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Near Mosul, Iraqi Troops Again Flee From ISIS as Soon as Shooting Starts

By Jason Ditz
April 8, 2016

The notion that ISIS fighters are unrivaled on the battlefield doesn't always stand up to close scrutiny, but the ISIS leadership can certainly continue to push that narrative this week, after routing an Iraqi military offensive near Mosul.

As has so often been the case, the Iraqi troops didn't handle coming under fire particularly well, and fled en masse as soon as the shooting started in earnest, with analysts warning that the Iraqi troops simply aren't combat ready, and lost what little ground they took almost immediately.

Having ISIS drastically outnumbered by most estimates, Iraqi officials have been talking up the idea that the entire war would be won by year's end, only to have this preliminary offensive put on indefinite hiatus, as they wait for reinforcements to replace the deserters.

It's unsurprising, given how poorly the military has done, that Iraq is again turning to Shi'ite militias to try to turn the tide of battle, but many Shi'ites oppose sending their fighters so deep into Sunni country, to fight against Sunni Islamists.

And while the Pentagon is downplaying the losses, insisting the Iraqi troops are "learning the area," it's undeniable that ISIS has once again fallen into a major propaganda win, as Iraqi troops turn their tails and run, and reportedly flagging ISIS morale has been boosted.