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## **MILITANTS BLOW UP OIL WELL IN IRAQ'S NORTHERN KIRKUK PROVINCE**

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A group of gunmen blew up a bomb at the Bai Hassan oil field in Iraq's northern province of Kirkuk on Wednesday, China's news agency Xinhua reported, citing a provincial police chief.

So far no group has claimed responsibility for the attack.

The Kurdish military forces, the Peshmerga, arrived at the scene after the militants had fled and found another two bombs at other installations in the oil field, but managed to defuse them.

Last week, ISIS fighters killed five people in an attack on Bai Hassan, and attempted to take down a gas compression station nearby as well, where they planted bombs after killing four guards. The fifth victim was an engineer working at field.

Sources from the Peshmerga forces said that the attack on the gas station was neutralized and that three of the four ISIS terrorists involved in the double hit were killed, one of them managing to blow himself up, causing explosions in oil storage tanks. The fourth one escaped.

There have been suggestions that the attackers belonged to a sleeper cell based in the oil-rich region of Kirkuk in northern Iraq.

Control over Kirkuk is extremely important for Kurdistan, as it is overwhelmingly dependent on oil for its livelihood, just like Iraq. Currently, the Kurdistan Regional Government has control over some 45 billion barrels of oil (BP estimates), which is about a third of Iraq's total.

ISIS attacks on Kurdish territory have been rarer than elsewhere in Iraq. Yet, the terrorist group is now being driven out of some important strongholds by the Iraqi army (and by the Syrian forces in

Syria), cutting its access to oil, on which it is no less dependent than both Baghdad and Erbil. In July, ISIS set five oilfields on fire near Mosul, one of the first major cities that fell to the terrorists back in 2014.

In Iraq, MacFarland said national forces were gaining ground to recapture the northern city of Mosul. However, US forces still have work to do in terms of turning the Qayyarah air base in northern Iraq into a hub for the battle to retake Mosul.

Despite the recent successes, the US commander warned: "Military success in Iraq and Syria will not necessarily mean the end of Daesh. We can expect the enemy to adapt, to morph into a true insurgent force and terrorist organisation capable of horrific attacks like the one here on 3 July in Baghdad and those others we've seen around the world."

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Kaynak/Source: