

**NEWS**[About  
News](#)[DoD News](#)[Advisories](#)[Contracts](#)[Live  
Briefings](#)[Photos](#)[Releases](#)[Slides](#)[Speeches](#)[Today in  
DoD](#)[Transcripts](#)[American  
Forces  
News](#)[Articles](#)[Radio](#)[Television](#)[Special  
Reports](#)[Search](#)[News  
Archive](#)[News by E-  
mail](#)[Other News  
Sources](#)Updated: 05 Mar  
2003

United States Department of Defense

# News Transcript

On the web:

[http://www.defenselink.mil/news/Mar2003/t03052003\\_t305targ.html](http://www.defenselink.mil/news/Mar2003/t03052003_t305targ.html)Media contact: [media@defenselink.mil](mailto:media@defenselink.mil) or +1 (703) 697-5131Public contact: [public@defenselink.mil](mailto:public@defenselink.mil) or +1 (703) 428-0711**Presenter:** Senior Defense Official

Wednesday, March 5, 2003 - 11:52 a.m. EST

## Background Briefing On Targeting

(Background briefing on U.S. military practices and procedures to minimize casualties to non-combatants and prevent collateral damage during military operations. The slides shown during this presentation are available at <http://www.defenselink.mil/news/Mar2003/g030305-D-9085M.html> )

Staff: It is not quite afternoon. It's -- good morning, and thank you for joining us today, and welcome to this background briefing on the targeting process.

Last week we talked in here about countertargeting, and this was really the other side of the coin. You've heard us say many times that we strike only military targets while taking extraordinary care to avoid unnecessary civilian casualties and to minimize collateral damage. Saddam Hussein, on the other hand, flaunts the laws of war and co-locates military and civilian facilities, and employs human shields.

I guess I would want to remind you, before we get started, what the secretary said on this just last week or a few days ago.

(Reading.) "International law draws a clear distinction between civilians and combatants. The principle that civilians must be protected lies at the heart of international law of armed conflict. It is the distinction between combatants and innocent civilians that terrorism and practices like the use of human shields so directly assaults.

"Saddam Hussein makes no such distinctions. He deliberately constructs mosques near military facilities, uses schools, hospitals, orphanages and cultural treasures to shield military forces, thereby exposing helpless men, women and children to danger. These are not tactics of war, they're crimes of war. Deploying human shields is not a military strategy, it's murder, it's a violation of the laws of armed conflict and a crime against humanity, and will be treated as such. To those who follow his orders to use human shields, they will pay a severe price for their actions."

So today we are joined by a senior official from the coalition headquarters at CentCom to shed some light on how we go about striking legitimate military targets while sparing no effort to protect innocent

civilians. Again, I would remind you that this briefing is on background and can be attributable to a senior CentCom official. And our official today, for your notes, is --

We have just shy of 30 minutes with our briefer, so let's go ahead and get started.

**Senior Defense Official:** Well, good morning, ladies and gentlemen. I appreciate you taking the time to come spend a few minutes with me and let me try to talk to you a little bit about how important it is for us to ensure that when we are given an order to take military action, that we then take that action in a prudent fashion that allows us to minimize any potential damage to the people or facilities surrounding any military target.

If I could, next slide. I'll go through these, and I think we'll make these available after we complete.

These are just some thoughts that the President has had publicly over the past number of weeks. And it's just to remind all that it is very important, no matter what we do militarily, that we not create a situation where, after the war, you lose the peace; and as we saw in Afghanistan, as we continue to believe, considering potential military Iraq -- action in Iraq, that maintaining the ability for a country to grow and flourish and have an economy after any military operation is important, and you do that by ensuring that collateral damage is kept to a minimum.

Next slide.

Collateral damage is really kind of two separate pieces. One is damage to facilities and the other is unintended casualties that surround noncombatants. It can occur -- however, it does occur in any conflict, in some cases because of human error, in some cases because of a mechanical error in a weapons system and in some cases, the situation on the battlefield is confused enough that people make mistakes. However, as we evaluate targets potentially to be struck, we do look to ensure that we -- that we stay clear of sites that are intended to be protected, like schools, mosques, civil buildings that have no military value, certainly residence areas. We need to ensure that when we find targets that are what we'll call dual use, and we'll talk a little bit about that later, that we are very prudent in the way we strike those so as to minimize any potential damage or danger to noncombatants.

In the end, however, occasionally, though, noncombatants are injured and killed, and we do have some structures that are damaged. And our intent is to have a process that not only looks to determine the target's validity, if you will, but then find a means to strike that target to gain the desired military effect without creating an undue effect on noncombatants or surrounding structures.

Next slide.

There's a series of decisions that occur as we go through a targeting process, and this occurs -- I might say as an example, in Afghanistan, while the overall numbers of targets was not huge, the some 400 or so targets that we considered, each one of those goes through a vetting process. And the vetting process looks to ensure that if you have to take the action on a target that you've reduced the damage. We look at targets that are likely to result in civilian casualties or noncombatant casualties, as you see here, or structures -- certainly targets that might be in the vicinity of a protected site -- and I'll talk a little bit about what those protected sites might be in a few minutes.

Targets that are dual use. Communications are a good example. The military clearly uses communications facilities as does the civilian population, as does the media. And we want to make sure

that a decision to damage or destroy a dual use facility is made for the military purpose that you would gain from that, not -- and to minimize any resulting kinds of damage.

And then, the other target category that is a challenge for us is where the human shields that we've talked of before might be used. And you really have two types of human shields. You have people who volunteer to go and stand on a bridge or a power plant or a water works facility, and you have people that are placed in those areas not of their own free will. In the case of some of the previous use of human shields in Iraq, Saddam placed hostages, if you will, on sensitive sites in order to show that these were human shields, but, in fact, they were not there of their own free will. Two separate problems to deal with that, and it requires that we work very carefully with the intelligence community to determine what that situation might be at a particular location.

Next slide.

As we evaluate targets -- this is kind of a simple graphic, but it's designed to show you a couple of key elements.

First, if you assume that the container in the middle, that military headquarters, is a valid military target and it's met those criteria within the laws of armed conflict that have been mentioned, we still have to look at the surrounding area to determine if we'll cause collateral damage. The red circle you see is just a cartoon depiction of notionally what would be the maximum effective area that could be covered by collateral damage by a particular munition. And it's done by each particular weapon. For example, the -- a Hellfire missile has only about a 40-pound warhead. So the circle that it might cause damage is relatively small: 60 or 70 feet. On the other hand, a 2,000-pound bomb will create about 90 percent of its effect out to about 600 feet of the target. And so, depending on the kinds of weapons you would use, you would place a circle over the target and then look to see what's in the circle. In the case of our example here, we see a civilian housing structure, a hospital and a mosque. And those are, one, noncombatant facilities, and in the case of a mosque or a hospital, a protected facility. And so we want to make sure that we don't inadvertently cause damage to those facilities while we're striking that target.

So we then look at the aim points that we might use, and then the type of weapon. Can we make that circle smaller, for example? Can we mitigate the effect of the weapons? And I think there was a good article, maybe just today, I think, that showed as an Air Force model how they do something called the bug splat. It's sort of a groupie term, but it's really a mathematical process that we can go to that shows, depending on the direction the bomb is actually falling, where the effects of that fragmentation from the bomb will go. And so they look at that to determine what facilities are in that ring, and then how they might be affected.

Next slide.

Once we determine that there are facilities in that ring and that hitting that target will cause damage to those, we look at some of the variables in the mitigation process, if you will. And the mitigation process is designed to take smaller weapons, employ a different type of fusing. For example, if you use a bomb with an air burst, meaning it explodes some number of feet above the ground, there's nothing that absorbs the fragmentation of that bomb, so it travels farther. If you use a delay fuse that goes a millisecond or two milliseconds under the ground, in fact the explosive -- the fragmentation doesn't go very far at all, and the explosive damage is created mostly straight up, as opposed to out from the target. So you can reduce the area that's affected.

You can also shift aim points around on a building. For example, in the case you see up there, if we

move that little -- I'll just kind of point to it -- this little triangle is our aim point, if you will, and you can shift that various places on the building to mitigate the effect that it has. For example, if this mosque were a little closer in here and your aim point was on this point, you might have an effect on the mosque. So you shift the aim point to allow the effects to go in a direction that goes away from your protected facility.

You can also adjust the azimuth that you use for the attack. I'll just make a point. You see the yellow shaded area in the circle there; that is a notional depiction of a 500-pound fragmentary pattern used against a target. And so you can see by -- if you see the small arrow there on the triangle, the angle of attack of that bomb is coming from southwest to northeast, and so you see that the major effect of the bomb goes out in front of the flight path and to the side; it doesn't go in a concentric circle all the way around. So you can adjust by choosing a particular run-in heading where that fragmentary effect will occur.

And then finally, you can pick the time you choose to attack a target. Obviously, if your target is a military facility, you would assume day or night, probably wouldn't matter. On the other hand, if your target might be something that could have non-combatant casualties to a residence or, for example, close to a school, you may want to choose to strike that at night versus during the day, where you may not have kids in a school. Now, it's clear that in the middle of combat operations you probably aren't going to have school in session. But you can still adjust your day and night timing to try to continue to reduce the effect of your weapons.

In any case, our example here, we've used a smaller weapon than that large circle that we saw before. We've adjusted the angle of attack for the aircraft that would be designated to strike that target, and then changed the fusing of the bomb to allow it to detonate further into the ground than right at the top. And so, you can shrink down the effect of that weapon to a very minimal size.

Now, there is no doubt that in those -- in this particular example that civilian housing area, you'll probably blow out some windows. And so, there will be some side effect from just blast, over pressure, that does occur. And as we go through this mitigation process, we also have a series of models that will say, well, if it's a high rise building with so many glass windows in this -- this particular number of feet away from the impact, you can tell, roughly speaking, what the effect will be on that building and make an estimate, given a set of criteria on the capacity of the building, for example, on how many additional casualties you might see in a strike.

So it allows you to be pretty predictive. It's certainly not science. To a degree, there is some art form in it. But it gives you a pretty good process by which you can determine an ability to strike a target in a fairly confined area and keep the collateral damage to a minimum. I might add, during the OEF, during the operations in Afghanistan, as we were striking targets, sometimes in downtown Kabul we were able to use this process and strike targets where an al Qaeda meeting was taking place. That meeting location was destroyed, and the adjacent buildings on all three sides were not damaged. As you know, many structures in Afghanistan had walls surrounding them. You can take advantage of those surrounding structures to help mitigate by using a delay fuse, et cetera.

So it's -- I don't want to say there will be no damage. I don't want to say there will be no casualties. But there is a very good way to try to keep the number of casualties and the damage to the minimum.

Next slide.

Now, we talked earlier about dual use facilities, and there are situations for sure where facilities are

both military and civilian in nature. We take a look at each one of those facilities to determine if the benefit from striking that target outweighs the potential damage to surrounding facilities or to noncombatant casualties. And we -- and while a dual use facility is a legitimate target within the laws of armed conflict, we do want to make sure that we try to strike that target at a point where it minimizes the casualties. And that may be, for example, where I talked about using a day versus a night attack will help you with that.

Next slide.

There's one final mean of providing some mitigation, and is essentially provide some warning. We have, as many of you have reported, been using leaflets and radio broadcasts in Afghanistan, and certainly in Iraq now to send messages to the people. In our case, for example, in Iraq, we send messages to have them listen to our radio broadcasts. We send messages to tell them to stay away from military targets. And we would use this same kind of approach to be able to say to the people at a particular target location, "You probably don't want to go around a military base. You might want to stay home. You probably don't want to go to work if you work in one of those dual use facilities. And you can use the media -- I want to rephrase that -- (laughs, laughter) -- the medium of broadcast, both leaflets and the airwaves, to actually say to the civilian community, "You probably ought to stay away from the kinds of facilities that could be targeted in any kind of conflict." And you can do that over time and condition or you can do that in a very short period of time and allow you at least one more means of trying to get that message out to keep people away from a target that may be struck.

Next slide.

Now, there are -- kind of, the summary to this process is to say that we really have -- we are continuing to work hard to minimize the effects that we have. But -- and there are some targets that we will, as a routine, not strike at all. You can see diplomatic facilities. Now, there will be somebody out there that says, "Well, what about in Kosovo? You made a mistake." If you will go back to the first chart where I had that little yellow ellipse that said "fog of war; human error," those things will occur and we won't get this 100 percent correct. But we feel confident that as each day goes by, we continue to develop better intelligence and location information on things like diplomatic facilities, public services, locations of the NGOs, locations of the media, and certainly, the hospitals and religious facilities that we have around.

There is an important point, though, and that is once a government, an enemy force chooses to locate military -- valid military targets, like surface-to-air missile systems, like AAA weapons, like tanks, like weapons of mass destruction, if a government chooses to co-locate those with one of these protected sites, they lose their status, under international law, as a protected target. Now, that doesn't mean you're striking the protected target. It means you're striking the military capability that is co-located there. And again, we'll go through a similar process to make sure that you target the thing and not the facility; again, trying to minimize the kind of damage that you might incur.

Folks, that's -- those are the general slides I wanted to cover. And I see I've prompted a few questions, so let me go around here.

Q: Yeah. I was wondering what -- if you could describe what techniques you have for mitigating collateral damage if you hit a chemical or biological weapons site.

**Senior Defense Official:** That's a great point. There has been great work done by a number of both military and civilian agencies to determine the effects of a weapon on a chemical site, whether it's

something simple, like a missile fuel manufacturing facility, for example, that uses a variety of chemicals, or if you find a mustard gas storage site.

First point is, there are some ways to deny use of that facility without destroying the facility. For example, you can take the power out from that facility, and so you might strike the power production for -- or the switching site for that facility, so it makes it not functional. You might deny access to that by using self-destructing small mines -- and these are air-deliverable -- that have a 24-hour or 48-hour self-destructing capability. And so you could keep people from going in and taking something out of that facility.

We might also target some of those kinds of facilities with special operating forces, as opposed to kinetically, with bombs. And so there's a number of ways that you might preclude a chemical or weapons of mass destruction emission.

There's also some good studies on the kinetic effect of various types of munitions on various types of chemicals. And so you may be able to incinerate some of those in the actual attack itself.

I think, finally, just to say this -- because this is an important point, we will attempt to not create those kinds of effects. That's not to say we won't strike targets we need to, but we think we have some means that will allow us to deal with some of those --

Q: And is this the same for biological or chemical?

**Senior Defense Official:** There are again, some similar studies -- I really don't want to give you too much of the results there, because I'd probably speaking -- beyond my level of understanding.

Q: Yesterday General Myers said that roughly 60 to 70 percent of the bombs that would be used would be -- were precision-guided, which would mean roughly a third of those dropped would not be. Can you compare for us your accuracy in achieving what you're attempting to do with all of this with the precision-guided bomb and a "dumb" bomb?

**Senior Defense Official:** Sure. First, it's important to say that you pick the weapon that is best suited to the target. And so, for example, troops in the open, where precision is not so critical -- we would generally try to use non-precision weapons for those kinds of targets. And there are a number of those.

On the other hand, as you start to get closer in to a requirement for precision, the actual percentage of precision to non-precision will actually swing way over to the left. And I would say that General Myers' characterization is good as you look at an entire campaign. But as you look at the areas where collateral damage is the most concern for us, then you'll probably see a much more substantial reliance on precision weapons up into the 90 percent.

Q: In comparing the two in terms of collateral damage and in terms of actually hitting the targets that you're -- that you're attempting to hit, how do they -- how would you --

**Senior Defense Official:** I'll just give you an example. A 500- pound dumb bomb, if you will, dropped from medium altitude has a circular error probable -- in other words, that's sort of the basket it's expected to hit -- of somewhere around 200 feet. A 500-pound laser-guided bomb or a GPS weapon is down in the 21 or 22 feet. So that's sort of the order of magnitude. And again, as I would go back to you, you would choose to use the smarter weapons when you -- when the precision is more required for

you. Does that help you?

Yes, ma'am.

Q: Could you answer a couple of questions? With regard to your precision-guided munitions, what's your dud rate or your mistake rate? Because some of them --

**Senior Defense Official:** Sure.

Q: And the second question I have is, how confident are you in your targeting databases? Because that was a problem in Kosovo. Could you talk about the changes you will have made?

**Senior Defense Official:** Sure.

Q: And also, could you --

**Senior Defense Official:** Now, see, you're going to confuse me with a third question.

Q: All right.

**Senior Defense Official:** I'll come back to you if I -- if we can. Okay.

First, targeting database. I think we've made a huge improvement. It -- and that's maybe unfair. We have continued to refine that process. And people who have an input to that have become -- have begun -- have become much more forthcoming, if you will, to help us with that. For example, nongovernmental organizations are keenly interested in letting us know where their locations are so that they are not targeted. And so, we think we are making great progress in improving our database.

Now, if you go back to your first question of things don't go where they're supposed to go all the time, I think it's fair to say that between, somewhere between 7 and 10 percent of even our precision weapons do not hit within that 21-foot circle that I just mentioned a while ago. And so, there will be some unforeseen circumstances. A bomb comes off an airplane, and there are a number of both electrical and mechanical things (that) have to happen in order for that bomb to go where it is designed. And you could have a power failure on a guidance unit, you could have a fin lock up, and that bomb will go somewhere we know not. And so it's important to understand that collateral damage can occur not because you struck the wrong target, but because a bomb just flat didn't go. And that's -- that is not uncommon in 8 to 10 percent of the time.

Q: Any possibility of compensation for -- for --

**Senior Defense Official:** I'm really not at the level -- .

Q: There have been reports about Iraq purchasing GPS jammers and possibly putting them around. Is that a concern as far as targeting is done? And are you confident that the military has overlooked it and gotten past it?

**Senior Defense Official:** Well, GPS jammers don't affect laser-guided weapons, so -- and GPS jamming doesn't affect electro-optically-guided weapons. So, what I'm really saying is we have a broad enough capability that I'm not worried about it.

Now, to the question of GPS jamming, it's certainly something we have to acknowledge is a capability, but I think we have paid attention to that and we're not terribly concerned.

Q: As you design your structure for command authority to drop bomb X on target X, are there categories of targets that will require -- in Kosovo, you may recall, some of the targets required going all the way up to presidents of coalition countries. How is your command structure designed? How much freedom does the pilot have? How much freedom does Tommy Franks have and his subcommanders to go? Will you likely have open free-fire zones, boxes, where you're patrolling and looking for certain things?

**Senior Defense Official:** Yeah, I think first, the point I'd like to make is that the command control structure is built very flat. It allows for decision-making at the lowest possible level, and that's a good thing. I don't believe you'll see the kinds of challenges that military commanders in Kosovo faced. I think the president, secretary and General Franks have a very good agreement on only those key targets that have to be elevated, and we allow the battlefield commanders to make those decisions. I think -- I'm getting old -- the second point you mentioned?

Q: The box.

**Senior Defense Official:** Ah. Okay. Yes.

Q: (Inaudible) - In a fluid battlefield you create boxes where you have different --

**Senior Defense Official:** Sure. Absolutely. We'll have -- again, that will be dependent upon the effect that you want to achieve on the battlefield. For example, if you're moving a large maneuver force forward in an open battle area, that land component commander may very well want sort of roaming patrols in a large geographic area to strike any military target they find. Pilots -- the ground commander always still has a responsibility to positively identify what he's going to shoot. And so, it still has to meet the criteria of a military target that affects the battlefield. So -- but there will be areas where a broad area engagement permission is given and to effect the battlefield.

Q: Could you talk at all about non-lethal weaponry that might be used? I'm thinking of the E-bomb, for example, and maybe other things. Do you -- I know people don't want to get into the E-bomb, but if not that, the other --

**Senior Defense Official:** I'm chuckling because I haven't met that guy yet.

Q: Is there such a thing? Or is it --

Q: Well, let's go to my question first, if that's alright? (Laughter.) Any of the non-lethal --

**Senior Defense Official:** I think --

Q: -- non-lethal weaponry that might be in your inventory that you could use?

**Senior Defense Official:** I think what is fair to say is that our military technology has developed to a point where there are a number of tools that are not necessarily explosive -- they are non-kinetic. And I think that there are many places where a non-kinetic tool is better for you than a kinetic tool. And they



can be something as simple as using a concrete-filled bomb as opposed to an explosive bomb. If your desire is to make a trailer-size thing go away and make it not functional, you could hit that with a concrete weapon and it won't work anymore, but you haven't destroyed anything. So I think it's unfair to try to get so specific to say is there one of these or one of those or how do you use them. It's probably more fair to say that we have a broad ability to use non-kinetic tools and we will take advantage of those on the battlefield.

Q: What about pulse weaponry of any kind?

**Senior Defense Official:** You know, I'm an A-10 pilot; I'm not smart enough to talk about it.

Q: But you don't know anything about the pulse weaponry at all?

**Senior Defense Official:** No, I really can't comment on it.

Q: You can't comment because you don't know, or you never heard, or you know but you --

**Senior Defense Official:** I don't know enough about it to say it exists or to say that it works.

Q: May I just follow up on that? Is there anything that uses electromagnetic pulses or anything in that general category that might be used in this -- in any upcoming battle?

**Senior Defense Official:** Well -- I'm stuttering, and you'll say, "Well, he knows something he's not telling me." I really don't know of a weapon right now that has that kind of characteristics. But I am not a scientist and there are a lot of smart scientists trying to develop weapons that take advantage of the electromagnetic field, the radio field and others.

Q: But not scientists trying to develop one now, but, I mean, is there one in existence? I would presume you'd know about weapons --

**Senior Defense Official:** I'll just let you continue to speculate.

Q: But is that --

**Senior Defense Official:** Sir?

Q: -- part of a disinformation campaign, the stories about --

**Senior Defense Official:** No, I just -- I honestly don't know enough to give you an answer. I guess that's as good as I can give it to you.

Q: I want to go back to an issue that Jack raised, and that's about targeting oversight. There was this story -- whether it was correct or not, I don't know -- from Afghanistan, where a Predator had spotted a vehicle and there was a question about whether the JAG on duty had to authorize that strike. That created a lot of controversy over whether the role of the JAGs, given the -- sort of the short sense of the shooter space that we have now, whether the role of the JAGs is the same as it was in the past. Do JAG officers have to rule on --

**Senior Defense Official:** No. I think that was a grossly unfair characterization of the process. But I will

say that it was also a process that we were learning, because that's the first time that we used that particular kind of weapon system on the battlefield, that gives you that situational awareness. But I think it was unfair to say that the JAG rules that process. Every commander at every level has a legal adviser with him because there are laws of armed conflict and there are accepted means of behaving on a battlefield. And so if you have a question, at every command level, you have a relationship with your combat lawyer that says, "Well, what do you think? This seems a little bit of a gray area to me; is it?" That is a healthy interaction and it needs to occur. The key is making that decision loop as tight as you can. And I think we've learned a lot from the first day of Afghanistan till today, and I think -- I'm confident, to go back to the point over here, that the decision cycle is very, very agile and should not be a concern.

Sir?

QA political overview question here. Is the purpose of this briefing, besides imparting specific information, is the purpose of this because CentCom is so concerned about the prospect of urban conflict and a lot of civilian casualties that you want to sensitize those who are going to be covering it, and the world who reads the briefing, that CentCom has a process in place to mitigate whatever may happen in an urban conflict environment?

**Senior Defense Official:** Well, I happen to be a CentCom person speaking, but I think the briefing is a fair approximation of where we have come in the transformation of the use of military over the last -- even the last three or four years. And so I think the purpose of the briefing is to say bad things will still happen on the battlefield, but if we are asked to use military power in Iraq, our intent is to ensure that we keep those bad effects to the minimum.

(Crosstalk.)

Q: What about the --

**Senior Defense Official:** I do -- I'll take two more questions. I can do that.

Q: What about the leaflets and the broadcasts? In your experience in Afghanistan, did people pay much attention to that? Did -- when you dropped a leaflet and said stay away from this, or had broadcast.

**Senior Defense Official:** Absolutely. You know, there are some great stories of that, and I could spend a hour here doing it. But let me just give you two snippets.

As refugees left Afghanistan, we were able to speak with many of them and ask them, "So did y'all see any leaflets running around or anything like that?" And they said, "Oh, yes. We got them, and it said to tune in to this frequency. And we listened to you. We enjoyed listening to your music. We" -- (laughter) -- they said, "Your music was way better than what we could hear," you know.

So there is -- in the process, the evolution of these messages, you build an audienceship (sic), just like you do. And what we found is that the programming, the messages, and the information, we told them where humanitarian aid was going to be delivered. We told them to stay away from the city centers at night.

Q: Did they do that? Did they get --

**Senior Defense Official:** And they seemed to affect them. And, in fact, one of the follow-on snippets is "We saw you so precise with your targeting that we weren't afraid. We felt comfortable that we could stay in our house and you wouldn't hurt us."

Back here.

Q: A couple of JDAM questions. You used the example of a 500- pound JDAM. One question is, I wasn't aware that those were out in the field in large quantities --

**Senior Defense Official:** I think I used -- I said "JDAM", I said "laser-guided weapon and JDAM". But you're right, we have 500- pounders still coming to us. But it was really -- the circular error is about the same for a laser-guided bomb or a JDAM.

Q: So the laser-guided 500-pounders obviously are out there.

**Senior Defense Official:** Yes.

Q: Okay. The other thing is, you were talking about the pilot still has the responsibility to identify the target. Now, obviously, when you're using JDAMs, which are becoming a popular thing, you don't have to have eyes on the target. Do they -- or do they still have to?

**Senior Defense Official:** No. Let me -- let me -- that's a good point, because there -- as you prepare for every mission, there is a very detailed mission planning process that goes on for every air crew.

For weapons where you're -- for missions where you would use a weapon that is not sort of terminal guidance, there is a detailed target study process that occurs with that air crew and his flight members so that they can look at the surrounding area, find ways to identify it. And then in the aircraft they have, whether it's radar, whether it's a targeting pod, whether it's a -- just using even the visual eye, in some cases, you can identify that even though I'm not going to see that bomb physically hit that spot, I can see where that spot is on the ground. And unless the coordinates on my weapons system are in error, it's going to go where it's supposed to. And so, there is -- I'm not concerned that we will induce additional error by the fact that that's not a terminally guided weapon by the guy in the airplane. Does that help you?

Q: Well, let's say, the example of the case in Baghdad where there were 400 civilians gathered in a --

**Senior Defense Official:** Or wherever.

Q: -- command post right -- whatever it was. Let's say that you could actually see those -- those people around it. I don't think that was the case with this particular thing --

**Senior Defense Official:** No.

Q: -- because it was a laser-guided thing. But let's say there was a case where people had gathered around it for whatever reason, and you're using JDAMs to hit that command post. I mean, would you -- would be a man in the loop there or not?

**Senior Defense Official:** Well, again, you -- you would hope that your messages that say "Don't go around facilities that are military in nature" would take. And --

Q: Well, maybe they didn't go voluntarily.

**Senior Defense Official:** And I'll go back to my statement on the fog of war, that sometimes there will just be mistakes made. That's not the intent, but it does happen.

Okay, last question.

Q: Okay. Given the targeting calculations that have already been made, what is the current estimate for civilian casualties?

**Senior Defense Official:** I really don't have anything that I could say to you as a good estimate. I think the view would be that our precision capability allows us to keep targets -- keep civilian casualties to a lower number than we've ever seen in the past. But there will be some.

Q: Are we talking hundreds?

**Senior Defense Official:** I really would -- it would be unfair of me to try to guesstimate that, because --

Q: This number 3,500 that a group at Harvard put out for the last gulf war of civilian casualties, do you subscribe to that? Is it ballpark?

**Senior Defense Official:** Somebody from Harvard's pretty smart, so they surely probably have a good answer. But I -- I really wouldn't want to affirm or deny that that was accurate.

Q: Just to be clear: even given the kind of intensity of the bombing campaign that we're hearing about, the calculation is still that there will be fewer numbers of civilian casualties in this conflict than -- if there is one -- than there was during Desert Storm?

**Senior Defense Official:** I think that there -- it's fair to say it's possible. I mean, I think our -- we will use -- in Desert Storm I think we used 20-some percent precision weapons. Here we'll use 70 percent precision weapons. An example in Desert Storm, we -- on a number of occasions we targeted a particular location with 16 or 18 airplanes; we'll do that same target with one now. And so, the ability to be that more precise intuitively tells me that there should be fewer casualties. But I -- but that's probably as close as I can get for you.

Q: Last one. How many people sign off --

**Senior Defense Official:** This will be my other last question. (Laughter.)

Q: You talk about the vetting process. How people sign off on a target before it indeed becomes a target? What happens to that targeting process, that vetting process when you do have a real-time situation such as a Predator hunting, you know, Omar X over there, and he finds him, and he needs a quick decision on whether or not to attack?

**Senior Defense Official:** I think the first question is the easiest one to answer -- well, they're both fairly easy to answer.

The vetting process for targets involves the entire intelligence community. There are video

teleconferences each day that look at targets and decide whether they are viable targets.

In terms of the time-sensitive targeting, which is what you're talking about, we also have a command structure of intelligence operations, legal and commanders, who can make a determination. And in the end, they will do just that. They will make a judgment based on all the best information that we have. And I'd just say we have a very robust capability to gather and fuse information at a point of decision.

Thanks, ladies and gentlemen. I appreciate it. Sorry, I have to catch a flight.

Q: Thank you.

**"THIS TRANSCRIPT WAS PREPARED BY THE FEDERAL NEWS SERVICE INC., WASHINGTON, D.C. FEDERAL NEWS SERVICE IS A PRIVATE COMPANY. FOR OTHER DEFENSE RELATED TRANSCRIPTS NOT AVAILABLE THROUGH THIS SITE, CONTACT FEDERAL NEWS SERVICE AT (202) 347-1400."**



[Printer-friendly Version](#)



[Email A Copy](#)

---

[Privacy & Security Notice](#) | [External Link Disclaimer](#) | [Web Policy](#)  
[About DefenseLINK](#) | [Contact Us](#)