

Fake News? US-backed Forces Blast Through 8th Century Syrian Wall to Fight ISIS

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ISIS's last holdout in Syria is in Raqqa; its forces have been backed into an ancient wall that surrounds the old city of Raqqa on three sides. The Rafiqah Wall, first constructed in the 8th century by the Abbasid dynasty, is reported to be over 12 feet high, over a meter thick and stretches over 3 miles around the old city.

While the wall had been described as an important fortification for ISIS, the advancement of Syrian troops made the wall a trap that could have allowed the ISIS fighters to be completely wiped out. According to a July 3, 2017 TIME article(1), ISIS fighters had taken positions there “to defend the city [sic]” and planted explosive devices at what the article described as “breaks in the wall.” Under the circumstances, the point to planting explosive devices in the wall would only have been to create escape routes. It was apparent from the next day’s news, however, that the “breaks in the wall” were not adequate for escape.

The US-backed forces, fronted by the so-called “Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF)”, appeared to come to ISIS’s rescue. On the night of July 3rd, the U.S. Central Command (CENTCOM), claimed that SDF had “found a way” through the historic wall at “the most heavily-fortified portion of Raqqa”; two 25 meter-long breaches had been blasted through it. Laughably, the article claimed that the two “small” — almost 100-foot — gaps “will help preserve the remainder of the overall 2,500-meter wall”: now US-backed forces might not need to totally demolish the 1300-year old wall.

While Brett McGurk, described as the US envoy for the anti-ISIS coalition, tweeted that the operation was “a key milestone” in the campaign to “liberate the city”, it is evident what was really being liberated.

Karin Brothers is a freelance writer.

Note

1) Hincks Joseph U.S.-Backed Troops Breach the Perimeter of ISIS’ Last Bastion in Syria Jul 03, 2017
<http://time.com/4844317/raqqa-syria-isis-wall/>

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