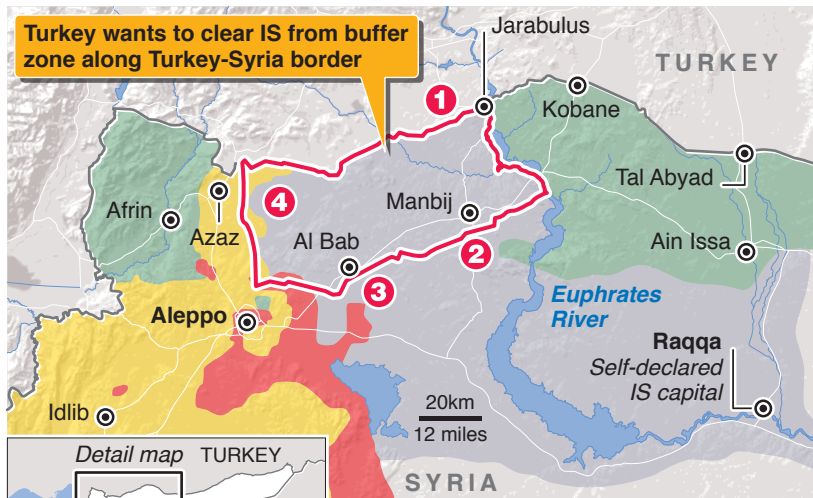


Turkey may be planning Syrian invasion

The so-called Islamic State is fending off attacks from all sides in Syria, and there are growing indications that a Turkish ground invasion could add to the militant group's list of concerns

Turkey wants to clear IS from buffer zone along Turkey-Syria border



AREAS OF CONTROL (as of Jan 18, 2016)

- Syrian regime and allies
- So-called Islamic State (IS) militant group / Daesh
- Kurdish YPG / Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF)
- Other rebel groups

1 Turkey: Engaged in mine clearing operation near border town of Jarabulus, indicating possible start point for invasion. Plan reportedly discussed by Russia and U.S. – Russia would not obstruct Turkish efforts, providing buffer zone is not expanded to Mediterranean Sea

2 Kurds / SDF: Advancing on IS-controlled town of Manbij after crossing Euphrates River, despite Turkish opposition to move

3 Syrian regime: Forces moving northwards from Aleppo towards Al Bab, backed by Russian airstrikes

4 Rebels: Fighters predominantly from Turkish-backed Mare Operations Room advancing east along Syrian border, looking to gain ground from IS. Rebels aided by increased Turkish artillery strikes along border, which could indicate efforts by Turkey to soften up IS targets prior to ground invasion