

Pentagon: 45 civilians killed by coalition strikes on Islamic State

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Investigations conducted during the month of March reveal that US-led coalition airstrikes targeting Islamic State killed 45 civilians, mostly in and around the Iraqi city of Mosul, according to a Pentagon statement released on Sunday.

In each incident, the Pentagon said "all feasible precautions were taken," but the strikes still resulted in "unintentional" loss of civilian life.

The report did not include findings from an ongoing investigation into a March 17 strike targeting Islamic State fighters in Mosul. [That strike resulted in more than 100 civilian deaths, according to reports from residents.](#) Last month, the US acknowledged coalition planes conducted a strike "at the location corresponding to allegations of civilian casualties," but did not confirm the reports of high civilian casualties.



State held territory in Mosul in 2016 Credit: AP

The March 17 strike sparked outrage in Iraq and beyond with calls from local government officials as well as the United Nations for greater restraint in the fight against IS for Mosul. The United Nations reported nearly 2,000 civilians have been treated for trauma since the fight for western Mosul began in February following the formal launch of the operation to retake Mosul in October 2016.

Coalition officials have declined to give a time frame as to when the investigation into the incident will be complete. The Pentagon acknowledged at least 352 civilians have been killed by coalition strikes in Iraq and Syria since the start of the air campaign against Islamic state, also known as Isil, in 2014. Activists and monitoring groups put the number much higher. The London-based monitoring group Airwars reported that coalition strikes have killed more than 3,000 civilians in Iraq and Syria since 2014.

Iraqi forces declared Mosul's eastern half "fully liberated" in January, but have since struggled to retake the city's western side. Claustrophobic terrain and tens of thousands of civilians being held by the extremists as human shields have bogged Iraqi and coalition forces down.

The Sunday statement also included the findings of an audit begun in March that inspected the way the US-led coalition reports and tracks civilian casualties in the fight against Islamic State. The statement said the audit found that 80 civilian deaths caused by coalition airstrikes had not been previously publicly reported and two civilian deaths previously reported were found to have not been caused by the coalition.

The US began the campaign of airstrikes against Islamic State in 2014 after the extremists pushed into Iraq from Syria, overrunning Mosul and large swaths of Iraq's north and west. Since then Iraqi forces have slowly clawed back territory. Now a cluster of western Mosul neighborhoods are the last significant urban terrain under Islamic State control in Iraq.

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