

US-Led Airstrikes Kill as Many Civilians as Nice Attack-but Get No Front-Page Headlines in Major US Media

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A coalition airstrike reported on Tuesday that killed at least 85 Syrian civilians—one more than died in the Nice attack in France last week—wasn't featured at all on the front pages of two of the top US national newspapers, the [New York Times](#) and [LA Times](#), and only merited brief blurbs on the front pages of the [Wall Street Journal](#) and [Washington Post](#), with the actual stories buried on pages A-16 and A-15, respectively.

According to the London **Telegraph** ([7/19/16](#)), the airstrike killed “more than 85 civilians” after the “coalition mistook them for Islamic State fighters.” Eight families were represented among the dead, with victims “as young as three.” The **Intercept** ([7/19/16](#)) reported the death toll could end up being well over 100.

The Pentagon has not denied the reports, saying an investigation is underway, according to **Stars and Stripes** ([7/19/16](#)), a media outlet that operates inside the Department of Defense.

As many on **Twitter** pointed out, the number of dead was roughly equal to that of the recent Nice attack, yet the airstrike did not garner nearly as much media coverage, nor did news outlets convey an outpouring of grief:

US “accidentally” obliterated 85 civilians. Same number as killed in Nice but you won't see wall-to-wall coverage <https://t.co/eS8wEa14pQ>

— Rania Khalek (@RaniaKhalek) [20 July 2016](#)

By contrast, the Nice attack garnered multiple front-page stories in the [New York Times](#) and [LA Times](#), as well as significantly more than 20-word blurbs in the [Wall Street Journal](#) and [Washington Post](#).

For those who see a “false equivalency,” there are two mitigating reasons for this glaring discrepancy: 1) The airstrike deaths were an “accident” and 2) Syria's a war zone, where civilian deaths are to be expected. Neither of these retorts are satisfactory, and certainly not enough to justify a virtual front-page blackout.

On the issue of accidental deaths having less import than purposeful ones, this doesn't explain why unintentional natural disaster deaths [routinely receive splashing front-page coverage](#). Intent rarely affects coverage of these events; only death counts do. And this is

granting the deaths were actually accidental, which we don't know for sure at this time, or whether the US military was using tactics, like so-called "[signature strikes](#)," that are known to greatly increase the chances of killing noncombatants.

As for the "war zone" factor, [according to Airwars](#), a Western group that monitors civilian deaths at the hands of the US-led coalition, the total number of civilians deaths since the beginning of airstrikes in September 2014 has been 190. To increase this number by almost 50 percent in a matter of days would indeed be a radical departure from the normal course of events—rendering it more than newsworthy.

Indeed, all of the publications in question ran a story on the "dozens of deaths" at the hands of US-led airstrikes, so we know they deemed it notable. Just not notable enough, for whatever reason, to put in a prominent position for US audiences.

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