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US Generals Warn of More Civilian Casualties to Come in Mosul Invasion

By Jason Ditz
March 29, 2017

The Pentagon is rather quickly transitioning its narrative on the large number of civilians US airstrikes have killed in Mosul this month, with blanket denials giving way to concessions that it was probable the US was responsible for the killings and now to outright defiance about that fact.

Official comments from top generals, including Gen. Joseph Votel, appear to have moved totally beyond the question of the large number already killed, and are focusing their comments today on the many civilians the US will kill in the days to come, with Votel insisting the US “will try” to avoid endangering civilians with airstrikes, but that it is becoming “more and more difficult” during fighting in densely populated Mosul.

Officials are saying that the soaring death toll was “to be expected” as fighting advanced into the Old City, and no longer appear to be focused on denying any of the killings so much as insisting that killing civilians was a natural consequence of bombing the city.

These comments, along with the none-too-convincing promises to “try” to avoid killing huge numbers more of civilians, are likely to add to the growing disquiet among human rights groups about US behavior in Iraq, drawing even more unwanted attention to the hundreds of civilians they’ve already killed and the lack of interest in changing policies to prevent more in the future.

To the extent that any reassurance is being made at all to justify US actions, right now it just centers on insisting that the rules of engagement are the same as they were under the Obama Administration. That they aren’t working appears to be totally beside the point.