

## **ISIS loses 30 per cent of its territory in Iraq, Syria to US-led coalition**

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**Baghdad:** The US-led coalition fighting the Islamic State group has said that the militants have lost 30 percent of the territory they once held in Iraq and Syria.

Baghdad-based spokesman Col. Steve Warren told reporters the extremists have lost 40 percent of their territory in Iraq and 20 percent in Syria, adding that they are now in a "defensive crouch."

Since the U.S.-led coalition began launching airstrikes in 2014, Kurdish forces have pushed IS out of parts of northern Iraq, including the town of Sinjar, and driven the extremists out of a band of Syrian territory along the Turkish border. Further south, Iraqi forces and Shiite militias recaptured the Iraqi city of Tikrit last year.

But IS has also made fresh advances, capturing the Syrian town of Palmyra -- home to famed Roman-era ruins -- and the western Iraqi city of Ramadi in May of last year.

Iraqi forces backed by U.S.-led airstrikes drove Islamic State militants from Ramadi's city center last month, recapturing most of the provincial capital of the sprawling Anbar province.

"All of these things add up and we believe this enemy is weaker," Warren said, adding that IS has not gained any new territory since May. "Militarily they are struggling," he added.

IS has continued to launch attacks at Iraqi military positions in Anbar province. Car bomb attacks on the outskirts of the city of Haditha on Monday killed 11, just a week after IS was pushed out of Ramadi.

IS still holds much of northern and western Iraq, including the country's second-largest city Mosul, and large parts of Syria. It also boasts increasingly potent affiliates in Libya, Egypt, Yemen and Afghanistan.

- AP