

Defeat by Annihilation: Mobility and Attrition in the Islamic State's Defense of Mosul

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A detailed look at how the group has chosen to fight the final stages of the battle in northern Iraq, with potential lessons for the next 'last stand' battle in Raqqa.

The Islamic State's defense of Mosul has provided unique insights into how the group has adapted its style of fighting to dense urban terrain. While the Islamic State failed to mount an effective defense in the rural outskirts and outer edges of Mosul, it did mount a confident defense of the denser inner-city terrain, including innovative pairing of car bombs and drones. The group continues to demonstrate a strong preference for mobile defensive tactics that allow it to seize the tactical initiative, mount counterattacks, and infiltrate the adversary's rear areas. Yet, while the Islamic State has fought well in Mosul, it has also been out-fought. Islamic State tactics in the final uncleared northwestern quarter of Mosul are becoming more brutal, including far greater use of civilians as human shields...

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