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Daily News Brief



Botched U.S. Strike Kills Allies in Syria

COUNCIL *on* FOREIGN RELATIONS

CFR 4/14/2017 - The United States confirmed that a Tuesday strike in Tabqa, Syria, mistakenly killed eighteen allied rebel fighters. The strike is the [third in a month \(NYT\)](#) by the U.S.-led coalition against the self-proclaimed Islamic State that may have killed civilians or allies. The fighters were members of a Kurdish-Arab militia that partners with the United States. Pentagon officials said the U.S.-backed Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) [called in an airstrike \(DOD\)](#) on what they believed was an [Islamic State position near the Tabqa Dam \(WSJ\)](#), but was actually an SDF frontline position. Also in Syria, the government began the evacuation of some thirty thousand residents to either government or opposition-controlled towns in a [swap brokered by Iran and Qatar \(BBC\)](#), which back opposing sides in the Syrian conflict.

ANALYSIS

"Without eyes on the ground, [targets can be misleading](#). Several missiles fired from a CIA drone in March 2011 struck a meeting in northwest Pakistan among locals and Taliban mediators who had gathered to settle a dispute over a chromite mine. While some of the three dozen people killed were Taliban fighters, Pakistani officials said, most were elders or simply residents," Eric Schmitt and Anjali Singhvi write for the *New York Times*.

"As someone who relies on open-source information because I lack access to classified information, I cannot fully appreciate the safeguards involved in targeting processes—nor fully trust insiders' claims. This is why congressional oversight committees, empowered with both access and information, should act on the public's behalf to investigate and evaluate the [civilian casualty] prevention policies and processes being used presently in the bombing campaign. Unfortunately, in public hearings [policymakers have abrogated this responsibility](#) and expressed little interest in fulfilling their role," CFR's Micah Zenko writes for *Foreign Policy*.

"Similar agreements have been reached in recent months, with Syrian rebels leaving areas long-besieged by President Bashar al-Assad's forces, sometimes in exchange for Shi'ite Muslim residents moving from the villages surrounded by the mostly Sunni insurgents. After six years of fighting a civil war, [Damascus has gained the upper hand](#) against rebels in the west of the country, and been able to negotiate the deals from a position of strength thanks to Russia's intervention since 2015 and increased support from Shi'ite allies Iran and Lebanese Hezbollah," Laila Bassam and John Davison write for Reuters.