



## Did US Forces Set Fire to Crops?



2020-05-23

### Fake News by SANA: US-Dropped Thermal Balloons Set Fire to Crops in al-Jazira

Following a thorough process of investigation and verification, it became clear that a field caught fire as one of the area's residents unintentionally threw a cigarette stub into the crops; namely, US Apache helicopters are not involved in the arson

In the second half of May 2020, Syrian, Arab and international media outlets posted news claiming that US forces in northeastern Syria have set fire to wheat and barley crops in the Syrian al-Jazira region, [Hasaka province](#), complying with President Donald Trump's orders. However, a thorough process of investigation and verification proved that US forces were not involved in the arsons that affected the crops during the reported period.

In a [report](#) published on 23 May 2020, the [Syrian Arab News Agency / SANA](#) cited Singapore-[International Business Times](#),<sup>1</sup> claiming that while flying close to the ground on the morning of 17 May 2020, a US-Apache helicopter dropped several thermal balloons setting fire to over 20 hectares of wheat fields in [Adla](#) village, [al-Shadadi city](#), south of [Hasaka](#) city.

<sup>1</sup> "International Business Times: Trump Ordered Syria's Wheat Crop Burning," SANA, 23 May 2020. Last visited 26 June 2020. <https://www.sana.sy/en/?p=192268>

Arab and international media outlets, including [Sky News Arabia](#) and [Sputnik News Agency](#), reported the same incident and referenced *International Business Times* as well. Published on 23 May 2020, [Sputnik's report](#) added that on the evening of 22 May 2020,<sup>2</sup> two US Apache helicopters dropped a number of thermal balloons while flying close to the ground over five villages extending between the towns of [Tell Barak](#) and [al-Hawl](#), southeast Hasaka, setting over 250 hectares of cultivated agriculture land on fire, destroying, thus, wheat and barley crops ready for harvest.



Photo no. (1) – Taken from SANA, which published a [report](#) on 23 May 2020, citing *International Business Time*, claiming that US forces set fire to wheat and barley fields in the region of al-Jazira/Hasaka province, under President Donald Trump's orders.

<sup>2</sup> "Why did Trump order Syrian wheat crop be burned and how would Damascus retaliate?" Sputnik, 23 May 2020. Last visited: 26 June 2020. [https://arabic.sputniknews.com/arab\\_world/202005231045513171-%D9%84%D9%85%D8%A7%D8%B0%D8%A7-%D8%A3%D9%85%D8%B1-%D8%AA%D8%B1%D8%A7%D9%85%D8%A8-%D8%A8%D8%AD%D8%B1%D9%82-%D9%85%D8%B2%D8%A7%D8%B1%D8%B9-%D8%A7%D9%84%D9%82%D9%85%D8%AD-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%B3%D9%88%D8%B1%D9%8A%D8%A9-%D9%88%D9%83%D9%8A%D9%81-%D8%B3%D8%AA%D8%B1%D8%AF-%D8%AF%D9%85%D8%B4%D9%82%D8%9F/](https://arabic.sputniknews.com/arab_world/202005231045513171-%D9%84%D9%85%D8%A7%D8%B0%D8%A7-%D8%A3%D9%85%D8%B1-%D8%AA%D8%B1%D8%A7%D9%85%D8%A8-%D8%A8%D8%AD%D8%B1%D9%82-%D9%85%D8%B2%D8%A7%D8%B1%D8%B9-%D8%A7%D9%84%D9%82%D9%85%D8%AD-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%B3%D9%88%D8%B1%D9%8A%D8%A9-%D9%88%D9%83%D9%8A%D9%81-%D8%B3%D8%AA%D8%B1%D8%AF-%D8%AF%D9%85%D8%B4%D9%82%D8%9F/)



سكاي نيوز عربية - أبوظبي

### قالت وسائل إعلام محلية إن قوات أميركية وفصائل موالية لتركيا أقدمت على إحراق مساحات من حقول القمح في محافظة الحسكة السورية.

وقالت وكالة الأنباء السورية (سانا) قبل أيام، إن "طائرة لقوات الاحتلال الأميركية أقدمت على إحراق أكثر من 200 دونم من حقول القمح عبر رميها عددا من البالونات الحرارية فوق الأراضي الزراعية بريف مدينة الشدادي جنوب الحسكة".

وفي تقرير آخر، قالت الوكالة ذاتها إن مسلحين مواليين للقوات التركية أحرقوا حقول قمح في ريف رأس العين، وعدة قرى بمحيط المدينة شمال غرب الحسكة.

وزعم تقرير لموقع "إنترناشونال بزنس تايمز" الإخباري الأميركي، أن مجموع المساحات التي أحرقتها القوات الأميركية، يوم 17 مايو، تجاوزت الـ 300 هكتار، تتوزع على أرياف حلب والرقعة والحسكة.

Photo no. (2) – Taken from Sky News Arabia, which published a [report](#) on 22 May 2020,<sup>3</sup> titled: "Wheat arsons, Syria suspects are perpetuated by Turkey and US." The report said that US forces and pro-Turkey armed groups have burned down wheat fields in Hasaka province.

<sup>3</sup> "Wheat arsons, Syria suspects are perpetuated by Turkey and US," Sky News Arabia, 22 May 2020. Last visited: 26 June 2020. <https://www.skynewsarabia.com/middle-east/1346429-%D8%AD%D8%B1%D8%A7%D9%8A%D9%94%D9%82-%D8%A7%D9%84%D9%82%D9%85%D8%AD-%D8%AA%D8%AB%D9%8A%D8%B1-%D8%A7%D8%AA%D9%87%D8%A7%D9%85%D8%A7%D8%AA-%D8%B3%D9%88%D8%B1%D9%8A%D8%A9-%D9%84%D8%A7%D9%94%D9%85%D9%8A%D8%B1%D9%83%D8%A7-%D9%88%D8%AA%D8%B1%D9%83%D9%8A%D8%A7>

Sputnik عربي

كوفيد-19

عدد المصابين: 7,533,412  
عدد المتعافين: 3,553,504  
عدد الوفيات: 421,819

JHU CSSE



لماذا أمر ترامب بحرق مزارع القمح السورية وكيف سترد دمشق؟

العالم العربي

23.05.2020 16:54 GMT  
(محدثة 23.05.2020 17:34 GMT)

انسخ الرابط

6 14 0

Google News تابعنا عبر

في انتهاك جديد للقانون الدولي، أقدمت طائرات تابعة للجيش الأمريكي على إحراق مئات الدونمات من حقول القمح والشعير عبر رميها "بالونات حرارية" فوق الأراضي الزراعية في خمسة قرى بريف بلدي تل براك والهول جنوب شرقي الحسكة السورية.

وقال تقرير لموقع "إنترناشونال بزنس تايمز" الإخباري الأمريكي، إن مجموع المساحات التي أحرقتها القوات الأمريكية، يوم 17 مايو، تجاوزت الـ 300 هكتار، تتوزع على أرياف حلب والرقعة والحسكة.

وقال مراقبون إن "الخطوات الأمريكية تعد خرقاً للقانون الدولي، وجريمة إتلاف متعمد للإضرار بالأمن الغذائي السوري، مؤكدين أن الدولة السورية ستتخذ إجراءات رادعة ضد التحركات الأمريكية الإجرامية".



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طائرتان أمريكيتان تحرقان بالبالونات الحرارية آلاف دونمات القمح شرقي سوريا

Photo no. (3)- Taken from Sputnik News Agency, which published a [report](#), titled: "Why did Trump order Syrian wheat crop be burned and how would Damascus retaliate?", on 23 May 2020, saying that US helicopters set fire to hundreds of hectares of wheat and barley fields in five villages in the towns of Tell Barak and al-Hawl, southeastern Hasaka.

Syrians for Truth and Justice / STJ tracked evidence provided by open sources and interviewed witnesses from the areas where wheat and barley crops were burned in rural al-Shaddadi and the villages located between the towns of [Tell Brak](#) and [al-Hawl](#), concluding that the claims that the US forces have perpetuated those fires are groundless.



At the end of the process of investigation and verification, it became clear that *International Business Times*, which SANA and other media outlets have referenced as a source for their reports, accusing US forces of burning wheat and barley crops in al-Jazira region / the Syrian province of Hasaka, has itself based its news on a [report](#) originally published by SANA on 17 May 2020.<sup>4</sup>



Photo no. (4) –Taken from SANA-English, which posted a [report](#) on 17 May 2020, titled: “Thermal balloons dropped by US plane set fire to wheat crops in Hasaka countryside,” claiming that US forces have set on fire over 20 hectares of agricultural land cultivated with Wheat in Adla Village, rural al-Shadadi city, south of Hasaka city.

<sup>4</sup> “Thermal balloons dropped by US plane set fire to wheat crops in Hasaka countryside,” SANA, 22 May 2020. Last visited: 26 June 2020. <https://www.sana.sy/en/?p=191866>.

*International Business Times* cited information reported by an English-speaking Russian media outlet called [Veterans Today](#), which, for its part, had taken the information it reported from a Chinese news agency called [Xinhuanet](#), which was the first to quote the news reported by SANA.

While none of these media outlets provided evidence that President Donald Trump has commanded the burning of the crops, no comment was made by any US official on these accusations.



Photo no. (5) –Taken from *International Business Times*, which published a [report](#) on 21 May 2020, titled: “Trump ordered US Forces to Burn Hectares of Wheat Field in Syria amid CoVID-19 Pandemic: Russia Media.”<sup>5</sup> In the report, the outlet, quoting SANA, claimed that US forces have set wheat fields ablaze in Syrian Hasaka province commanded by President Donald Trump.

<sup>5</sup> “Trump ordered US Forces to Burn Hectares of Wheat Field in Syria amid CoVID-19 Pandemic: Russia Media,” *International Business Times*, 21 May 2020. Last visited: 26 June 2020. [https://www.ibtimes.sg/trump-ordered-us-forces-burn-hectares-wheat-field-syria-amid-covid-19-pandemicrussia-media-45482?fbclid=IwAR14-9tiZop5iCUsVR2Jb2cW1pOLpEa7Q\\_irgAvzz21W3Q\\_-9zF-OG59nf4](https://www.ibtimes.sg/trump-ordered-us-forces-burn-hectares-wheat-field-syria-amid-covid-19-pandemicrussia-media-45482?fbclid=IwAR14-9tiZop5iCUsVR2Jb2cW1pOLpEa7Q_irgAvzz21W3Q_-9zF-OG59nf4)



Steven Sahiounie, journalist and political commentator

Apache helicopters of the **US occupation forces** flew **low** Sunday morning, according to residents of the Adla village, in the Shaddadi countryside, south of Hasaka, as they dropped **'thermal balloons'**, an incendiary weapon, causing the wheat fields to explode into flames while the hot dry winds fanned the raging fire.

After delivering their fiery pay-load, the helicopters flew close to homes in an aggressive manner, which caused residents and especially **small children** to fear for their lives. The military maneuver was delivering a clear message: don't sell your wheat to the Syrian government. Head of Hasaka Agricultural Directorate **Rajab Salameh** said in a statement to SANA that several fires have broken out in agricultural fields in Tal Tamer countryside, as well.

Photo no. (6) – Taken from Veterans Today, an English-speaking Russian outlet, which published a [report](#) on 21 May 2020,<sup>6</sup> titled: “CONFIRMED: Trump Ordered Syria’s Wheat Crop Burned During Pandemic,” claiming that a US Apache helicopter dropped a thermal balloon while flying over Adla village in rural al-Shadadi, causing a fire. The outlet added: “The military maneuver was delivering a clear message: don’t sell your wheat to the Syrian government.”

<sup>6</sup> Steven Sahiounie. “CONFIRMED: Trump Ordered Syria’s Wheat Crop Burned During Pandemic,” Veterans Today, 21 May 2020. Last visited: 26 June 2020.  
<https://www.veteranstodaynetwork.com/2020/05/21/confirmed-trump-ordered-syrias-wheat-crop-burned-during-pandemic/>



XINHUANET



# U.S. aircraft sets fire to wheat crops in NE Syria

Source: Xinhua | 2020-05-17 21:26:45 | Editor: huaxia



DAMASCUS, May 17 (Xinhua) -- A U.S. aircraft dropped thermal balloons over agricultural lands in Syria's northeastern province of Hasakah on Sunday, setting fire to wheat crops, state news agency SANA reported.

The targeted area was in agricultural lands in the countryside of the Shaddadi city in the southern countryside of Hasakah, said SANA, adding that the fire gutted 200 dunums (0.2 square km) of wheat fields.

The report said the U.S. planes fly on a low altitude very close to the people's homes in the agricultural fields, causing panic and fear among civilians.

SANA said that during its illegal presence, the U.S. forces established bases in several areas in northeastern Syria, supplying them with weapons and logistic equipment through the illegal crossings with Iraq to reinforce their presence, and steal Syrian oil, resources, and major crops.

Photo no. (7) – Taken from Xinhuanet, a Chinese outlet, which published a [report](#) on 17 May 2020,<sup>7</sup> titled: “U.S. aircraft sets fire to wheat crops in NE Syria.”

<sup>7</sup> “U.S. aircraft sets fire to wheat crops in NE Syria,” Xinhuanet, 17 May 2020. Last visited: 26 June 2020. [http://www.xinhuanet.com/english/2020-05/17/c\\_139064494.htm](http://www.xinhuanet.com/english/2020-05/17/c_139064494.htm).



Addressing the claims that US forces have set fire to wheat and barley fields in the Syrian al-Jazira region /Hasaka province, STJ investigated into the news reporting that 20 hectares of wheat fields in [Adla](#) village, rural al-Shadadi city, south of Hasaka, were set afire on 17 May 2020 and interviewed a witnesses, who preferred to be called by the pseudonym Kh. Alo.

The witness recounted that the fire started as one of the area's residents unintentionally threw a cigarette stub into the crops. He added that the Autonomous Administration-affiliated Internal Security Forces have embarked on an investigation after the field owner filed a complaint demanding a compensation from the convict.

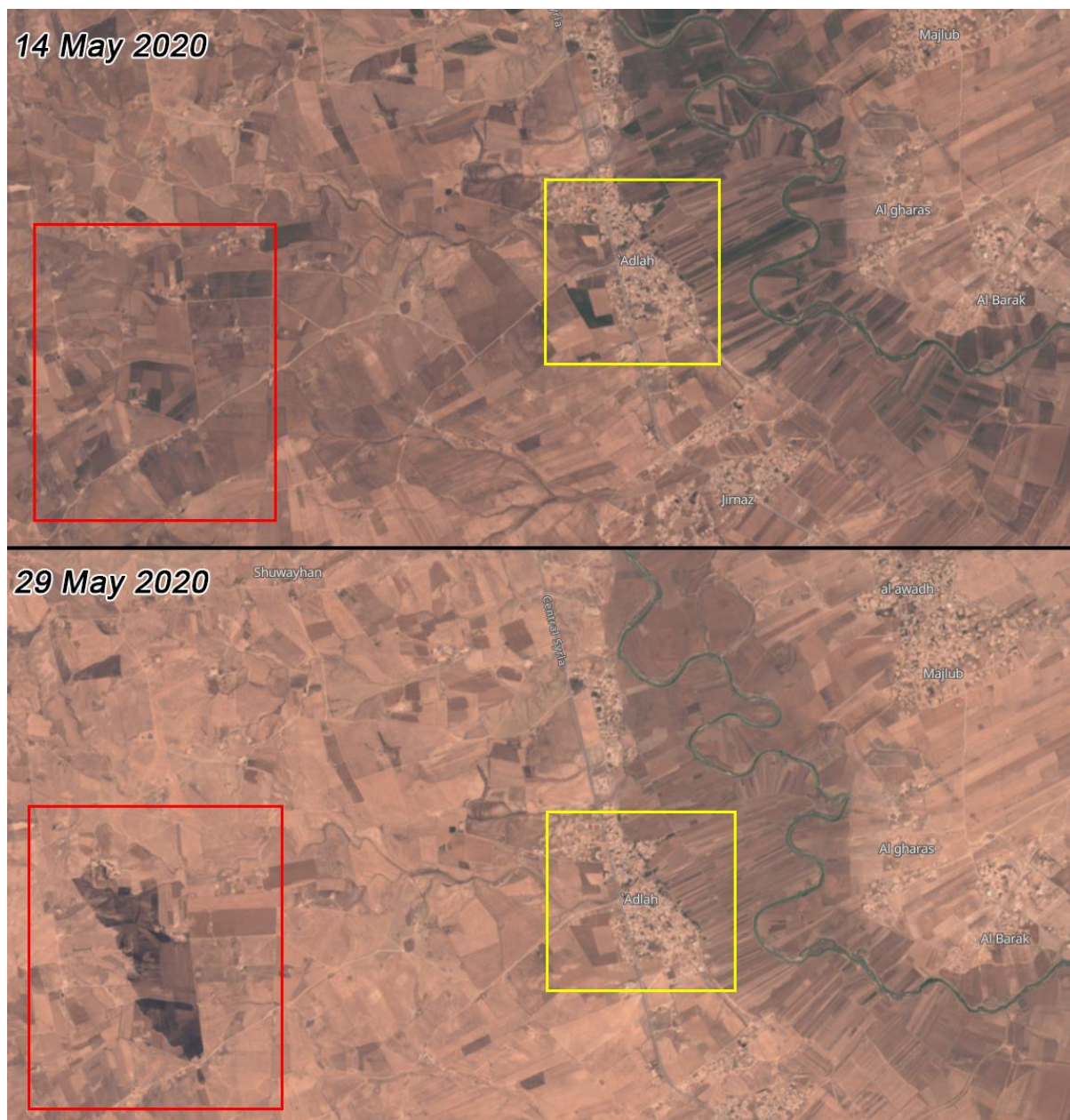


Image No. (8) - Satellite image (showing the location of some fire incidents between May 14, 2020 and May 29, 2020). In the area of Adla, south of Al-Shaddadi city.

STJ also investigated into the news reporting the burning of more than 250 hectares of wheat and barley fields in the villages of al-Hwaish al-Shamali, Um Ghadeer, al-Juaimseh, al-Jailiyeh and Tell Shayer, located between the two towns of Tell Brak and al-Hawl, southeastern Hasaka on 22 May 2020 and met witnesses based in the area, who refused to reveal their names for security reasons.

The witnesses said that two US helicopters hovered above the area when the fires broke out; however, they refuted the claims that the US forces are involved in perpetuating them, stressing that the fire was started by a spark from the combine that was harvesting the crops.



## About Syrians for Truth and Justice - STJ

Convinced that the diversity that has historically defined Syria is a wealth, our team of researchers and volunteers works with dedication at uncovering human rights violations committed in Syria, in order to promote inclusiveness and ensure that all Syrians are represented, and their rights fulfilled.

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