

Beat: News

UK jets bomb Daesh to back Mosul push

Mosul decisive battle

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USPA NEWS - AKROTIRI, Cyprus: British Tornado and Typhoon aircraft stationed at a UK air base in Cyprus are pounding Daesh targets ahead of a major offensive by Iraqi security forces next month to recapture the key northern city of Mosul from terrorists, a senior Royal Air Force officer says.

Air Commodore Sammy Sampson said Iraqi forces are confident they can retake the country's second-largest city from Daesh and that British warplanes will provide the needed support to get the job done.

"We'll stand by them. We'll support them. We will make it doable for them," Sampson told reporters Thursday on a guided tour of the RAF Akrotiri base's operations.

Sampson said the eight Tornado and six Typhoon aircraft flying out of RAF Akrotiri have in recent days destroyed numerous Daesh targets to pave the way for the start of the advance on Mosul in the coming weeks.

Mosul is the Daesh group's last major urban stronghold in Iraq, 360 km northwest of Baghdad.

US officials have said for some time that they expect the Mosul operation to begin in October.

One Typhoon strike last week hit a Daesh training camp just inside Iraq on its border with Syria, killing some 40-50 terrorists, said Sampson. The aircraft later destroyed Daesh weapons stockpiles and rocket launchers north of Ramadi in support of Iraqi forces.

But Sampson, who commands the UK's warplanes in the US-led coalition against Daesh, said airstrikes to start reclaiming territory from Daesh both in Iraq and Syria are far from new.

"We were striking targets to weaken Mosul from the very beginning of the campaign," said Sampson, who is based in the Combined Air Operations Center in Qatar.

Sampson said the same applies to the Syrian city of Raqqa, which Daesh considers its de facto capital. He said airstrikes in the Syrian city are "part of the plan" until the decision is made "how and when the liberation of Raqqa is going to be achieved."

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