



News Release

HEADQUARTERS UNITED STATES CENTRAL COMMAND
7115 South Boundary Boulevard
MacDill AFB, Fla. 33621-5101
Phone: (813) 529-0220

May 21, 2015
Release # 20150506

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

CTJF-OIR Completes Civilian Casualty Investigation

TAMPA, Fla. -- Lt. Gen. James L. Terry, Combined Joint Task Force – Operation Inherent Resolve commander, has reviewed and approved the findings and recommendations of an investigation that he directed into allegations that U.S. airstrikes against a network of veteran al Qaeda operatives, sometimes called “Khorasan Group” Nov. 5-6, 2014, in the vicinity of Harim City, Syria, likely resulted in non-combatant casualties.

The preponderance of the evidence in the investigation indicates the airstrikes conducted against facilities used by Khorasan Group in the vicinity of Harim City, Syria, likely led to the deaths of two non-combatant children. Terry directed the investigation on Jan. 8, 2015 and approved the findings of the investigation on April 5, 2015.

The redacted investigation has been released and is available at USCENTCOM’s Freedom of Information Act Reading Room at <http://tinyurl.com/USCENTCOM-CIVCAS-INVESTIGATION>.

Prior to the strikes, the Department of Defense conducted a thorough assessment, review, and validation process of the targeted buildings, and assessed that the Khorasan Group was using them exclusively for military purposes. In that assessment process, there was no indication that there were children at any of the targeted buildings. The strikes also resulted in minor injuries to two adult non-combatants residing near one of the targets.

The investigation concluded that the Nov. 5-6 airstrikes in the vicinity of Harim City, Syria, resulted in the destruction of the Khorasan Group targets. All ordnance functioned properly and struck their intended targets accurately. This triggered secondary explosions.

The airstrikes were conducted in accordance with applicable military authorizations, targeting guidance, and applicable rules of engagement. The targets engaged were valid military targets, and the Law of Armed Conflict principles of military necessity, humanity, proportionality, and distinction were adhered to during the targeting and engagement process. Measures were taken to avoid unintended death or injury of non-combatants during the strike by reviewing the targets thoroughly prior to engagement, relying on accurate assessments of the targets, and engaging the targets when the risk to non-combatants was minimized.

“We regret the unintentional loss of lives,” Terry said. “The Coalition continues to take all reasonable measures during the targeting process to mitigate risks to non-combatants, and to comply with the principles of the Law of Armed Conflict.”

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