

IRAO

U.S. denies looser rules for avoiding civilian casualties.

By Sinan Salaheddin
and Robert Burns
Associated Press

BAGHDAD — U.S. airstrikes probably played a role in the deaths of dozens of civilians in Mosul earlier this month, U.S. and Iraqi military officials acknowledged Tuesday, but they denied the rules for avoiding civilian casualties have been loosened despite a recent spike in civilian casualties.

Speaking from Baghdad to reporters at the Pentagon, the top commander of U.S. forces in Iraq said an ongoing investigation may reveal a more complicated explanation for the March 17 explosion that residents say killed at least 100 people, including the possibility that Islamic State militants rigged the building with explosives after forcing civilians inside.

Army Lt. Gen. Stephen Townsend said a recent spate of civilian casualties in Mosul was "fairly predictable" given the densely populated urban neighborhoods that Islamic State fighters are defending against Iraqi government troops. But the civilian deaths cannot be attributed to any loosening of American military rules of combat, he said, and Washington hasn't decided to tolerate greater risk of civilian casualties in U.S. airstrikes.

Amnesty International on Tuesday said the rising death toll suggested the U.S.-led coalition wasn't taking adequate precautions as it helps Iraqi forces try to retake the city.

Townsend acknowledged the U.S. had conducted multiple airstrikes in the area of the explosions. That, coupled with initial findings by



A coalition airstrike destroys an Islamic State car bomb March 9 that failed to explode in Mosul, Iraq. Iraqi security forces are fighting neighborhood by neighborhood to remove the Islamic State from its last strongholds in western Mosul. NOR PRICETT / THE NEW YORK TIMES

U.S. technical experts who visited the scene, led him to say: "My initial assessment is that we probably had a role in these casualties."

But Townsend said the type of munitions used by the U.S. in the airstrikes should not have been able to bring down the entire building. He said U.S. officials were assessing the possibility that Islamic State forced civilians to gather there, and that the militants filled the building with explosives, he said.

"My initial assessment is that we probably had a role in these casualties," Townsend said. "What we don't know for certain is whether that strike is responsible for the casualties in question."

"The fact that the whole building collapsed contradicts our involvement," he said. "The munition that we used should not have collapsed an entire building. So that's one of those things we're trying to figure out in the investigative process."

In the most extensive U.S.

U.S. airstrikes killing many civilians

DATE	WHERE	CIVILIAN DEATHS
7/1/02	Central Afghanistan	50
6/9/07	Uruzgan, Afghan.	52
7/4/08	Nangarhar, Afghan.	47
8/22/08	Arzabad, Afghan.	90
8/22/08	Herat, Afghan.	33
11/3/08	Kandahar, Afghan.	37
5/4/09	Farah, Afghan.	*140
9/4/09	Kunduz, Afghan.	30-40
10/15	Kunduz, Afghan.	42
11/3/16	Kunduz, Afghan.	33

* Military estimates that at least 78 were Taliban fighters.

"If we did it - and I'd say there is at least a fair chance we did - it was an unintentional accident of war," he said.

explosion damaged number of buildings, including the one where (the Islamic State) crammed about 130 civilians," said the ministry's spokesman, Brig. Gen. Yahya Rasool.

The Islamic State planned the slaughter to "impact the civilians, to inflame the public and to convey a wrong message to the world that the joint forces and the international coalition are behind the killing and bombings,"

The fight for western Mosul began in February after Iraqi security forces pushed the militants out of the eastern side of the Tigris River city. In recent weeks, the Islamic State defenders have taken shelter in neighborhoods with narrow streets and trapped civilians, Townsend said.

"It is there that the enemy has invested 2½ years of defensive preparations," he said, calling it the "toughest phase" of the war.

"I think that's really the explanation for the civilian casualties," Townsend added. "Although our partners and the coalition have made mistakes that harmed civilians, we have never targeted them - not once."

Maj. Gen. Joseph Martin, the commander of coalition ground forces in Iraq, also said recent civilian casualties were not the result of any change in the rules that govern the use of U.S. air power or authorities granted to U.S. commanders.

A more aggressive Iraqi approach allowed U.S. military advisers, who accompany the Iraqis in Mosul, to more quickly and effectively coordinate airstrikes, Maritz said.

In report released Tuesday, Amnesty International said the spike in civilian casualties in Mosul suggests the U.S.-led coalition was not taking adequate precautions.

to protect civilians. It cited a second strike Saturday that it said killed 100 in Tripoli and

Evidence gathered on the ground in Mosul "points to an alarming pattern of U.S.-led coalition airstrikes which have destroyed whole houses with entire families inside," the report said. It said any failure to take precautions to prevent civilian casualties would be "in flagrant violation of international humanitarian law."

Geneva, the spokesman of the U.N. human rights office, Rupert Colville, said the agency has tallied the deaths of at least 307 people between Feb. 17 and March 22, including 140 from the March 17 airstrike.

In both Syria and Iraq, local politicians and activists say the high numbers of

"People used to feel safe when the American planes were in the sky, because they

knew they didn't hit civilians," said Hussam Essa, a founder of Raqqa Is Being Slaughtered Silently, which monitors violence in Raqqa province. "They were only afraid of the Russian and regime planes. But now they are very afraid of the Ameri-

Civilians, humanitarian groups and monitoring officials have repeatedly warned

analysts have repeatedly warned of the possibility of increased civilian casualties in western Mosul due to the higher density of the population there and the increased reliance on airstrikes and artillery.

SITe

Wellington Town Square Variance

WELLINGTON PLANNING, ZONING & ADJUSTMENT BOARD NOTICE OF QUASI-JUDICIAL PUBLIC HEARING

NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN that a public hearing will be held on the Variance Petition described below:

A RESOLUTION OF THE PLANNING, ZONING AND ADJUSTMENT BOARD OF WELLINGTON, FLORIDA GRANTING A VARIANCE FOR PLOTION 17-33 2017-24 VARI FROM WELLINGTONS LAND AND DEVELOPMENT REGULATION SCHEME 6.6.3.2. (DALE 4.84 100 PROPERTY DEVELOPMENT REGULATIONS AND SCHEME 7.3.10.5.1. (DALE 7.3.7.2. NOTICE OF RIGHT-OF-WAY BUFFER STRIPS FOR CERRAN PROPERTY KNOWN AS WELLINGTON TOWN SQUARE, LOCATED AT THE SOUTHWEST CORNER OF FOREST HILL BOULEVARD AND SOUTH SHORE BOULEVARD, AS MORE SPECIFICALLY DESCRIBED HEREIN, PROVIDING A CONTEXTS CLAUSE, PROVIDING A SEVERABILITY CLAUSE, AND PROVIDING AN EFFECTIVE DATE.

No general public hearing will be conducted before the Wellington Planning, Zoning and Adjustment Board as follows:

Location: Village Hall, 12300 Forest Hill Boulevard, Wellington, Florida.

Date: April 13, 2017, at 7:00 PM, or as soon thereafter as may be held in the orderly course of business. The hearing of the matter may be continued from time to time as may be deemed necessary.

Notice is hereby given that members of the Wellington Council may attend and participate in the board proceedings.

All interested parties are invited to attend and be heard with respect to the proposed resolution. Copies of all documents pertaining to the proposed resolution are available for review at the Planning and Zoning Division of the address listed below and can be reviewed by the public weekdays between the hours of 8:00 a.m. and 5:00 p.m. and on Wednesdays from 7:00 a.m. and 6:00 p.m.

**Planning & Zoning Division
12300 West Forest Hill Boulevard
Wellington, Florida, 33414
(561) 791-4000**

Appendix: If a person is desired to appear and be heard with respect to any matter considered at such hearing, he/she will need to record a statement of the proceedings and for such persons may need to ensure that all relevant facts and circumstances are presented, including the testimony and evidence upon which the applicant is to be heard. All appeals must be filed in accordance with the rules and provisions of the Wellington Land Development Regulations.

Pursuant to the provisions of the Americans With Disabilities Act, any person requesting special accommodations to participate in this hearing, because of a disability-related physical impairment, should contact the Wellington Manager's Office at (561) 791-4000 at least two calendar days prior to the hearing.

Dated: _____
April 26, 2017
April 26, 2017
April 26, 2017

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