

《Syrian government forces advancing inside Palmyra》

The Britain-based Syrian Observatory for Human Rights says Syrian government forces have advanced into Palmyra on several fronts, as they try to retake the city from the Islamic State group.

The monitoring group said the fighting was the heaviest yet in the army's three-week campaign, as government forces were backed by waves of air strikes and artillery barrages. It said Syrian soldiers and allied militias had taken control of neighbourhoods in the western and northern parts of the city.

Palmyra was seized by the Islamist group in May 2015. If government forces succeed, the recapture of Palmyra would be the biggest defeat for the Islamic State in Syria.

As we head into Palmyra deep into the deserts of central Syria, we are often escorted by convoys of reinforcements heading into the city in a clear signal that the military is sparing nothing for this battle.

The mountains you can see behind me are the line that separates between areas controlled by the Syrian government and areas controlled by ISIL. We are less than five kilometers from ISIL pose on this road we are driving on right now. Officers from the Syrian army have told us that you can only travel along this road after crouching it for landmines and other explosive devices that ISIL plans here on daily bases.

Before entering the battlefield Syrian officers brief us on the latest in the situation and much needed security measures.

"The situation is changing rapidly on the ground and this means it is more dangerous and difficult for us to secure journalists who want to cover this story, the terrorists have vast expertise when it comes to desert warfare and we have that now as well after we fought them here for over a year," said General Sameer, Syrian Army Press Office.

The target of the military operation here is to get to Palmyra but to so this the army has to take the surrounding mountains that over look the city-a task that can be extremely challenging with ISIL militants having the high ground.

The artillery fires first a hail of mortars to occupy the defenders and then infantry start climbing up, new artillery pieces that the military got from Russia means more accuracy .The dots you see are soldiers from the Syrian army's elite units and they are taking Syriatel hill the highest hill over looking Palmyra , the citadel of Palmyra is also over the same hill.

Here the air force steps in. Fighters jets won't leave the sky of battle escorting ground troops every step of the way .

"The battle is very difficult but we won't stop till we take the city we won't turn back no matter what happens , ISIL brought more reinforcement last night but it won't make a difference," said Ihsan, Syrian soldier.

Before night fall the army takes the ancient citadel and we can get a first glimpse at the archeological site of

Palmyra over two thousand years old columns that has withstood the test of times, wars and even the world's most dangerous terror group ISIL.

