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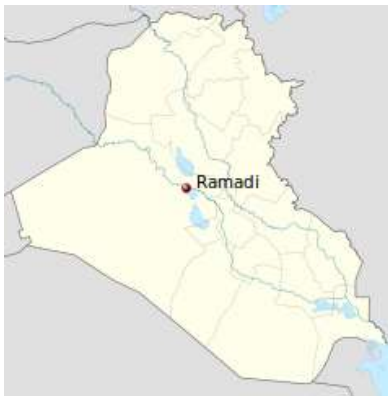
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Iraq's 'Liberated' Ramadi: 80% Destroyed, 30% Still ISIS-Held

By Jason Ditz
December 30, 2015



The vital capital of Iraq's Anbar Province, once a city of half a million people, Ramadi has in the past seven months fell to ISIS, was surrounded and bombarded, and now (mostly) recovered by Iraq. As Iraqi officials tout their victory, however, it seems what they really won is a big repair bill.

Gen. Mahlawi said operations in Ramadi were paused for today because of the weather, and estimated that ISIS still controls about 30% of the city, such as it is. This is a surprising admission, as Iraq claimed total victory in the city days ago.

Defense Minister Khaled Obeidi, meanwhile, told the cabinet Ramadi had been turned into a “ghost town,” and that 80% of the city is effectively destroyed. The Education Ministry said 260 schools were destroyed in the fighting, and would cost \$500 million to rebuild by themselves.

That could be a drop in the bucket when all is said and done, as thousands of houses are outright destroyed, much of the rest is at least seriously damaged, and given that remaining ISIS presence, the destruction is likely far from finished.

Infrastructure is all damaged from the fighting, and at least five bridges are damaged to the point of being unusable. Only a few hundred civilians are believed to remain in the city.

Publicly, officials are blaming ISIS “booby-traps” as the reason they’re keeping civilians from returning to the city, and this may be part of the story, but with so much damage done to the city it’s not exactly going to be liveable for awhile at any rate.