

US Killing Far More Civilians in Syria Than They'll Admit

CENTCOM Won't Even Look Into Most Incidents

By [Jason Ditz](#)

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On July 19, US warplanes dropped bombs on a crowd of civilians in the Syrian village of Tokhar. When the dust cleared, a minimum of 95 people were killed, and some groups claimed that as the wounded began dying, the toll rose to nearly 200.

CENTCOM seems to accept the pieces of this story. There was definitely a crowd of civilians, and there were definitely US warplanes dropping 500-pound bombs on them, and those bombs definitely hit the target. Getting them to the part where bombing a bunch of civilians with deadly explosives [meant killing them, however, is a herculean task.](#)



Throughout the ISIS War, CENTCOM has dramatically undercounted the number of civilians killed on so many occasions that it's become a cliché. More than half of the time, CENTCOM won't even investigate the incident, insisting there isn't enough "sufficient verifiable information."

Amnesty International officials say that this is almost always the case as far as CENTCOM is concerned, and that they routinely reject information they bring them that includes the names of slain civilians and pictures of the aftermath of the strike. The Pentagon won't even provide them with criteria on what they actually would want.

Even on those rare occasions, like Tokhar, that CENTCOM is pressured into agreeing to an

investigation, such a process regularly lasts months on end, with no transparency, and assuming they ever get around to admitting the incident happened at all, they'll almost certainly shrug it off with a death toll far lower than the number of bodies shown in pictures after the incident.

It is this process through which US officials have claimed civilian death tolls in this current air war are more than a factor of ten fewer than in other recent air wars, including other air wars the US is waging right now. With the US mostly bombing populated areas, analysts are in agreement that this simply isn't credible.

Still, Pentagon officials want to be able to sell the public in "liberated" ISIS territory on the idea that the US is being extremely careful and limiting the death toll to absolute bare minimum. That the actual evidence shows this is clearly not the case appears to be of no real concern to them.

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