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Civilian Killings by US Cast Pall on NATO's Marjah Offensive

By Jason Ditz

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The Battle of Marjah was supposed to be the centerpiece of the Obama escalation, showcasing NATO's firepower against the farming community while emphasizing strategic changes designed to limit civilian casualties.



This has failed on both fronts, [with troops encountering heavy resistance and making slow progress in occupying the town](#), and even more importantly an embarrassingly high profile mishap involving US forces.

According to NATO, the US was attempting to use its High Mobility Artillery Rocket System (HiMARS) to attack some nearby insurgents. [The rockets fired from the HiMARS “missed” their targets, and instead hit a crowded home 300 meters away, killing at least 12 Afghan civilians](#).

Officials [were quick to apologize](#), and the HiMARS has been temporarily barred from service, but after US forces papered the region with [leaflets urging civilians to “stay put”](#) during the invasion, the killings have once again drawn uncomfortable attention to the inaccuracy of war inside a town.

Despite the killings and the fighting, officials insist that the invasion is “[going to plan](#).” Those paying attention over the past month however will recall repeated predictions of a quick victory with little battle, and the [reality has been anything but](#).