

Iraqi forces battle ISIS militants in western town, far from Mosul

BAGHDAD (AP) — Iraqi forces, backed by U.S.-led coalition airstrikes, battled Islamic State militants for a third day on Tuesday in a remote western town, hundreds of miles to the south of the operation to retake Mosul, U.S. and Iraqi officials said.

The clashes underway in Rutba, in Iraq’s western Anbar province, are apparently part of the extremist group’s tactics to divert attention — as well as Iraqi and coalition resources — from the battle to retake Mosul from Islamic State militants.

“Fighting is ongoing in Rutba, which is still contested,” said Col. John Dorrian, a spokesman for the U.S.-led coalition.

“The coalition continues conducting strikes to support the Iraqi security forces’ response efforts, including one against a Daesh convoy that was attempting to flee the area,” he added, referring to IS by an Arabic acronym.

Brig. Gen. Yahya Rasool, an Iraqi military spokesman, said the situation was under control and there were no IS fighters in the town. But Rajeh Barakat, an Anbar provincial councilman who sits on the security committee, said IS fighters were still clashing with security forces in two southern neighborhoods of Rutba.

Threatened in Mosul, Islamic State uses alternative tactics

BAGHDAD (AP) — Dozens of Islamic State fighters struck at dawn, storming government and security compounds in and around the northern Iraqi city of Kirkuk last week, in a coordinated assault more than 100 miles from the front lines of the Mosul offensive.

Over the last two years, the extremists have adopted innovative tactics and launched diversionary attacks along the amoeba-like frontiers of their self-styled caliphate, and many now fear they have more surprises in store as Iraqi forces close in on Mosul, the militants’ last urban

bastion in the country.

The Kirkuk assault was carried out by more than 50 militants who may have been part of so-called sleeper cells. They struck targets in and around the city, pinning down Kurdish security forces for two days and killing at least 80 people. A similar attack was launched on the western town of Rutba, hundreds of miles from Mosul, over the weekend.

Here is a look at some of the other tactics the group may employ.

How autism in girls may help reveal the disorder’s secrets

CHICAGO (AP) — Think autism and an image of an awkward boy typically emerges, but the way autism strikes girls — or doesn’t — may help reveal some of the developmental disorder’s frustrating secrets.

Autism is at least four times more common in boys, but scientists taking a closer look are finding some gender-based surprises: Many girls with autism

have social skills that can mask the condition. And some girls do not show symptoms of autism even when they have the same genetic mutations seen in boys with the condition.

“Autism may not be the same thing in boys and girls,” said Kevin Pelphrey, an autism researcher at George Washington University.

The causes of autism aren’t known. Genetic mutations are thought to play a role, and outside factors including older parents and premature birth also have been implicated. But the gender effect is now a hot topic in autism research and one that could lead to new ways of diagnosing and treating a condition that affects at least 1 in 68 U.S. children.

Anger still flares after judge OKs Volkswagen emissions deal

SAN FRANCISCO (AP) — A federal judge approved the largest auto-scandal settlement in U.S. history Tuesday, giving nearly a half-million Volkswagen owners and leaseholders the choice

between selling their cars back or having them repaired so they don’t cheat on emissions tests and spew excess pollution.

U.S. District Judge Charles Breyer said the nearly \$15 billion deal “adequately and fairly” compensates consumers and gets the polluting vehicles off the road as soon as possible.

The German automaker acknowledged last year that about 475,000 Volkswagens and Audis with 2-liter, four-cylinder diesel engines were programmed to cheat on emissions tests.

Under the agreement, owners can choose to have Volkswagen buy back their vehicle regardless of its condition for the full trade-in price on Sept. 18, 2015, when the scandal broke, or pay for repairs. Either way, Volkswagen also will pay owners \$5,100 to \$10,000, depending on the age of the car and whether the owner had it prior to Sept. 18 of last year.

Volkswagen has agreed to spend up to \$10 billion compensating consumers and could start buying back the cars as early as next month. Regulators have not approved any fixes.



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