Beat: News

IRAQI FORCES MAKE BREAKTHROUGH IN TIKRIT WITH U.S. HELP

USE OF U.S. WARPLANES EFFECTIVE

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USPA NEWS - Iraqi forces have taken the outskirts of Tikrit and are closing in on the center of the strategic city in what would be a breakthrough in the country's battle against Islamic State militants, U.S. and Iraqi officials said Tuesday.

The gains point to the effectiveness of U.S. warplanes, which joined the fight last week after Iraq's military failed to make any advances against the militants despite an overwhelming advantage in ground troops.
Iraqi Prime Minister Haider al-Abadi said security forces have cleared neighborhoods on the southern and western edges of the city, which is about 80 miles north of Baghdad and is best known as Saddam Hussein's hometown, the Associated Press reported.
U.S. Central command confirmed Abadi's comments, saying large portions of the city have been recaptured from the militants.

Iraq launched a major offensive to retake the city several weeks ago, using mostly Shiite militias closely allied with Iran, which has provided military support for the offensive. After initial successes, the operation became stalled, as the militias struggled to root out several hundred militants inside the city.
As a condition for U.S. participation, the Pentagon told Iraq to withdraw Shiite militias from the fight. Iraqi special forces and conventional army units took the lead in the ground operation. Some militias said they were quitting on their own to protest U.S. involvement in the campaign.

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