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ISIS Launches Growing Counterattacks as Offensive Nears Mosul

By Jason Ditz
October 24, 2016



As Iraqi and Kurdish forces overrun empty villages on the outskirts of Mosul, drawing ever closer to ISIS' largest city, the Islamists look to be launching a growing number of

counterattacks against different areas around the country, trying to force some of the invading force to redeploy for defensive operations.

The counterattacks began Friday with surprising moves by ISIS forces against the area around Kirkuk. Since then, attacks have also been reported in Rutba, along the key highway from Baghdad leading east into Jordan and Syria, and in Sinjar, the Yazidi city west of Mosul.

This has been ISIS' reaction to attacks in the past, trying to force the other side to divide its forces and engage in more advantageous fights from their perspective. The three targets so far are notably in three different directions, with Sinjar and Kirkuk clearly aimed at distracting the Kurdish Peshmerga.

Most believe it will be another week or more until troops are actually ready to enter Mosul itself, and the counterattacks are likely to continue to escalate through that time, with Iraq's security forces pushed to their limits trying to sustain such a large offensive.