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HIGHWAY TO HELL: FOUR CORNERS

Highway to Hell: A report from the frontlines in the battle against Islamic State

“That’s rocket fire. We’re getting very close now to the frontline. There are civilians here, plenty of them, but this is obviously an active combat zone.” Matt Brown

On Monday night Four Corners takes you to the battlefields of Iraq with the ABC’s award winning Middle East correspondent, Matt Brown.

“We’ve been told there’s IS in a car and four IS fighters on motor bikes that are supposed to be coming to attack ...we’re a bit on edge right now.” Matt Brown

In this gripping film, Matt Brown and cameraman Aaron Hollett, capture the fight to take back the city of Mosul from the IS forces which overran the city two years ago, shocking the world with the speed and the ferocity of their victory.

“Mosul is the biggest battle anywhere on the planet this century.” David Kilcullen, Former Chief Strategist, US State Dept

The filming for this story began in October last year when Iraqi forces, backed by US and Australian air power, began their offensive to reclaim Mosul. Over the course of three journeys to the frontline, Matt and Aaron recorded the experiences of the soldiers fighting to liberate their home towns, and the civilians caught in the crossfire.

“They (IS) would target us and we would lie out on the ground so that bullets would not reach us. Shelling was like rain over our heads.” Mosul refugee

“I feel gutted. I am exhausted. We couldn’t treat her. We tried everything. We don’t have enough medical equipment. We don’t even have emergency assistance, not even ambulances for emergency.” Iraqi doctor

Despite the grief, there are moments of happiness and relief as families are reunited when the IS fighters are pushed back.

“I was running fast just to see (my mother) again. When I saw her it was a great moment. I am very happy and relieved.” Kurdish soldier

After months of fighting, government forces enter the suburbs of Mosul. But the city was far from secure, with the pair coming under fire.

“We’ve been hearing sniper rounds come in overhead - the distinctive crack or zing.” Matt Brown

And in interviews with the former commander of the Multi-National Force in Iraq, General David Petraeus and his then advisor, former Chief Strategist for the State Dept, David Kilcullen, they outline just how hard it will be to truly claim victory against IS.

“The liberation of Mosul from the Islamic State will be a very, very important achievement and a milestone in the battle against the Islamic State. But it will not mark the end of the Islamic State in Iraq or certainly in Syria.” General David Petraeus (Retd).

Highway to Hell, reported by Matt Brown and presented by Sarah Ferguson, goes to air on Monday 20th February at 8.30pm EDT. It is replayed on Tuesday 21st February at 10.00am and Wednesday 22nd at 11pm. It can also be seen on ABC News 24 on Saturday at 8.00pm AEST, ABC iview and at abc.net.au/4corners.

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