

# News story: False Caliphate faces collapse as UK marks three year tackling Daesh

Daesh fighters are being pinned down by the Royal Air Force in their former stronghold of Raqqa as the UK marks three years of tackling the barbaric cult in Iraq and Syria.

Royal Air Force aircraft destroyed 17 targets in Syria in a single day last week as the air campaign intensifies, forcing Daesh to splinter and retreat from areas it ruled when the UK voted to begin air strikes in September 2014.

British aircraft have struck Daesh 1,340 times in Iraq and 262 times in Syria. In that time the group has lost territory, finances, leaders and fighters as the 73-member coalition has liberated cities in both countries.

Defence Secretary, Sir Michael Fallon, said:

Britain has made a major contribution to the campaign that has crippled Daesh since 2014, forcing this miserable cult from the gates of Baghdad to the brink of defeat in Raqqa. By air, land and sea UK personnel have played a tireless role in striking targets and training allies.

As the second largest contributor to the Global Coalition's military campaign, the UK has flown more than 8,000 sorties with Tornado and Typhoon jets and Reaper drones, providing strikes, surveillance and reconnaissance, refuelling and transport.

Since 2014 the UK has hit Daesh with over 1,500 strikes, bombarding targets including heavy machine-gun positions, truck-bombs, mortar teams, snipers and weapons stores.

RAF Typhoons, Tornados and Reapers have hounded Daesh day and night, striking from Raqqa and Dayr az Zawr in Syria to Qayyarah and Al Qaim in Iraq.

Air Chief Marshal, Sir Stephen Hillier, said:

This has been an immense effort by RAF airmen and airwomen over the last three years of continued operations, countering Da'esh in Iraq and Syria. However, the tempo continues with RAF aircraft destroying 17 targets in Syria in a single day last week.

Three years ago Daesh was barely an hour from the gates of Baghdad, but today

it has lost more than 73 per cent of the territory it occupied in Iraq and 65 per cent of its former territory in Syria.

The Royal Air Force has played an essential role to allies, helping Syrian Democratic Forces engaged in ground close combat and the Iraqi Security Forces who continue their advance having liberated Mosul and Ninewah province.

More than 5.5 million people have been freed from Daesh's rule and over 2 million displaced Iraqi civilians have returned to their homes. In Mosul alone, it is estimated that over 265,000 people have returned.

On the ground, around 600 British soldiers are in Iraq, helping to train that country's forces. UK troops have so far helped train over 58,000 Iraqi Security Forces in battle winning infantry, counter-IED, engineering and combat medical skills.

Recognising the valuable contributions made by many serving military personnel, Sir Michael announced an Iraq and Syria Operational Service Medal during his recent visit to Iraq.

The UK's commitment from all three Services to the fight against Daesh across the region now numbers just over 1,400 military personnel, with the latest uplift of 44 Royal Engineers announced in September demonstrating the UKs contribution to the campaign.