

IS fighters taking cabs to dodge air coalition strikes

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Mosul (Iraq): Islamic State fighters are abandoning their off-road vehicles and using taxis in this northern Iraqi city to avoid being targeted by war planes from the US-led coalition, local media reported.

Local news site Ankawa cited witnesses as saying that more and more frequently, IS jihadists can be seen driving taxis in Mosul after the US-coalition stepped up air strikes against their vehicles.

Jihadists may also be abandoning their gas-guzzling SUVs due to a sharp jump in fuel prices since a major supply route was cut off with the recent closure of the road from Mosul to IS's stronghold of Raqqa in northern Syria, sources were quoted as telling Ankawa.

Supported by air strikes from the US-led coalition, by Kurdish Peshmerga troops and a Shia-dominated paramilitary force, Iraqi forces on 24 March began a long-awaited offensive to re-take Mosul from IS.

Home to around two million people before it fell to IS during a lightning offensive in 2014, Mosul is by far the biggest city ruled by the jihadist group in either Iraq or Syria.

Iraq's second largest city, Mosul is the 'capital' of IS's self-styled Caliphate, which extends across swathes of territory in Iraq and Syria.

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