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# **Department of Defense**

## **Annual Report on Civilian Casualties in Connection with United States Military Operations in 2024**

Submitted pursuant to Section 1057 of the National Defense Authorization Act for  
Fiscal Year 2018 (Public Law 115-91), as amended.

The estimated cost of this report or study for the Department of Defense is approximately \$2,450 in Fiscal  
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Connection with United States Military Operations in 2024**

This report is submitted pursuant to Section 1057 of the National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) for Fiscal Year (FY) 2018 (Public Law 115-91), as amended (“Section 1057”). Section 1057 provides that “the Secretary of Defense shall submit to the congressional defense committees a report on civilian casualties caused as a result of United States military operations during the preceding year.”

This report primarily provides information about U.S. military operations in 2024. This report also contains updates to information DoD previously reported to the congressional defense committees pursuant to Section 1057.

Some of the information provided in prior reports about U.S. military operations in 2017-2022 has been repeated in this report because the information was relevant to U.S. military operations in 2024.

This report is publicly available at [Defense.gov](https://www.defense.gov).

As noted in Section 1 of Executive Order 13732 of July 1, 2016, *United States Policy on Pre- and Post-Strike Measures to Address Civilian Casualties in U.S. Operations Involving the Use of Force*, the protection of civilians is fundamentally consistent with the effective, efficient, and decisive use of force in pursuit of U.S. national interests. DoD’s efforts to mitigate and respond to civilian harm are a direct reflection of U.S. values. Minimizing civilian casualties can further mission objectives; help maintain the support of partner governments and vulnerable populations; and enhance the legitimacy and sustainability of U.S. operations critical to U.S. national security.

The U.S. military is steadfastly committed to limiting harm to civilians, and DoD has a strong record of compliance with the law of war. As a matter of policy, U.S. forces routinely conduct operations under policy standards that are more protective of civilians than required by the law of war, and we are committed to continuing to improve our approach. This commitment is reflected in DoD’s consistent efforts to maintain and promote best practices that reduce the likelihood of civilian harm, take appropriate steps when harm occurs, and draw lessons from DoD operations to further enhance our ability to mitigate civilian harm. Section 2 of Executive Order 13732 catalogues certain best practices DoD has implemented to protect civilians during armed conflict and directs those measures be continued in present and future operations. During 2024, all operations were conducted consistent with the best practices identified in Section 2 of Executive Order 13732.

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### **I. U.S. MILITARY OPERATIONS DURING 2024 CONFIRMED, OR REASONABLY SUSPECTED, TO HAVE RESULTED IN CIVILIAN CASUALTIES**

During 2024, U.S. forces remained engaged in several military operations, and DoD has assessed that U.S. military operations in 2024 resulted in two civilians killed and two civilians injured. This report contains updates to information submitted to Congress in the annual Section 1057 report on U.S. military operations during 2023, based on reports of civilian casualties from U.S. military operations that have been received and assessed since the report was submitted in 2024.

Previous reports used the term “a declared theater of active armed conflict” in the way that term was understood at the time of the enactment of 10 U.S.C. § 130f, “Notification requirements for sensitive military operations”, which has since been amended and no longer includes this terminology. Additionally, the term “a declared theater of active armed conflict” is also not defined in relevant DoD doctrine.

For the purposes of this report, U.S. military operations in Iraq and Syria in 2024 and relevant prior years are considered to have occurred in “a declared theater of active armed conflict.” Thus, all U.S. military operations and particular instances listed below occurred in a declared theater of active armed conflict.

DoD’s longstanding policy is to comply with the law of war in all armed conflicts, however characterized. DoD conducts its operations in accordance with law of war requirements, including law of war protections for civilians, such as the fundamental principles of distinction and proportionality, and the requirement to take feasible precautions in planning and conducting attacks to reduce the risk of harm to civilians and other persons and objects protected from being made the object of attack.

This report addresses only civilian casualties attributed to the use of U.S.-operated weapons. For example, if a munition fired from a U.S. aircraft resulted in civilian casualties, the civilian casualties would be included in this report even if the airstrike was planned by a staff composed of personnel from multiple nations participating in coalition efforts and was guided to the target by a foreign Joint Terminal Attack Controller.

The numbers of civilian casualties provided in this report are based on assessments in which DoD has been able to conclude that, based on the available information, it is more likely than not that one or more civilian casualties occurred. Section II of this report describes the assessment processes in more detail.

#### **A. Operation INHERENT RESOLVE and other U.S. military actions related to Iraq and Syria.**

In 2024, U.S. Central Command (USCENTCOM) primarily conducted operations in Iraq and Syria under Combined Joint Task Force–Operation INHERENT RESOLVE (CJTF-OIR). Although the strategic landscape in the USCENTCOM area of responsibility is constantly changing, the methodology applied and lessons learned in Iraq and Syria continue to be relevant

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throughout the USCENTCOM area of responsibility and in any other region where civilian casualties could occur.

The CJTF-OIR coalition continues to maintain pressure on the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) to ensure the group's enduring defeat in Iraq and Syria working by, with, and through local partner forces. CJTF-OIR advises, assists, and enables partnered forces until they can independently defeat ISIS in designated areas of Iraq and Syria to set conditions for long-term security cooperation frameworks.

The mission of the Coalition is to support our partner forces through advising, assisting, and enabling at the operational and strategic level. CJTF-OIR works closely with local, regional, and international actors in Iraq and designated areas of Syria, to help bring stability to conflict affected areas and to work towards enduring security partnerships.

CJTF-OIR receives reports of civilian harm from military ground units and aircrews, as well as from a variety of sources, such as traditional media organizations, social media, private individuals, and non-governmental organizations (NGOs). CJTF-OIR carefully reviews reports of civilian harm, regardless of their source. This report lists only reports of civilian casualties attributed to U.S. forces. Information in this report may not match publicly available information released by USCENTCOM and CJTF-OIR. This is because CJTF-OIR, as a matter of strategy and policy, considers all civilian casualties to be the combined result of "Coalition" action and does not separately report civilian harm as attributed to a single nation.

As of February 1, 2025, CJTF-OIR assessed there were two incidents of civilian casualties in 2024 that were more likely than not a result of U.S. military operations in Iraq and Syria. USCENTCOM reviewed four reports of civilian casualties which it assessed were not more likely than not a result of U.S. military operations in 2024.

The table and information below summarize determinations of the relevant civilian casualty assessments, including additional details about instances assessed to have resulted in civilian casualties.

	<b>Date of Incident</b>	<b>Location</b>	<b>Operation Type</b>	<b>Civilians Injured</b>	<b>Civilians Killed</b>
1	02 FEB 24	Al Qaim, Iraq	Air	0	1
2	22 FEB 24	Classified Range, Syria	Ground	2	1
TOTAL				2	2

**Incident #1** occurred during the period of darkness between February 2-3, 2024, in Al Qaim, Iraq.

Incident #1 resulted in the death of one adult male. The type of operation was an air strike using strike authority against a declared hostile force in an area of armed conflict. A significant

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amount of reliable information was available to inform a civilian harm assessment regarding the strike, due to its proximity to current Areas of Operation. Witness interviews and site visits were not conducted by the involved unit. Airborne sensors observed the strike clearly in favorable weather conditions. Information was used from intelligence reporting, imagery, open-source reporting, and the Iraqi Ministry of Foreign Affairs. CJTF-OIR contacted the affected family to express their condolence, and a decision on whether to offer an *ex gratia* payment is under consideration.

**Incident #2** occurred on February 22, 2024, at a classified location in the general vicinity of Al-Hasakah, Syria.

Incident #2 resulted in the death of one child and the injury of two other children. No combat operation was related to this incident, which was more likely than not due to a compilation of factors related to operating a military weapons range. This incident was self-reported by U.S. and partner forces. A civilian harm assessment was conducted, which was informed by military interpreters, CJTF-OIR personnel, and partner forces. The assessment recommended the installation of a fence/barrier along the perimeter of the range to establish boundary lines and to prevent civilians from entering the range. Possible *ex gratia* payments related to this incident are under consideration.

### Updates to Previous Section 1057 Reports

CJTF-OIR routinely receives new reports of civilian harm related to U.S. military operations from prior years, assesses reports that were not completed in previous years, and re-considers previous assessments if new relevant information is discovered.

The following table provides updates to information reported in previous Section 1057 reports, based upon additional assessments that were completed since the report on U.S. military operations during 2023.

	Date of Incident	Location	Operation Type	Civilians Injured	Civilians Killed
A	26 DEC 23	Al Hillah, Babylon Province, Iraq	Air	1	2
TOTAL				1	2

**Incident A** occurred on December 26, 2023, near the town of al Hillah, in the Babylon Province of Iraq.

Incident A resulted in the death of two adult males and the injury of one adult male. The type of operation was an air strike using authority against a declared hostile force in an area of armed conflict. A significant amount of reliable information was used to conduct a civilian harm assessment because of the strike's proximity to Coalition bases and the relatively recent timeframe of the information. Sources included military intelligence reporting, imagery, open-source reporting, and the Iraqi Ministry of Health. Witness interviews and site visits were not conducted. CJTF-OIR coordinated with an NGO for assistance in contacting the affected

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families to offer an *ex gratia* payment. Each family expressed that they did not want any further contact regarding this incident.

### **B. U.S. military actions in Yemen**

USCENTCOM's mission in Yemen is to degrade the capabilities of Iran-backed Houthi Forces who threaten regional partners and maritime security in the Red Sea, Bab al-Mandeb Strait, and Gulf of Aden, through targeted strikes and military pressure, while working to protect U.S. and coalition personnel and interests in the region.

As of February 1, 2025, USCENTCOM has not assessed that any report of civilian harm in Yemen during 2024 more likely than not resulted from U.S. military operations. USCENTCOM is currently assessing eight NGO reports of civilian harm potentially related to U.S. military operations in Yemen during 2024.

### **C. U.S. military actions in Africa**

The U.S. is one of several countries providing support to the Federal Government of Somalia, including humanitarian aid, stabilization efforts, economic development, and military assistance. In 2024, U.S. Africa Command's (USAFRICOM) overarching strategic goals in Somalia was to disrupt al-Shabaab's ability to conduct attacks outside of Somalia and to increase regional stability. USAFRICOM contributes to multi-national efforts in Somalia to secure the population from insurgent attacks while conducting direct action to disrupt terrorist threats to U.S. persons, the U.S. homeland, and U.S. interests. USAFRICOM's approach to achieving these goals includes training and advising Somalia's Danab Advanced Infantry Brigade in coordination with the Department of State. During 2024, USAFRICOM oversaw the delivery of a variety of military equipment including small arms and medical supplies to the Danab forces trained by the Department of State, increasing the Danab's capacity to conduct longer duration offensive operations. USAFRICOM's support to the Somali National Army (SNA) and the Federal Government of Somalia enabled the SNA to conduct operations in central and southern Somalia during 2024.

In 2024, USAFRICOM reviewed seven reports of civilian harm.

USAFRICOM closed reviews of five reports of civilian harm, assessing that the civilian harm reported was not more likely than not that the result of U.S. military operations. In four of these cases, USAFRICOM could not correlate the report to kinetic activity. In one case, USAFRICOM could correlate the report to kinetic activity, but determined U.S. military operations were unlikely to have caused the harm.

USAFRICOM has assigned an investigating officer to conduct a preliminary inquiry for one report received during the relevant timeframe which relates to an airstrike in 2018. That inquiry remains ongoing at the time of this report.

The reports of potential civilian harm incidents arose from news media reporting, open-source social media, and correspondence from civil society organizations to Commander,

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USAFRICOM. USAFRICOM released quarterly reports on its public website detailing the status and results of ongoing or completed assessments of reports of civilian harm.

## **II. DOD PROCESSES FOR ASSESSING REPORTS OF CIVILIAN CASUALTIES FROM U.S. MILITARY OPERATIONS**

As reflected in Section 2 of Executive Order 13732, *United States Policy on Pre- and Post-Strike Measures To Address Civilian Casualties in U.S. Operations Involving the Use of Force*, of July 1, 2016, the U.S. military, as appropriate and consistent with mission objectives and applicable law, including the law of war, has a practice of reviewing or investigating incidents involving civilian casualties, including by considering relevant information from all available sources, such as other agencies, partner governments, and NGOs, and taking measures to mitigate the likelihood of future incidents of civilian casualties.

On December 21, 2023, the Department released the DoD Instruction (DoDI) 3000.17 on Civilian Harm Mitigation and Response (CHMR), which directed commands to use standardized processes for conducting civilian harm assessments and investigations. The DoDI states that the Department conducts, documents, and archives timely and thorough assessments of civilian harm that may have resulted from U.S. military operations, at a scale appropriate to the operational environment; that the requirement to conduct such assessments applies regardless of sensitivity or security protections; and, to facilitate such assessments, the Department collects and archives accurate data regarding U.S. military operations to the greatest extent practicable and collects relevant information regarding civilian harm from external sources, including public sources.

The DoDI lays out six purposes for civilian harm assessments: (1) assess whether civilian harm resulted from U.S. military operations; (2) identify and document the causes of civilian harm; (3) enable learning that improves DoD operational and institutional capability, capacity, and readiness to mitigate and respond to civilian harm; (4) support information requirements of military and civilian leadership, including to inform planning and decision-making in ongoing operations and to fulfill external reporting requirements; (5) enable acknowledgements and other appropriate responses to civilians harmed by U.S. military operations; and (6) enable timely responses to reports from outside the DoD that civilian harm may have resulted from U.S. military operations. The DoDI further allows for command investigations of civilian harm to be conducted in addition or in place of a civilian harm assessment, and identifies the following circumstances for which a command investigation of civilian harm may be appropriate: (1) to answer questions not sufficiently addressed by, or outside the scope of, a civilian harm assessment; (2) to inquire into potential misconduct not within the purview of a Military Criminal Investigative Organization, or related matters that may have contributed to civilian harm; or (3) to facilitate a more detailed inquiry into matters that a relevant authority deems to be sufficiently complex or significant as to warrant the use of command investigative mechanisms.

When assessing reports of civilian casualties, DoD considers whether any members of the civilian population were injured or killed as a direct result of U.S. military operations. For the purposes of such assessments, DoD does not include members of the civilian population who have forfeited the protections of civilian status by engaging in hostilities. For example, DoDI 3000.17, defines “civilian casualty” as “Death or physical injury of civilians who are protected as

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such, but excluding harm to DoD personnel or contractor personnel supporting U.S. military operations.”

Further information about different classes of persons under the law of war, including “civilians” and “combatants,” can be found in Chapter IV of the DoD Law of War Manual (June 2015, Updated July 2023), which is available at

<https://ogc.osd.mil/Portals/99/Law%20of%20War%202023/DOD-LAW-OF-WAR-MANUAL-JUNE-2015-UPDATED-JULY%202023.pdf?ver=Qbxamfouw4znu1I7DVMcsW%3d%3d>.

DoDI 3000.17 provides procedures for conducting civilian harm assessments. In addition, in preparation for and throughout the duration of crisis or conflict, it requires combatant commands to establish or maintain civilian harm assessment cells (CHACs) and to have a Civilian Harm Assessment and Investigation Coordinator in place at the combatant command-level, or, as appropriate, at subordinate operational commands.

CHACs receive and compile information related to civilian harm, including information from combat assessments and information from other DoD and non-DoD sources, that is relevant and necessary for conducting assessments as soon as the operational environment permits. In assessing reports of civilian harm, the command or entity seeks to review all readily available information from a variety of sources and may seek additional information that is not readily available, for example by searching social media and conducting interviews. Sources of information may include, but are not limited to, operational planning data and reporting, video surveillance and other data from intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance assets, witness observations (including those of partnered forces) where available, news reports, and information provided by NGOs and other sources, such as local officials or social media. In reviewing the report, the command or entity seeks to assess whether civilian casualties more likely than not resulted from U.S. military operations. The “more likely than not standard” reflects the command’s best understanding based on the information available at the time of the assessment, as well as the reality that information during military operations is often lacking or incomplete. If there is reason to believe that civilians were injured or killed—or when the scope of a civilian harm assessment includes damage or destruction of civilian objects, that civilian objects were damaged or destroyed—and that such harm resulted from U.S. military operations, and if other available information does not provide greater reason to believe that civilians were not killed or injured as a result of U.S. military operations, then the “more likely than not” standard would be met.

When receiving information indicating civilian harm may have occurred, CHACs review the information and, if the necessary baseline information to conduct a civilian harm assessment is not provided, seek additional information by, as appropriate and practicable, communicating with the source of the original information. Necessary baseline information includes information that indicates: (1) the date, time, and specific location of the incident; (2) whether injuries, deaths, damage, or destruction may have occurred; and (3) whether such injuries, deaths, damage, or destruction may have resulted from U.S. military operations. To the extent reasonably practicable, CHACs pursue other sources of information necessary to inform civilian harm assessments (e.g., information available from intelligence reports, interviews with witnesses or information documented from on-site, traditional, and social media, and publicly



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available reports). When reviewing reports of civilian harm, CHACs consider the reliability of information, including to mitigate risks associated with adversarial or otherwise malicious use of disinformation, and, under the guidance of the commander, take appropriate actions should evidence of adversarial or otherwise malicious use of disinformation emerge.

When there is a report of civilian harm, the first step is to submit an initial review. A commander's CHAC may conduct this initial review, or a commander or their designee may direct that an appropriate subordinate command to conduct or support this initial review in coordination with the CHAC. The intent of the initial review is to correlate information related to the reported civilian harm with other information related to civilian harm that may provide further details and with information on U.S. military operations. In doing so, CHACs will ensure appropriately sized location and time windows are considered to ensure all U.S. military operations that may have resulted in the reported civilian harm are considered as part of the review process. If the unit conducting the review is unable to identify any U.S. military operations that may have resulted in the reported civilian harm in question, then the unit may recommend that the command not proceed with the civilian harm assessment.

Following the initial review, a commander's CHAC may conduct the civilian harm assessment, or a commander or the commander's designee may direct that an appropriate subordinate or supporting command conduct or support the civilian harm assessment in coordination with the CHAC. Any unit tasked to conduct a civilian harm assessment, including any individual that supports a civilian harm assessment, must not have been directly involved in the event(s) being assessed, must be objective, and must be able to complete a thorough assessment as soon as practicable and in accordance with any directed timelines (or seek an extension). The unit that conducts the civilian harm assessment will consider all reasonably available information to inform the assessment, including from U.S. military, other USG, and external sources, and compile a thorough report detailing the civilian harm assessment in a timely manner.

Approved reports from civilian harm assessments will be retained by the CHAC or forwarded by the CHAC to the appropriate office for retention, as determined by the commander or their designee. Reports of civilian harm assessments that are not approved will be returned to the CHAC or unit that conducted the assessment with additional guidance from the commander or their designee. Alternatively, the commander or their designee may direct another subordinate command to conduct the civilian harm assessment, request that a different non-subordinate command conduct the civilian harm assessment or initiate an investigation.

If warranted, a commander or other responsible official may direct a more extensive review or investigation to find additional facts about the incident and to make relevant recommendations, such as identifying process improvements to reduce the likelihood of future civilian casualty incidents. Command-directed investigations are conducted in accordance with applicable Military Department guidance (e.g., Army Regulation 15-6, Navy Judge Advocate General Instruction 5800.7G, or Department of the Air Force Manual 1-101).

In some cases, DoD has not been able to assess a report of civilian casualties due to insufficient information provided or because related reports are still pending review. However, DoD continues to consider relevant information on civilian harm that may lead to initiation of an assessment. Additionally, existing civilian harm assessments can be re-opened or an

investigation initiated if previously unassessed relevant information becomes available and a review of the new information indicates it could change the previously approved results, or if other issues emerge that cast significant doubts on the accuracy of the results of the previously approved assessment.

DoD acknowledges that there are differences between DoD assessments of civilian harm and reports from other organizations, including NGOs. DoD personnel engage with representatives from NGOs and international organizations (IOs) regularly to discuss reports and assessments of civilian casualties, at both working and leadership levels. These differences result from a variety of factors. For example, NGOs and media outlets often use different types of information and methodologies than DoD to assess whether civilian casualties have occurred. Some organizations conduct on-the-ground assessments and interviews, while others rely heavily on media reporting. Although such information can be valuable, this information alone can be incomplete or inaccurate. DoD assessments seek to incorporate available information, including information provided by NGOs and IOs, as well as additional information and tools that are not available to other organizations – such as operational planning data and intelligence sources. As noted above, DoD reconsiders existing assessments if new relevant information becomes available, such as new information received from NGOs or other external sources.

### **III. DOD PROCESSES FOR CONSIDERING *EX GRATIA* PAYMENTS OR OTHER FORMS OF RESPONSE TO CIVILIAN HARM**

An *ex gratia* payment may be one of several possible response options that might be appropriate for DoD to take when U.S. military operations injure or kill a civilian or damage or destroy civilian objects. Other possible response options could include an acknowledgement of responsibility, provision of medical care, or other appropriate measures that may be consistent with mission objectives and applicable law. Such actions have historically been used to express condolences, sympathy, or goodwill, and to support mission objectives. Such actions are not required by law, not an admission of wrongdoing, and not for the purpose of compensating the injured civilian or the civilian's family for their loss.

When commanders identify a situation in which it is appropriate to extend an *ex gratia* payment, DoD has authority and funds to do so. Section 1213 of the NDAA for FY 2020 (Public Law 116-22), as amended, specifies that it shall be construed as the sole authority to make *ex gratia* payments for property damage, personal injury, or death that is incident to the use of force by the U.S. Armed Forces. In June 2020, DoD published Department-wide interim regulations to implement the authority provided under Section 1213. Commanders rely on these regulations to evaluate incidents and to determine whether offering an *ex gratia* payment in a particular case would be appropriate and consistent with mission objectives and applicable law.

DoD did not institute or update any major CHMR policies during 2024.