

Pentagon Admits Air Strike Hit Mosque in Syria



Washington, May 5 (RHC)-- Pentagon officials have finally admitted that a March airstrike in northern Syria did in fact hit a mosque, killing dozens of people. An investigation by the U.S. Central Command found that the March 16th airstrike targeted a building that was part of a "mosque complex" in a village west of Aleppo.

The Pentagon had initially rejected the notion that a mosque was hit and that there were casualties, despite photos and videos showing the disastrous aftermath of the strike.

Officials had insisted that the strike hit a building near the mosque where al-Qaeda militants were holding a meeting. The day after the strike, Pentagon spokesman Capt. Jeff Davis said that the U.S. did not "assess there were any civilian casualties."

Typically any building used for religious purposes would be on a so-called no-strike list, along with hospitals and schools. However, neither official would say if the complex had ever been on such a list, or whether it had been removed.

The air raid drew strong condemnation from prominent human rights organizations. At least 49 civilians were killed and over 100 people were wounded in the strike.

Human Rights Watch said in a report last month that the U.S. military failed to take "necessary precautions" to prevent civilian deaths in the airstrike. The rights group also said that it had found no evidence that militants were inside the building.

The HRW report was based on interviews with more than a dozen people with firsthand knowledge of the strike. The rights body also worked with organizations to analyze the imagery of the attack and reconstruct the assault.

A U.S.-led coalition has been conducting airstrikes inside Syria since September 2014 without any authorization from Damascus or a UN mandate.

The coalition has repeatedly been accused of targeting and killing civilians, while failing to fulfill its declared aim of destroying the Daesh terrorist group.

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