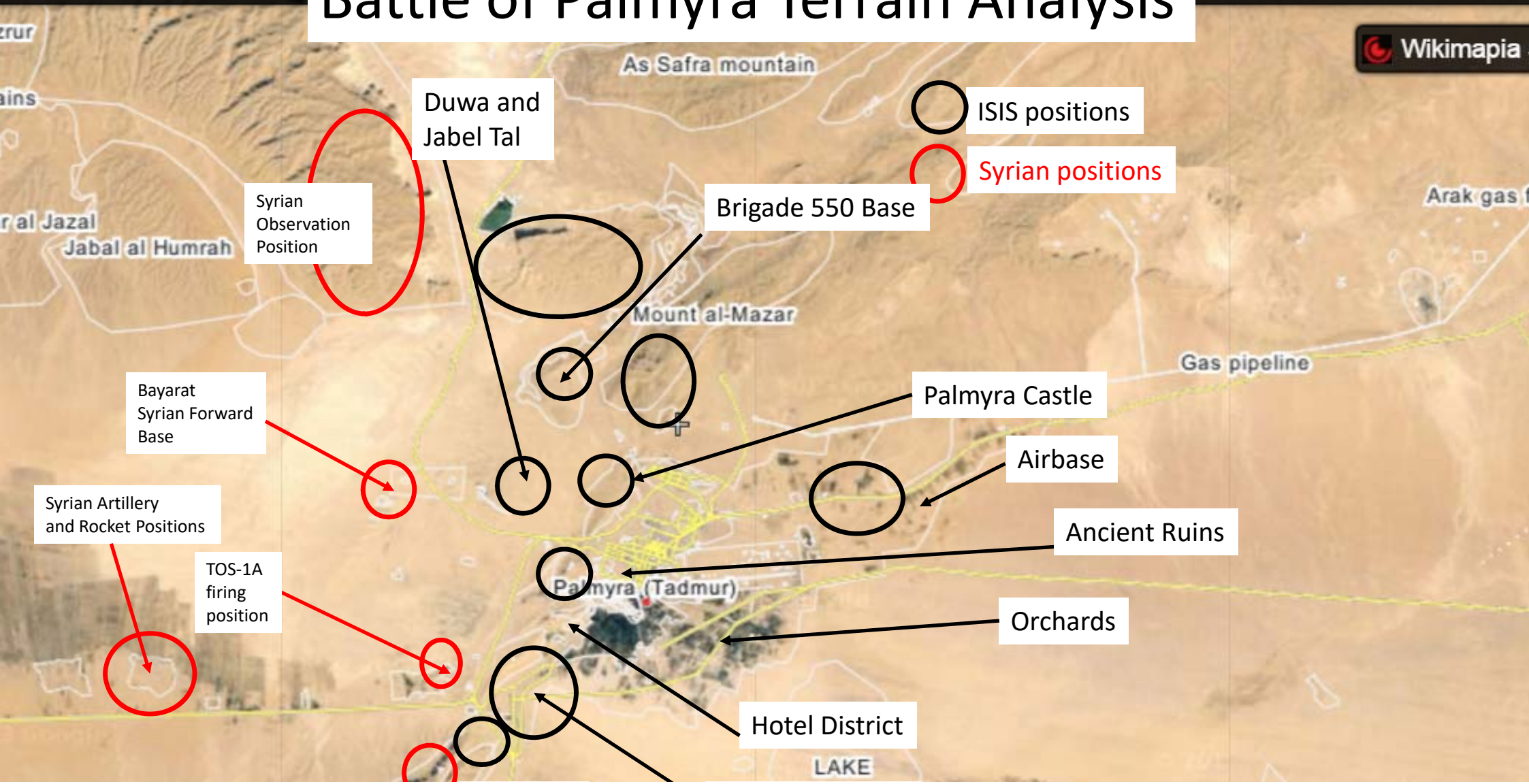
Analysis of Syrian and Russian Operations against Islamic State Forces in Central Syria

By Tim Ripley

This presentation will Look at the following:

- Terrain Analysis
- Preparatory Operations
- Major Syrian Units – Tiger Force, Desert Hawks, Hizbullah
- Fire Support Operation
- Russian Support
- Massing of Forces
- Islamic State Defensive Operations
- Syrian Assault Operations – Timeline
- Syrian Assault Operation - Phase 1
- Syrian Assault Operations – Phase 2
- Liberation of Ancient Ruins
- Follow-up Operations

Battle of Palmyra Terrain Analysis



Terrain Analysis

- Battle was determined by control of key ridges round Palmyra City

Views of Palmyra Castle from desert to west of city

Attacks by Syrian Marines, Hezbollah Against Duwa and Jabel Tal ridge to clear route to Palmyra Castle



Main Syrian Assault From South West Along Jabbal Hayyan Ridge line

© Valeriy Sharifulin/TASS 18 March 16
<http://tass.ru/en/world/863502>

Russia 24 footage from 18 March 16

Palmyra Operational Zone

March 16 – approx. 6,000 troops on Palmyra front (1000 reinforcements arrive 17 Mar 16, 500+ arrive on 22 Mar 16)

Syrian Arab Army (SAA)

HQ Tiger Force Col Suheil Hassan, deputy (Colonel Shady Al-Isma'el)

- Al Sahabat Regiment (Commander Ali)
- Al Rahhal battalions/Fadi Al Shibany Unit (Jazal/Shاعر gas field 23 Mar 16)
- 67th Tank Brigade
- Homs Leopards - Special Missions Regiment (Jazal front March 16)
- Fawj Maghawir Al Bahar (Navy/Marines Special Forces unit) (leave Latakia for Palmyra 17 Mar 16) commander Ali Askar A (KIA 21 Mar 16)
- Military Intelligence Shield Forces (deploying from 18 Mar 16)

Militia Forces

- Suqur al-Sahara (Desert Hawks NDF special forces unit) (balance of unit arrive on 17 Mar 16 from Latakia) Commander Ayman Jaber
- Homs NDF unit
- Eastern Lions NDF unit (arrive 18 Mar 16)
- NDF of Sadad
- Syrian Social Nationalist Party “Nisor al-Zubah”
- “Desert Lions” and “Qalamoun Shield” NDF detachments
- Fouj Al-Joulan (Golani Regiment) and Liwaa Suqour Al-Quneitra (Al-Quneitra Hawks) (500+ troops arrive 22 Mar 16))

Allied Forces

- Iranian Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) SF det (arrive 21 Mar 16 from Aleppo)
- Liwaa Al-Fatemiyoun (Afghani paramilitary) (arrive 21 Mar 16 from Aleppo)
- Hizbullah unit (400 troops) (arrive beginning Nov, extra reinforcements March 16)
- Liwaa Imam Ali (Iraqi paramilitary)

Commanding the Palmyra Offensive



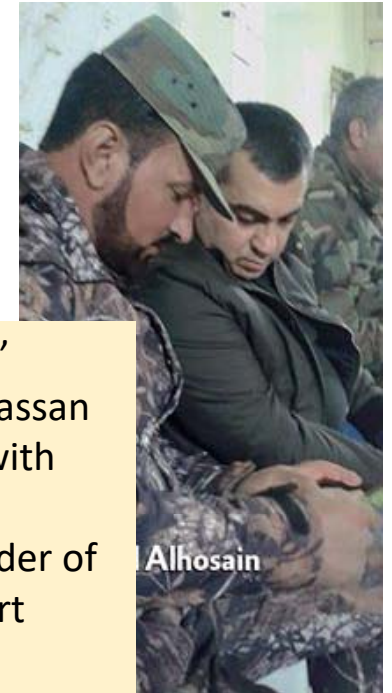
Inside the main Syrian command post controlling the Palmyra front
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iRIKv7_4Wg4



“Colonel” Suheil Hassan on the Palmyra front



“Colonel” Suheil Hassan in his forward observation post during the assault of Jabal Tar on 24th March



“Colonel” Suheil Hassan confers with the commander of the Desert Hawks

The Tiger Force Division

The Tiger Force is the Syrian Arab Army's elite assault force.

- 1,000 troops
- All arms force, including T-72 tanks, BMP troop carriers, 2S1 122mm SP guns and ZSU-23-4
- Its commander "Colonel" Suheil Hassan is leading the Syrian assault on Palmyra



"Colonel" Suheil Hassan (right) in Palmyra desert



Tiger Force Troops in Palmyra desert, March 2016



Desert Hawks Brigade



The Desert Hawk or Falcons Brigade is a unit of the National Defence Forces militia.

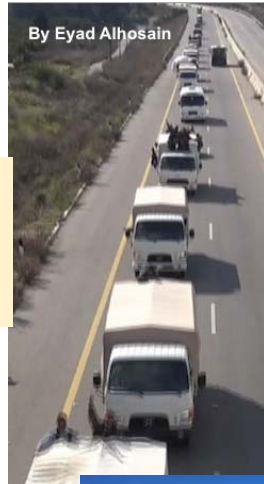
- Formed in 2012 from reserve soldiers in the Homs region for operations in desert terrain
- It is now one of the largest NDF units, with more than 1,000 troops in at least 3 battalions or columns
- Each column has T-55 tanks, 2S1 self propelled guns and armed “technical” SUVs, as well as “hobby” drones for surveillance
- Prior to the Palmyra battle the bulk of the brigade was fighting in Latakia province

Massing Forces March 2016



Lebanese Hizbullah
Special Forces on ridge above Palmyra

Desert Hawk
Convoy leaves
Latakia



Desert Hawk
Low loaders arrive
Outside Palmyra



Unidentified
Republican Guard
T-55 unit



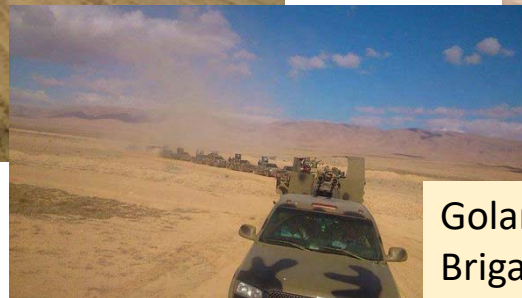
Unidentified
Republican Guard
T-90 unit



SSNP Militia
Outside Palmyra



Syrian Marines
Outside Palmyra



Golani Regiment and Al-Quneitra Hawks
Brigade arrive outside Palmyra

Logistic Operations

Palmyra's harsh desert terrain and climate have put a premium on logistic support to keep Syrian troops fighting.



Troops on ridge line positions need to have food, water and ammunition man-packed up to them



T-4 Airbase is the main logistics hub for the Syrian Operation against Palmyra



Civilian tankers are used to bring up fuel and water



A scarcity of buildings means tentage has had to provided for troops



Heavy consumption of artillery ammunition requires regular re-supply

Bulldozers were used to build Logistic tracks to ridge positions



Forward repair centres for tanks keep them operational



Supporting Russian Units

Russian a Syrian HQs, co-ordinating air cover and other support. Russian command vehicles deployed with them



Russian GRU Spetsnaz teams are deployed forward to the Palmyra front to call in air strikes



On 17th March, ISIS released a set of images showing the body of a dead Russian soldier near Palmyra and his captured equipment



During January and February 2016, Syrian Units concentrated securing key ridges to the west of Palmyra. There were regular artillery duels and raids with Islamic State forces in Palmyra

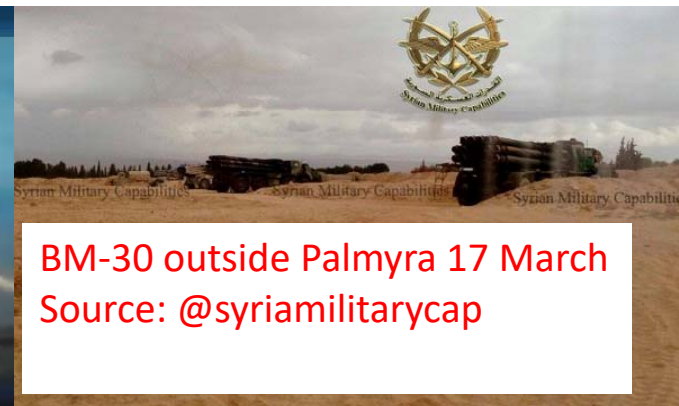
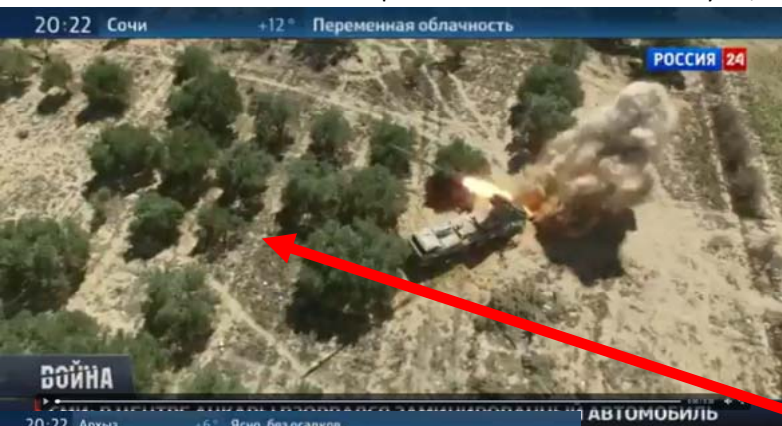


<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5OtkaxnxLn0>



During March 2016 Additional Russian Fire Power was deployed against Palmyra

BM-30 Smerch in fire position outside Palmyra, as seen on Russia today 13 March 2016

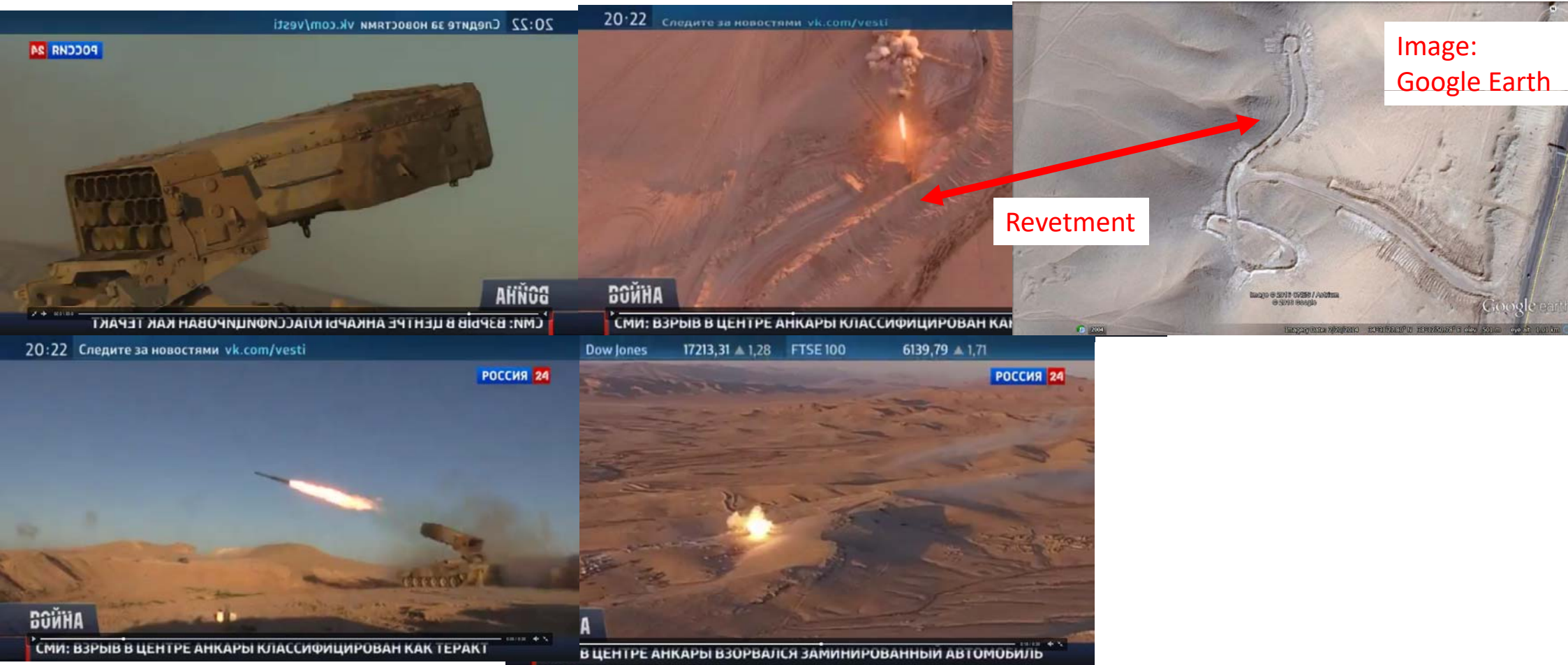


BM-30 convoy on Homs-Palmyra road, early March 2016.



TOS-1A in fire position outside Palmyra, as seen on Russia 24, 13 March 2016

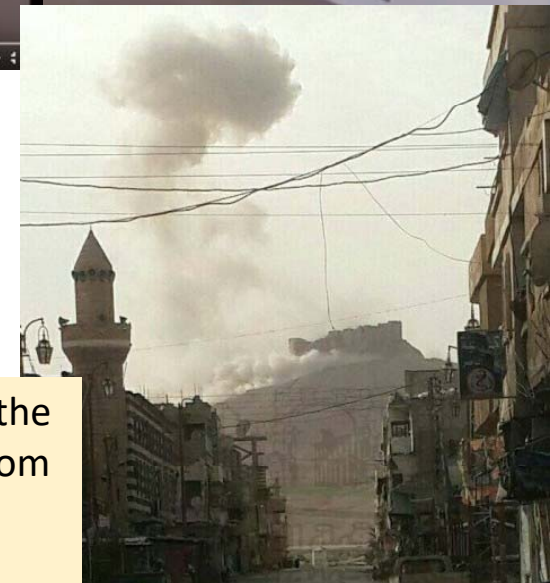
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hIPfD8Kpееc>



Russian Mi-24/35 attack helicopters based at Shayrat airbase intensified their strikes against Palmyra in March



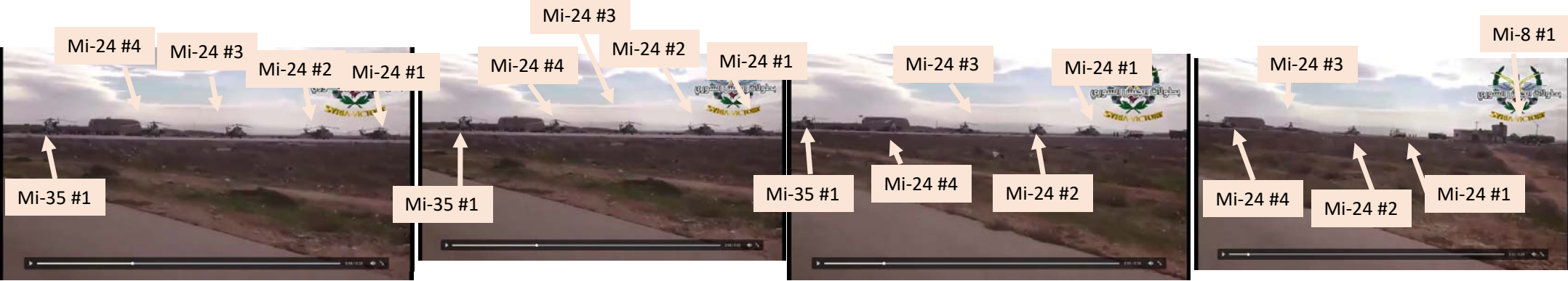
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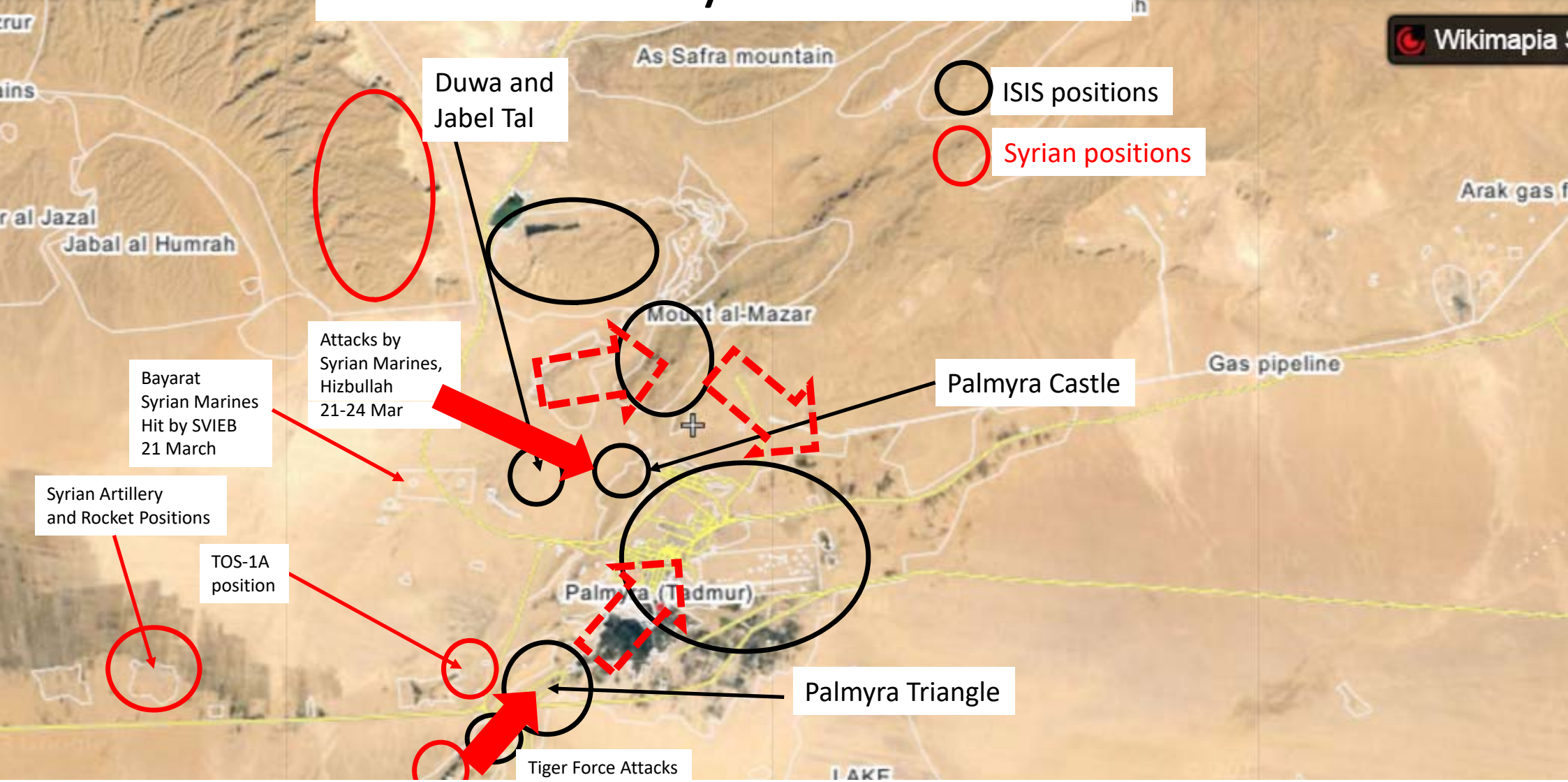
An air strike on the castle viewed from inside Palmyra, March 2016

Russian 4 x Mi-24P, 4 x Mi-35s, 1 x Mi-35 at Shayrat Airbase, Syria 19 Feb 16
From video posted on @WarfareWW

© timripley@hotmail.com



Battle of Palmyra March 2016



Suicide Vehicle borne IED attack against Syrian Marines, al Bayarat, west of Palmyra, 21st March, results in 17 KIA
source: [@RamiAlLolah](#)



Islamic State deploys Chinese-made HJ-8 Missile Teams at Duwa, west of Palmyra, 19 March to blunt Syrian attack towards Jabal Tar
Source: @oryxspioenkop



Islamic State video from inside Palmyra posted 24 March on showed T-55 tanks positioned on ridge lines and sand bagged buildings inside city
source: <http://www.dailymotion.com/video/x3zvufm>



Desert Hawks advance along Jabal Hayyan, 24-25 March

The view from Jabal Hayyan of Palmyra Castle under attack on 25 March



The view of the Ancient Ruins from the Hotel District on 25th March



Palmyra Triangle Area was seized on 23 March



The Hotel District was captured on 24th March

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zFHclm9F41w>

The assault opens in northern Axis, 23rd March



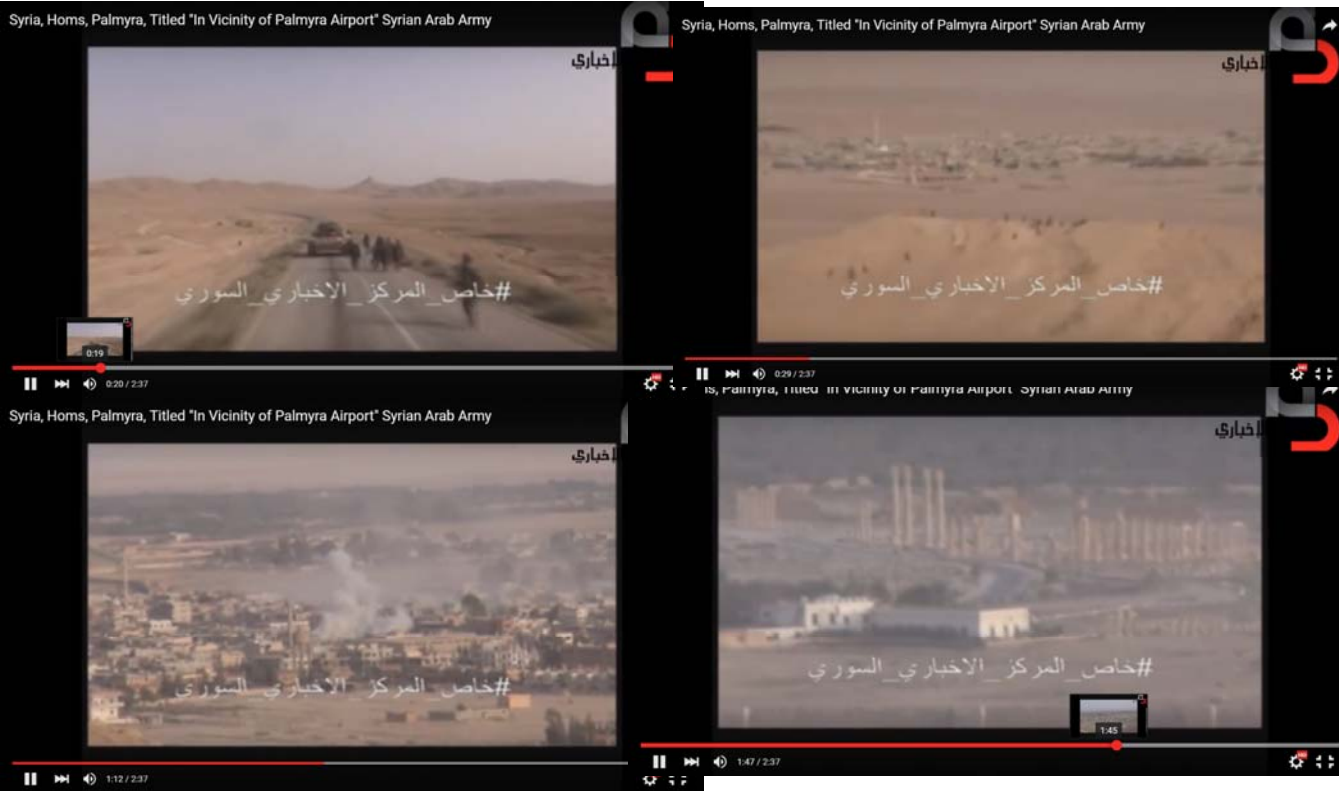
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JPFeDCZkr3M>

Northern Axis, Assault, 24 Mar 16



<http://lifenews.ru/news/192442>

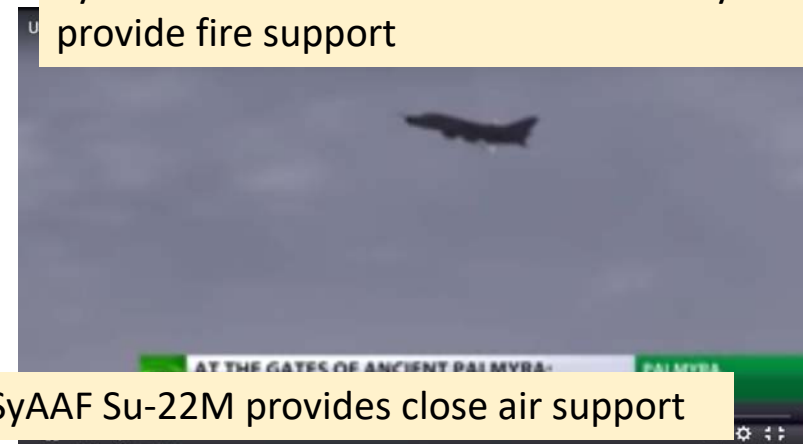
Northern Axis, 25th March – Outflanking Palmyra



Syrian firepower hits ISIS positions in Palmyra



Syrian BM-21 and D-30 122mm artillery provide fire support

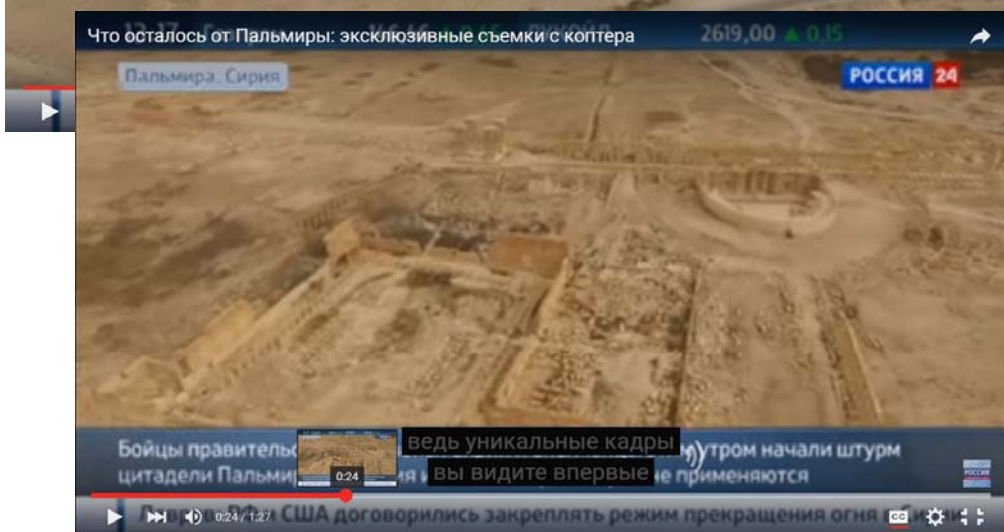
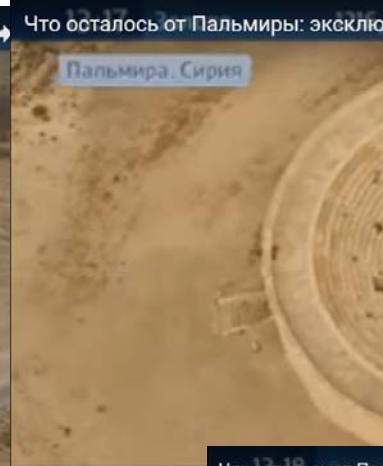


SyAAF Su-22M provides close air support

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=L01bHiLzt9w&feature=youtu.be>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=llQDaoFOkkw>

Palmyra from Russia 24's Media Drone 25 March 16



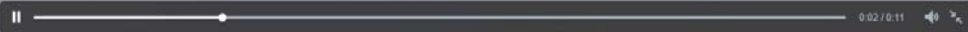
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Mi-28N in action over Palmyra



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SyAAF operations over Palmyra, March 2016

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SZBQHpYXXtg>

