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THE FOGHORN

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“Cutting Through the Fog of War”

The Native Nations Rise March: Kandi Mossett on How Standing Rock Lives On

By Sarah Jaffe, Truthout | Interview

Since election night 2016, the streets of the US have rung with resistance. People all over the country have woken up with the conviction that they must do something to fight inequality in all its forms. But many are wondering what it is they can do. In this ongoing “Interviews for Resistance” series, experienced organizers, troublemakers and thinkers share their insights on what works, what doesn’t, what has changed and what is still the same. Today’s interview is the 21st in the series. [Click here for the most recent interview before this one.](#)

Today we bring you a conversation about the recent Native Nations Rise March in Washington, DC, with Kandi Mossett -- also known as Eagle Woman -- a Mandan, Hidatsa, Arikara woman from North Dakota who works with the Indigenous Environmental Network.

Sarah Jaffe: Last week, there was a march on Washington and an encampment. Can you tell us about that?

Kandi Mossett: The whole Native Nations Rise March came out of the Standing Rock camps and what was happening in North Dakota. When we started planning, we didn’t know for sure what was going to happen at the camp -- it was prior to the forced removal. But we thought something bad might happen, so we wanted to make sure that we were following up with something positive and with the next steps beyond just the camp and into other people’s communities.

It was actually the Standing Rock Sioux Tribe and the Indigenous Environmental Network putting our heads together and saying, “Well, what should we do?” Then, the idea was born and we just started having all of the calls and different working groups and everything that you need to make that happen. Then, the camps were raided and it was a really horrible thing. We were really having a setback with planning because of everything that was happening at the camps. But we just still continued to move forward because we had already picked the date. It was just a really busy, hard time to do the planning, and also to see just how bad it did turn out when the Army National Guard and the police did move in by gunpoint and forcibly removed everybody.

At the same time, once the event came and we were all together in DC last week, it was like a family reunion. It did really lift up everyone’s spirits again because the whole idea was always that what we did at Standing Rock was much more than just a physical encampment. It has been ongoing for over five hundred years anyway. It is about sustainability and about not continuing to take and take and take from the earth without ever giving anything back. The idea was, “What is next? We are all together, we are here in DC. What are the next steps?” It was helping to ensure that people were connecting with each other that maybe didn’t connect in Standing Rock. That people understood how to lobby their congressman and congresswoman on the hill in DC and that people understood that the power lies in the people. I think we were really successful at all of that.

The whole idea was not to just do a march and rally, but to do a four-day event with a tipi encampment which included lobby visits and speaking, panels, performances and song and arts and culture ceremony. We had originally been expecting maybe 500 people to make it to DC for the march. Then, we thought, we are going to get a couple thousand. When it was all said and done, we know there were at least 5,000 people at that march with us on Friday. I don’t even know the full numbers yet of how many came through all together during the whole four-day event.

I feel like it was a great success and it led people to work on all the other pipeline sites, because we do have Keystone XL back on because

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of Donald Trump. There are already camps. There is a camp in South Dakota already near the Cheyenne River Sioux Tribe. They are fighting, again, the same way they did before because the Dakota Access pipeline encampment, all of that was a result of the success we had with Keystone XL. Now, all the people are going back to Keystone XL to continue to fight that. But there are people going to the Two Rivers Camp in Texas to fight against the Trans Pecos Pipeline, which is the same company, Energy Transfer Partners. To continue the Dakota Access pipeline fight, a lot of people are going to Louisiana where a camp is being set up against the Bayou Bridge pipeline. The Bayou Bridge pipeline is the one that will connect to the Dakota Access pipeline in Illinois so that the oil can continue to go down to Port Arthur, Texas where it will be refined and then shipped to foreign markets. It is all part of the same project. A lot of people didn't understand that until they went to DC and saw the different information and made that connection that we need to continue to fight.

It is so much bigger than Standing Rock and one pipeline. In addition to that, we are arranging toxic tours and having people come to North Dakota to see the Bakken and the shale oil formation so that they can see where the oil is coming from and help push more bans and moratoriums on fracking. We have the economy on our side, too. As we have been saying all along, the price of oil has been dropping. There is going to be a slight increase, we know, here in 2017, but not what they have been touting for the last two years. For the last two years they have been telling oil industry folks, "Wait until 2017 when everything is going to be great again." We know that not to be true.

But we still have to continue to push and fight back, because there is a new shale oil formation that was found in Texas. I don't know how new it is, but it has been recently released that there is a lot of oil in Texas. That means it will take the pressure off of North Dakota, but it is not a NIMBY issue. It is not going away. It is going somewhere else. In the big picture, that doesn't help any of us. That is why I really want to go personally myself to Texas. I want to go to the Two Rivers Camp.

We have to continue pushing for the just transition. We are going to build the Mní Wičóni sustained community, but we are working with the tribes at Standing Rock to see exactly how big we can go with that and what that looks like, because we did have a delay with everything that happened and the community members there are really tired of the militarized police force and different non-BIA officers now that are on the reservation because of cross-deputization and jurisdiction. The project is still fully funded and it is slightly on hold. We're having continued educational forums about what it means to have a community that is based upon grey water systems and wind and to understand that it is not another encampment, it is what we had always talked about since as far back as August and September, leaving something behind for the community. It is for

Standing Rock and for their children and for future generations. So not only stopping these energy projects, but showing what we mean when we say "just transition" by just doing it, by just making it happen.

I want to go back a little bit to the forced removal from Standing Rock. I think a lot of people were paying attention very closely up around the election and then the election took everybody's attention off, so people don't really know the story of the removal. Could you give us a little bit more background there?

What happened was the state had waged ... a campaign to cause division between the Standing Rock Sioux Tribe and the people that were there at the camps. They did that by blocking the bridge on Highway 1806. When they blocked the bridge, that caused the casino revenue to dip greatly because a lot of people would go from Bismarck down to the Prairie Knights Casino. It also forced community members to go around to get up the hospital. Ambulances had to go around and couldn't take Highway 1806 to Bismarck.

The other thing that happened was that because of the fight at Standing Rock, a lot of the hidden racism that was always there in North Dakota [increasingly emerged].

I grew up there, I always experienced it, but when Standing Rock came about, it just became more and more blatant because of the actions that were being done in Bismarck.... School children, when they would go on their high school basketball games or boys' and girls' teams at different sports events, were getting harassed. They actually had to have escorts follow them to their basketball games because whether or not the children said anything about the pipeline fight -- they were just going to a game -- they would get harassed by the other kids and by their parents.

All of these things were causing further and further and further division amongst the Standing Rock Sioux Tribe community and the encampments themselves. There were a lot of non-Native people, really well-meaning non-Native people that came to stay in the camp and there were a lot of different things that were happening in the camp.

By January 20 there was a resolution that was passed by the Community of Cannonball, which is the closest community that was signed on by the majority of the Council. Four of the council people abstained. One didn't vote at all and that was Dave Archambault, the chairman. He didn't have to. Only if there were a tiebreaker. He never even voted or did any of these things that [were] blamed for forcibly removing the camps. What it was the community saying, "We are tired. We appreciate it that you were here. Now we are asking you to go home so that we can continue this battle legally in the court systems because, essentially, we have lost." [The pipeline] never stopped. They continued building all the way up. They got the easement. So by the time Donald Trump was in there and by the time he was saying he was going

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to build it, the communities were tired. All of this, to me, was totally understandable. The people on the ground, however, were like, "How could the tribe do this to us?" It all caused a division between the people on the ground and people in the communities. It was a battle that was waged against the people based upon that bridge being blocked and the police telling the Standing Rock Sioux tribe, "We will not remove this barricade until the camps are cleared." I think it was kind of a Catch 22.

At that same time, it was hard that it got blamed on the tribe when that land was all along Army Corps of Engineer land -- although technically it is not, because it is treaty land because of the 1851 Fort Laramie Treaty. So those that chose to take a stand, did so on the treaty angle, which was true. It was a moment to say, "You need to honor our treaty." There were all these different sides and all these different angles that caused a little bit of dissension amongst different groups, and maybe a little bit of division. I could see that happening like, "How are we going to move forward in a positive way to continue these next steps leading up to what we are going to do beyond the camp being taken down?" The negotiations were made that everybody would have plenty of time. That is when the date of February 22 was set.... I know that we went in and we took down our yurts and we did a clean-up campaign, which had only been going on for two or three weeks. You have to imagine a city that was almost the size of 15,000 people trying to clean that up in the snow. It was time-consuming.

But what the press did and what they really glommed onto was "Oh, these Water Protectors are polluting and destroying the river by being there." They took all of the energy and attention away from the fact that there is an oil pipeline with carcinogenic materials running through it and said it was us that was polluting the river. That caused further division, which made it really hard for us because it was like, "How can the media twist or spin this any more than they already were before?" We were cleaning up for two or three weeks and then, when we were forcibly removed, we had to stop because they were like, "Get out of here." Then, they said, "We had to clean this. It is all their fault." It is like, "You forced us out at gunpoint."

All of that led up to how the military -- it wasn't just the police coming in and moving people out, it was armed vehicles and people wearing riot gear and the United States Army, came in fully geared up with rifles and machine guns and tanks and came against unarmed Water Protectors. They had made it sound like they were going to find weapons or something. Later on, the Sheriff of Morton County, Kyle Kirchmeier, put out a report that said, "We did not find any weapons in the camp." We were like, "Of course you didn't! We have been saying this all along." On my own Facebook page I was teasing them saying, "Did they find my stash of snowballs?" because that was one of the things they complained about, that people threw snowballs at them with their machine guns pointed at us....

One of the things that everybody that I spoke with when I was

out there stressed was to talk about what was going on in the camp in the context of Native sovereignty and of de-colonization. I wonder if you could talk about that a little bit.

The way that the camp started, first of all, was with the youth. They had a vision and a goal and a dream because of the fact that suicide rates in our communities are so high. It is so devastating that so many kids would rather kill themselves than to deal with the hurt and the transgenerational trauma that has happened over the years. It was amazing to see youth like Jasilyn Charger and Bobbi Jean Three Legs and other youth who decided to do these runs where they ran in their own community. It was just a few miles and they were like, "This is fun. We should organize another run." That is when they called up and included the Indigenous Environmental Network. We had helped them with their first run, just for food and funding.

Then, they said, "We want to go further." I was like, "OK, how about Nebraska? The Army Corps of Engineers offices?" My co-worker Dallas Goldtooth was helping to say, "Yes, let's make it happen."

All we did was make a few phone calls for solidarity housing, food along the way, gas for the vans that were going to be following the runners. And they successfully ran to Nebraska. Then, they said, "We want to keep running!" Then, they ran to DC.... In doing this run, they were able to connect with each other as youth with the pain that they were having in their own households, in their own communities, that their grandpas and grandmas experienced. When everybody had gone to boarding schools during this termination era that the United States government had, it was pretty terrible for our grandparents and their great grandparents. They were beaten. They were abused. They were stripped of clothing, even, to

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Next VFP56 meeting will be held
on Thursday, April 6th at
7:00 PM.
Meeting will be held at 24 Uni-
tarian Fellowship Way, Bayside,
Jacoby Creek Road. Veterans and
non-veterans are more than wel-
come to come and help us dialogue
about what we together can do to
bring about peace in this complex
world.



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change the way that they dressed. The language was stripped. Then, there was a lot of molestation that actually happened in these boarding schools. What ended up happening is that degree of negativity carried on through the generations to where we had uncles or different family members that carried on that type of negativity to their own family members.

Youth started understanding that this wasn't because of their grandparents or their [great] grandparents. This was because of a system that was broken.... This movement allowed people to see the youth weren't going to take it anymore. The millennials of this generation were going to change it by speaking out about it and not keeping it a dirty secret or not keeping it silent.

That is how [Standing Rock] started. It was the youth wanting to say, "We forgive you for doing this as your job, construction workers. Here is some water. Water is life. We know that you don't want to be here. We know that you are just doing this as your job." They just started to gather out there and stand in front of equipment. Then, the company Energy Transfer Partners ran out of patience in May, June and July. So, when August came, it was when we got the 48-hour notice that [they] were going to start constructing the first road that was going to cut across Cannonball Ranch, which is also treaty land, and cut down to the river. We knew that there were sacred sites out there. That is when people first started seeing the arrests. They started seeing us standing on the barricades, standing in front of the equipment, breaking down fences and running out and jumping on equipment. That is when the rest of the nation started to get involved, when they started to see violence, unfortunately.

The biggest problem was that we could not identify who the people in the camps were that were not actually on our side versus the ones that were, because the camp became infiltrated with people that were working for the police and people that were working for the Dakota Access Pipeline, people that were working as private mercenaries. Even right now, there is an FBI taskforce, a "terrorism" taskforce that is basically harassing some of the Water Protectors. There are three of us that we know of for sure that are being investigated by the FBI Terrorism Taskforce. But that is not new. If you go back to the 1970s and to Wounded Knee, this all happened then, too. Leonard Peltier is still in prison 40 years later for a crime that everybody is convinced he never committed.

How can people keep up with these different camps and with the movement and be supportive?

It is always important to be in the community where you are at and respect the community -- even if you don't agree with them....

When a call goes out, if a call goes out, for people to join, then they should. A call went out at Two Rivers Camp in Texas. A call went out at the Sabal Pipeline fight in Florida. A call went out in Louisiana for people to come and stand with them. That is great. The other thing that people should continue to work on even if they can't go to a camp is the defund campaign and the divestment campaign. That has been extremely successful. We have DefundDAPL.org, which shows you the 17 banks that are funding these

projects ... we are always still continually asking people to take their money out of these big banks and to put them into their local community and credit unions to bring back the power to your community.

That is part of the big picture anyways. We need to go back into our own communities and restabilize our own communities at that small-scale level that takes away a lot of the power and a lot of the money that the corporate interests have to use. It is our money that they are using to fund these projects. This Standing Rock thing that happened showed people, "Oh, we do actually have a lot of power. We didn't realize it." We are continuing to push for the divestment campaign and we are continuing to have people push back against the Donald Trump administration pushing for fossil fuel resources. The way that we want people to do that is by -- in your own community -- having community gardens and having local community education events that talk about how you can be more sustainable. If that means not having strawberries in December, depending on where you live, then so be it. Food sovereignty and transportation systems are all tied into it.

Another component of this, another layer in addition to doing grassroots work is to get involved in politics. I know that is hard for some people because they hate it. I used to hate politics myself, because I felt like they didn't represent me. They won't represent you unless you make your voice heard in your town, in your community, in your state.

I am from North Dakota and we are battling with all of these really ridiculous laws -- they are trying to ban any wind projects from moving forward for two years so that they can bring back coal projects. I have to talk to my family and say, "Here is a letter for you. Just sign it." Whatever it takes to get people involved and aware of the issues in your own communities. We have to impact politics. If that is not good enough, then people should run for all official positions if they want to make change. We always encourage that, too, in our communities.

How can people keep up with you and with the Indigenous Environmental Network?

We have our webpages: IENEarth.org as well as IndigenousRising.org. We have our Twitter: @IENEarth. We have our Facebook pages: Indigenous Rising Media and Indigenous Environmental Network. I have all my personal pages under my name, as well: Kandi Mossett. I am on Twitter @Mhaweaa.

I have to get better at tweeting and being on these pages. But, really, what I am trying to do is work my way out of a job. I really have a passion and a goal in my life and that is to not ever have a phone again or a computer again.

In the meantime, I have a three-year-old, so every spring we are getting our garden planted again. I am teaching her how to grow food. I am teaching her where we find our own berries, where we find our ground berries at home, where we find turnips, what it looks like, what the plant on the top looks like, where you dig. I think it is important for people everywhere to know that. Even in the cities, what used to be there? What could be just outside the city? What kind of resources can you find? That is my continuation and I hope one day to just be in the country somewhere with my garden and with my daughter and just living a more relaxed

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pace. But right now it is really urgent and people need organizers. I am going to continue the community gardens and continue the local cooperative work, getting people to invest in their own co-ops. Hopefully, one day when I am older, I won't have to worry as much, but I just don't know. This seems like this might definitely be a battle for my lifetime.

Sarah Jaffe is a reporting fellow at The Nation Institute and has covered labor, social and economic justice and politics for Truthout, The Atlantic, The Guardian, In These Times and many other publications. She is the cohost of Belabored, a labor podcast hosted by Dissent magazine, and the author of Necessary Trouble: Americans In Revolt (Nation Books, 2016). Follow her on Twitter: @sarahljaffe.

An Update on Amy: The Latest on a Previous GI Rights Hotline Story

By Jon Reisdorf

Amy is the army specialist in a previous issue's story: "Proceeding According to Hoyle: A Soldier's Story" called me in early March on a Friday. Her First Sergeant told Amy to get all of her gear together because she is going home. Amy and I were thrilled. In December her unit confirmed that she was going to be separated with a full honorable because of an adjustment disorder. In English, her unit agreed with Amy and the GI Rights Hotline which asserted that her stress level caused by insufficiently treated trauma of the past was so aggravated by being in the army that she could not do her job. The unit however was moving painfully slowly toward that discharge. The discharge process should have only taken a month or two and was now dragging on into its third month with no clear end in sight. Then came Friday. It seemed, finally, the end was here. Unfortunately, what Amy was told was false.

When Amy showed up with her gear, it was explained that her first sergeant had jumped the gun. Her platoon commander told her that the discharge packet still needed to be signed off at the level of the sector's commanding general. And no one in her immediate chain of command knew where her packet was. Some said legal. Some said it had been signed off by legal and was at the level of the base commander. The first sergeant had been told by someone (he wouldn't say who) that it was already at the commanding general of the sector's desk waiting for his signature. Everyone involved agrees that Amy desperately needs to get out of the army. They've known it for months now. Yet here she sits.

For the reader it helpful to understand that permanent duty service members are in a very different status than those in their first 180 days. Until a service member finishes basic training and training in their occupational speciality they are in entry level status. A service member is permanent duty she has finished basic, training in their occupational speciality and has been assigned to

a unit. When such a service member is being discharged there is a lot of steps involved. Potentially, they have more protection and more rights.

This works well for counselors in the GI Rights Hotline when a client is being railroaded. There are several readings of the discharge papers and the service member has a chance to discuss their case with an attorney from the Trial Defense side of the Judge Advocate General - JAG. Oftentimes these steps are ignored or short changed by NCOs or commands. Sometimes out of ignorance and sometimes out of sure cussedness. Counselors working with the GI Rights Hotline can use those mistakes to get a review board to reexamine an other-than-honorable discharge and hopefully either upgrade that or at least get the service member VA benefits. But for cases like Amy when everyone is on board and happy with the eventual result - full honorable with benefits - it can still be slow and frustrating.

All I can do is try to figure out WTF is going on and be there for her. Despite her PTSD, panic attacks and depression, Amy has never been shy about asking me to make calls on her behalf. So I gulp down a mug of coffee and screw up my courage and make calls.

After the Friday debacle, I decided to start at the top. Amy had no idea how to contact the highest command level and no one in her chain of command would tell her if they knew. So I used Facebook and google to track down the commanding general's phone number. It is surprising what people put on their Facebook page. I spoke to the general's secretary who assured me the packet hadn't yet crossed her desk. She gave me the phone number for someone lower on the food chain, a First Sergeant who took down Amy's information and offered to look for her packet. When we next talked he said he was sure it hadn't come to the general's office. I called Amy and she informed me that it didn't matter. She was now being told that her discharge packet didn't need to be signed off by the commanding general. Curiouser and curiouser.

Are you confused yet reader? I know I am. There are regulations covering almost every aspect of life in the military all based on Department of Defense Instructions but there are also traditions at every base, those informal practices, governing how things actually work. Our work as counselors on the GI Rights Hotline is complicated by this crazy fact. All bases share the same regulations and all of them have their own traditions that get followed unless someone forces them to follow the regs.

Amy and I have had long conversations on why things are plodding along. We identified Christmas as reason number one. Everything slows to a crawl during the few weeks prior to and just after Christmas. Amy was aware of this and after her return from Christmas exodus she knew that little was going to happen, primarily because of reason two.



Reason two: deployment. Right after Christmas Amy's unit deployed for some special training in preparation for its overseas deployment coming up in the fall of 2017. When her unit deployed for training, Amy was left with the small skeleton rear-detachment since she was on non-deployment status. Nothing could get done those six weeks either. It was terribly boring for Amy but her commander told her what to expect and she was ready for it. Unlike most bases and posts, Behavioral Health (BH) stepped up and did its job and the psychiatrist overseeing cases saw her every couple of weeks.

Amy told me she experienced daily panic attacks but they were mild compared to what she experienced prior to her discharge paperwork being formally submitted to the brigade commander. The breathing techniques and the affirmations she was taught to use at BH made it easier to fall asleep. And she was kept busy during the day. And she thanked me for allowing her to help me out with other Hotline cases. That's what kind of gal Amy is. The best. I should have been thanking her.

Amy allowed me to give out her number to three other female soldiers struggling with clinical depression and various levels of suicidal ideation. I was helping each to obtain entry level separation from their branches. One of them, Melanie, leaned heavily on Amy during her struggle to get out of the Air Force. In fact, I first learned that Melanie was successfully out and back home from Amy. Amy called me a couple of weeks ago announcing: "Good news Mr. Jon. (Amy is from the South) Melanie is out of the Air Force and back home." Amy has a Southern accent and Southern attitudes. It's always Mr. Jon when we talk and she closes every email with a "very respectfully, Specialist Amy Caman). I will save Melanie's story for another time.

Since the unit returned from its 6 week training deployment, Amy's anxiety level began to sky rocket. Given her PTSD, her high anxiety was to be expected since she was once again being surrounded by so many, many men in uniform. Partly her anxiety was rising too due to her receiving conflicting reports from her command structure. This was something I could do something about.

During those weeks leading up to the Friday in March debacle Amy was being whipsawed by rumors and confusion. I made it my job one to inform everyone I spoke to about her case that someone in Amy's fragile emotional condition needed to know factually what was going on. Early in February a well meaning first lieutenant, trying to alleviate a panic attack, assured Amy that her discharge paperwork was at legal. An NCO told Amy it hadn't left brigade yet. Amy was frantic. She asked me to call her company commander and find out what was the truth.

I left a message with her commander, Captain Tracy, who called me back within ten minutes. Captain Tracy is a really stand up guy

and a good commander. I explained to him that Amy was experiencing a spike in her panic attacks since everyone returned from deployment. It was crucial for Amy to receive only accurate information and time tables. He promised to speak to the first lieutenant and Amy. Amy emailed within the hour that both occurred.

In the middle of February, Amy's paperwork reached the desk of the base legal. And apparently there it sat. Amy gave me Sergeant Major Lopez's number and asked me to call. Amy's nerves were on edge. Days had gone by and no news. Amy told me that if anyone could find out it was the brigade's chief master sergeant, Sergeant Major Lopez.

After I explained what the GI Rights Hotline is and who I was I explained I was calling as Amy's advocate needed help tracking down her packet. Lopez took thirty minutes out of his busy day to explain the structure at Carson and where he fit in that structure. He was essentially the boss over several hundred soldiers as chief NCO over all NCOs at Amy's base. He asked me to explain to Amy this process. When she is not receiving an answer to a query from her platoon sergeant she should first contact her First Sergeant. If he doesn't give a clear answer she should ask Captain Tracy. If neither can give her a straight answer, she had permission to talk to him next. His door was always open. I thanked him and let him know that I had the highest regard for Captain Tracy, and that he was a straight shooter and always helpful when Amy was in panic mode. Sergeant Major Lopez said he appreciated hearing that and would pass on the praise to Captain Tracy. Lopez would make an excellent politician. He was very polished. Very professional.

Amy contacted her First Sergeant and then Captain Tracy who laid out for her what he understood to be the steps needed for her to get out. Captain Tracy personally went up to legal and found her paperwork and pushed it through. Legal sent it on to the brigade commander. Which was over Captain Tracy's pay grade. Then it would go to the base commander, and finally the commanding general of the entire sector. This could take weeks. Amy was freaked out. Would I make some more phone calls? I could and did. Factually there is little I can do to speed up the process. Though I was able to knock a couple of days off when I found a couple of short cuts for steps that it turned out were traditionally done at her base rather than required by regulation. But the process and the way forward remains unclear. So here we sit. Keep your fingers crossed.=



U.S. military says it may be responsible for airstrike that allegedly killed 200 Iraqi civilians

W.J. Hennigan

The U.S.-led military coalition fighting to dislodge the Islamic State from the Iraqi city of Mosul said Saturday it may have been responsible for an airstrike that killed more than 200 civilians in the western part of the city.

The U.S. Central Command, which oversees military operations in the Middle East, said in a statement Saturday that an initial review of the strike showed that the coalition carried out an attack at the request of Iraqi security forces on March 17 at a location in West Mosul “corresponding to allegations of civilian casualties.”

The admission comes days after journalists from Western media, including the Los Angeles Times, visited the village of Jadidah inside Mosul and saw dozens of bodies being pulled from the rubble of a large building.

The coalition “takes all allegations of civilian casualties seriously and a formal Civilian Casualty Credibility Assessment has been opened to determine the facts surrounding this strike and the validity of the allegation of civilian casualties,” the Central Command’s statement said.

The fact it has taken the U.S.-led coalition more than a week to determine whether it could be at fault in an airstrike believed to have killed so many people underscores the pounding Mosul is taking as the bombing campaign ramps up of Mosul

Families in Jadidah extract the bodies of their loved ones who were trapped under rubble.

Hundreds of artillery shells, ground-based rockets and precision-guided bombs strike targets around the densely populated city each week, raising questions about whether the Trump administration has relaxed the written rules of engagement in the more than 2-year-old war against the Islamic State.

Civilian casualty claims have also increased in both Iraq and Syria.

Col. John Thomas, spokesman for the Central Command, said the rules of engagement have not been changed and the military maintains tight restrictions to ensure that civilians are not inadvertently harmed. But the U.S.-led

coalition and its ground partners in Iraq and Syria are closing in on the Islamic State’s last strongholds, where the militants mix among the locals in heavily populated areas. This is a departure from the early phases of the campaign when the militants would drive through the desert flying black flags, making themselves easy identifiable targets.

The airstrike, if confirmed, would mark the deadliest civilian casualty incident by far since the U.S. military began its involvement in mid-2014. The credibility assessment, in which the military gathers and analyzes an array of information that is both classified and public, is expected to take two to three weeks.

The inquiry will also examine whether an accumulation of airstrikes in the area may have degraded the structural integrity of the building before it fell or the Islamic State detonated an explosion after the air strike to bring the building down.

Airstrike monitoring group overwhelmed by claims of U.S.-caused civilian casualties

Airstrike monitoring group overwhelmed by claims of U.S.-caused civilian casualties

“This sort of assessment is really complex,” Thomas said. “It gets especially difficult to determine what happened in certain areas of the city where the streets are so narrow that large vehicles cannot get through.”

Another possibility is that an airstrike hit or triggered an Islamic State suicide car bomb. The militants have deployed such mobile bombs, in which a driver will blow himself up in the face of advancing Iraqi forces.

Mosul Eye, a local blog, reported one was detonated in the village on Saturday, killing 40.

Times staff writer W.J. Hennigan reported from Washington, D.C.

“Peace is a daily, a weekly, a monthly process, gradually changing opinions, slowly eroding old barriers, quietly building new structures.”

~ John F. Kennedy





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If you would like to submit an article, opinion, comment or response to anything you have read which might interest the members of VFP-56, please e-mail it to turtldncer@aol.com, in word format, or mail to Jim Sorter at 1762 Buttermilk Lane, Arcata, CA 95521. Submissions will be included on a first come basis until the newsletter is full. Late arriving submissions will be archived for future issues.



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