

Beat: Politics

Coalition airstrikes kill 70 Islamic State militants in northern Iraq

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USPA News - The United States and its coalition partners have carried out another 46 airstrikes against Islamic State targets in Iraq and northern Syria over the weekend, destroying buildings and equipment and killing more than 70 jihadists, military officials said on Monday. The vast majority of airstrikes since Friday were carried out in Iraq, where coalition fighter jets and drones struck dozens of Islamic State targets in 31 airstrikes, the newly-created Combined Joint Task Force (CJTF) said.

It came as Iraqi media reported that jihadists suffered many casualties on Monday when jets struck targets near Kirkuk. The Combined Joint Task Force said the coalition airstrikes near Kirkuk had destroyed two excavators, a bulldozer, a bunker, an ammunition dump, and an overpass while striking a fighting position and a tactical unit. A Kurdish commander said the airstrikes near Kirkuk on Monday had killed at least 70 Islamic State militants and wounded dozens more, the Iraqi news agency BasNews reported. The commander told BasNews that the Islamic State jihadists were preparing to attack the town of Tel Ward, which was freed by Kurdish forces earlier this month. "As the result of airstrikes from coalition warplanes, the IS plan was destroyed and they lost many militants to the shelling," the commander was quoted as saying. The Combined Joint Task Force said other airstrikes near al-Biaj destroyed four armored vehicles, a jihadist checkpoint and two storage containers. Four airstrikes near Sinjar destroyed six buildings, seven storage containers, two jihadist fighting positions, an excavator and a bunker. Two armored vehicles and a jihadist observation point were struck near al-Qaim. Four airstrikes near Mosul, which is the largest city under the control of the Islamic State, struck two jihadist tactical units and destroyed an excavator, a vehicle and a heavy weapon, the force said. Other airstrikes in Iraq struck four jihadist units and destroyed seven armored vehicles, a bulldozer, an excavator, two buildings, a front-loader and a tank. Meanwhile, coalition forces also carried out fifteen airstrikes in northern Syria over the weekend, all but one which were near the city of Kobani. The strikes near Kobani struck eight tactical units and two fighting positions and destroyed three buildings, two staging areas, two tanks, a motorcycle, a mortar. An airstrike near the Islamic State's self-proclaimed capital, Al Raqqa, struck an "electronic warfare garrison," the force said, without providing other details. "The strikes were conducted as part of Operation Inherent Resolve, the operation to eliminate the ISIL terrorist group and the threat they pose to Iraq, the region and the wider international community," CJTF said in a statement, adding that all aircraft involved in the operations had returned to their base safely. Other details about casualties were not available. The Islamic State (IS), which was previously known as the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL/ISIS), is an al-Qaeda splinter group which declared itself an Islamic caliphate earlier this year after seizing much of northeastern Syria and making huge gains in parts of Iraq. Their rule has been marked by brutal violence - such as beheadings and crucifixions - of anyone opposing the "caliphate." Since early August, U.S. forces have carried out hundreds of airstrikes in Iraq to protect U.S. interests and to assist Iraqi forces as they attempt to fight off ISIS. A coalition of countries - including France, the United Kingdom, and Australia - later joined that effort. The United States - along with several Arab countries - has also launched a separate air campaign against ISIS in northern Syria.

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