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**USFOR-A PUBLIC AFFAIRS**

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

**Response to Committee on the Rights of the Child**

KABUL, Afghanistan (February 08, 2013) – The UN Committee on the Rights of the Child's concerns about reports of the death of hundreds of children as a result of attacks and air strikes by the US military in Afghanistan are categorically unfounded. Equally unsubstantiated is their assertion that US forces use indiscriminate force during their operations. Finally, the committee's assertion that US troops do not exercise precautionary measures is entirely false.

In fact, International Security Assistance Force (ISAF), of which US Forces are the majority, reduced civilian casualties by 49% in 2012 compared with 2011, demonstrating that protecting Afghan people is the cornerstone of the ISAF mission. More specifically, the number of children who have died or been wounded as a result of our air operations has dropped by nearly 40% in 2012 compared to 2011.

The United Nations Assistance Mission Afghanistan's report on protecting civilians in armed conflict, published in August of 2012, states that the vast majority of Afghan civilian casualties in Afghanistan are caused by the insurgency. ISAF assesses that 84% of all Afghan civilians killed and wounded in 2012 were victims of insurgent attacks. In contrast, in 2012 the combined ISAF and Afghan National Security Forces caused approximately 8% of CIVCAS. The cause of the remaining 8% of CIVCAS is unknown. The insurgents' indiscriminate use of IEDs and suicide bombers is taking an extraordinary toll on Afghan civilians. In 2012, the insurgents killed or injured nearly 3500 Afghan civilians.

To minimize the risk of CIVCAS, both ISAF and US Forces Afghanistan (USFOR-A) employ detailed systems of technical, tactical and procedural checks and balances before employing all weapons in Afghanistan. More specifically, ISAF and USFOR-A take precautions to employ force only when necessary, and in a proportional manner. Strict rules apply to the use of air-delivered munitions,

particularly when civilians may be present and whenever there is a possibility of striking a civilian structure. USFOR-A specifically rejects any implication that the US is indiscriminate in the use of force.

Despite all efforts to avoid them, forces operating under ISAF, including US forces, are sometimes responsible for civilian deaths during Coalition operations. In each case ISAF and US military officials make every effort to meet with the families of those we have harmed and to express our condolences personally.

In a continuing effort to further reduce these civilian casualties, USFOR-A, ISAF and the Afghan National Security Forces continuously collaborate on all civilian casualty mitigation efforts. Lessons are continuously shared, procedures improved, incidents investigated, policies modified, training amended and tactics updated. The mitigation of civilian casualties has direct command oversight and the highest level of priority in both ISAF and USFOR- A.

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