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Department of War

Annual Report on the Civilian Protection Center of Excellence
for Fiscal Year 2025

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United States Code: Title 10 §184(c) provides:

Annual Report on Civilian Protection Center of Excellence

The Secretary of Defense shall submit to the congressional defense committees, and make publicly available on an appropriate website of the Department, an annual report on the activities of the Center.

INTRODUCTION

This report—which describes the activities of the Department of War’s (DoW) Civilian Protection Center of Excellence (CP CoE), from October 1, 2024, through September 30, 2025—is submitted pursuant to 10 USC § 184(c).

This report is publicly available at War.gov.

BACKGROUND

In FY2025, DoW maintained policies and guidance aimed at improving operational outcomes and strengthening joint force capability and capacity to mitigate and respond to civilian harm.¹ Consistent with these policies, and pursuant to 10 USC § 184(a), DoW continued to operate the CP CoE within the Department of the Army throughout the fiscal year.

The CP CoE supports components across the Joint Force by serving as the Department’s focal point for matters related to civilian casualties and other forms of civilian harm resulting from military operations involving the United States Armed Forces; and by institutionalizing and advancing knowledge, practices, and tools for preventing, mitigating, and responding to civilian harm.

ORGANIZATIONAL CONTEXT

Following resourcing priority changes implemented throughout the Department in Q2 – Q4 FY25, the CP CoE experienced an approximately two thirds reduction in staff. This and similar reductions in personnel and resourcing across the DoW’s Civilian Harm Mitigation and Response (CHMR) community impacted the CP CoE’s scope of activities.

In January 2025, CP CoE staffing included approximately 40 personnel (including civilians, military, and contractor support) in line with plans to achieve Full Operational Capability by close of FY25. After reorganization, the CP CoE was reduced to 9 personnel (7 civilians, 2 military) by the close of FY25.

Similarly, DoW-wide budgets for CHMR in FY26 were cut and CHMR staffing billets and programs across the DoW, including at U.S. Combatant Commands (CCMDs), were gradually reorganized, reduced, and/or terminated by the end of FY25. However, in line with Commanders’ authorities, certain CCMDs and components retained a portion of their CHMR personnel and activities.

¹ Such guidance includes Executive Order 13732 of July 1, 2016, *United States Policy on Pre- and Post-Strike Measures To Address Civilian Casualties in U.S. Operations Involving the Use of Force*, as amended; Department of Defense Instruction (DoDI) 3000.17, *Civilian Harm Mitigation and Response*, of December 21, 2023; and Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Instruction (CJSCI) 5840.01 of July 31, 2024, on *Civilian Harm Mitigation and Response*; among other CHMR-specific provisions throughout Joint Doctrine.

At the close of FY25, a final decision on the rescoping of CHMR across the DoW was still pending and associated personnel and program funding, including for the CP CoE, remained at reduced levels. The CP CoE continues to retain critical skills, knowledge, and expertise and has prioritized workstreams necessary to meet the requirements outlined in 10 USC § 184 and corresponding DoW policies and in support of the priorities set forth in the DoW's 2025 Interim National Defense Strategic Guidance.

ACTIVITIES OF THE CP CoE

A. COORDINATION AND SYNCHRONIZATION OF CHMR EFFORTS WITH KEY STAKEHOLDERS [10 USC § 184(B)(7) AND (8)]

1. CHMR ENTERPRISE SYNCHRONIZATION

In November 2024, the CP CoE convened the first CHMR Collaboration Workshop, bringing together more than 180 professionals from across the Department of War and other relevant U.S. Government (USG) departments and agencies to foster collaboration, share insights, and strengthen partnerships over two days. The target audience of CHMR personnel included CCMD staff members from across J2, J3, J5, and J9 Directorates, CHMR Officers (CHMROs) from the U.S. military services, Service Component Command CHMROs, the Department of State's Civilian Harm Incident Response Guidance (CHIRG) team, and Intelligence Community (IC) officers. Keynote speakers offered the perspectives of general officers and senior civilian officials on the relationship between reducing civilian harm and warfighting effectiveness. Panels also included insights from renowned civilian casualty (CIVCAS) experts from non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and academia.

The Workshop's plenary sessions included: CHMR in Large-Scale Combat Operations; integrating CHMR into major military exercises; CHMR in Security Cooperation; lessons learned from U.S. Africa Command (AFRICOM) and Central Command (CENTCOM); and twelve small-group sessions focused on specialized topics such as cyber warfare and Artificial Intelligence (AI). Participating organizations held additional sessions on Civilian Environment Teams, U.S. Indo-Pacific Command (INDOPACOM) priorities, and CHMR Red Teaming. AFRICOM reviewed the development of investigation protocols for reports related to events going back more than five years. CENTCOM presented a case study of its first interview of a person harmed in U.S. military operations under the CHMR construct. CENTCOM detailed the CP CoE's assistance to its assessment of the person's civilian status, guidance on trauma-informed interview protocols, and facilitation of contact with NGOs.

In FY25, the CP CoE continued its monthly CHMR Enterprise Sync meeting, engaging the entire USG CHMR community with a regular opportunity to exchange programmatic updates and share insights on implementation. In January 2025, the CP CoE established a recurring classified Operations Sync for participants to share real-world operational insights from across commands. Presentations included: CENTCOM's integration of Red Team and Civilian Environment Team analysts into the Joint Targeting process for Operation Poseidon Archer; U.S. Southern Command (SOUTHCOM) CHMR Officer's deployment to advise a host nation's counternarcotics operations in a populated environment; and a demonstration of the CP CoE's

integration of enhanced civilian environment data in a theater Common Operating Picture (COP).

2. OPERATIONAL COMMANDS AND EXERCISE SUPPORT

In FY25, the CP CoE continued to collaborate with operational commands emphasizing exercise integration, experimentation, and limited support to ongoing operations. The CP CoE engaged with Combatant Command CHMR teams, multiple service component commands, and four Army Corps HQs.

i. Ad-Hoc Provision of Reachback Support and Specialized Subject Matter Expertise

In FY25, the CP CoE provided reach back support to CCMDs upon request during active operations and advised CCMD CHMR teams on maintaining readiness for emerging missions amid anticipated FY26 resource reductions. Notably, the CP CoE supported CENTCOM's Civilian Harm Assessment Cell (CHAC) during Operation Rough Rider (ORR) by providing guidance on assessing the reliability of local NGOs as sources for civilian harm reports in a contested information environment, enabling more informed civilian harm assessments. The CP CoE developed a deployment plan to augment the CHAC, though the operation concluded before implementation.

ii. CHMR in Major Theater Exercises for Large-Scale Combat Operations

The CP CoE also supported planning and execution for major theater exercises and wargames simulating Large-Scale Combat Operations (LSCO).

INDOPACOM. In the second quarter of the fiscal year (Q2), the CP CoE worked with the Center for Naval Analyses (CNA) to facilitate an LSCO wargame integrating Civilian Harm Mitigation and Response at INDOPACOM. This wargame, conducted as a classified Tabletop Exercise (TTX), brought together stakeholders from INDOPACOM, its component commands, and across other elements of the DoW, to explore challenges and opportunities in executing CHMR functions through a variety of plausible vignettes showcasing different operational environments, forces, and dilemmas for Commanders in a near-future LSCO in the INDOPACOM area of responsibility (AOR). Within the vignettes, players explored the intelligence and planning that would enable commanders and staff in a future joint task force (JTF) to incorporate CHMR into operational planning, mitigate civilian harm during high-intensity operations, and assess the effects of operations on the civilian environment.

In Q3, the CP CoE held a series of meetings with the INDOPACOM CHMR team to assist in preparations for their integration to the exercise Pacific Sentry 25 Battle Rhythm.

EUCOM. The CP CoE also directly supported planning, exercise design, and scenario development for a major U.S. European Command (EUCOM) service component command theater exercise, U.S. Army Europe-Africa (USAREUR-AF) exercise AVENGER TRIAD 25. CP CoE planners engaged with the EUCOM CHMR team and North Atlantic treaty Organization (NATO) Civil Military Cooperation (CIMIC) counterparts on the development of Master Scenario Events related to a realistic civilian environment in an LSCO on the continent and

drafted civilian protection training objectives for a coalition operation based on the existing Universal Joint Task List (UJTL).

iii. Integrating the Civilian Environment for More Realistic Training Environment in Exercises

The CP CoE identified a ubiquitous gap across exercise training environments – a lack of realism in integrating the civilian environment. In FY25, the CP CoE concluded a series of observations of Army Corps-level exercises with a CHMR briefing at the I Corps Indo-Pacific exercise YAMA SAKURA in October 2024, and an observation of exercise execution in December 2024, with two CP CoE members embedded with the Center for Army Lessons Learned (CALL). These observations led to the CP CoE’s prioritization of the development of a civilian environment model in theater and Corps-level exercises to better prepare operating forces for the realities of how civilians will impact the operational environment. There is continued interest throughout operating forces in developing realistic simulations, training objectives, and exercise injects in line with the CP CoE’s efforts.

Civilian environment layer in Maven Smart System. The CP CoE leveraged the rapid adoption of the AI-enabled Maven Smart System (MSS) within the Army and the Joint Force to advance the development of a civilian environment layer in the COPs used by operational commands. Building upon nascent best practices from the Army Civil Affairs community’s experimentation in Corps-level exercises, the CP CoE developed an integrated model capable of supporting targeting, fires, intelligence, civil affairs, and planning tasks. The CP CoE also cooperated with U.S. Army Special Operations Command (USASOC) and key industry partners to refine this model. Further, the CP CoE deployed a senior Army Field Artillery Targeting Technician to Army V Corps’ Fires TTX and the III Corps’ Warfighter exercise to adapt the model for interoperability with NATO partners in the EUCOM theater and enable its use for other operational warfighting purposes beyond CHMR. Concurrently, another CP CoE specialist adapted this civilian environment model for CCMD headquarters CHMR staff officers whose commands had recently adopted MSS. This theater model was suitable for replication for use in subordinate commands and Joint Task Forces during conflict.

CHMR AI Assistant. The CP CoE developed an AI Assistant prototype that helps military staff rapidly analyze civilian environment data during operations by equipping AskSage, the Army’s enterprise AI platform, with the CP CoE’s CHMR knowledge base. The CP CoE collaborated with an industry partner to pilot an MSS integration featuring dynamic operations support capabilities. During the XVIII Airborne Corps’ Scarlet Dragon exercise (SD 25), the pilot enabled the G9 Civil Affairs staff to shorten its timeline for validating civilian environment information by 97 percent, conserving critical staff bandwidth for other tasks. The successful demonstration resulted in requests from I, III, and V Corps representatives for access to enhanced versions of the AI assistant from the CP CoE to improve targeting and operational decisions at every Army Corps.

B. CHMR TRAINING [10 USC § 184(B)(4)]

1. FOUNDATIONAL CHMR TRAINING

In FY25, the CP CoE completed the baseline DoW CHMR training for the CHMR workforce, including personnel from CCMDs, the Intelligence Community, Services, and other USG entities, such as the State Department. A total of 212 U.S. personnel received this Foundational CHMR Training. This was accomplished by deploying mobile training teams to every geographic combatant command and by holding training sessions within the national capital region. NGOs and the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) also supported the training during a day dedicated to external data sources. Concepts covered in the CHMR training included: assessments and investigations; the civilian environment; joint targeting; and civilian harm in the cyber, maritime, and space domains. The trainings culminated in a matrix game capstone event testing participants' CHMR learning.

2. TRAINING PILOT: CIVILIAN HARM ASSESSMENT CELL CERTIFICATION

In June 2025, the CP CoE developed and delivered a weeklong classified course for certifying personnel for assignment to CHACs or supporting functions in the DoW and USG. The CP CoE conducted the course in cooperation with the Defense Threat Reduction Agency (DTRA), a leading DoW agency for advanced targeting and risk mitigation applications. Participants included representatives from AFRICOM, CENTCOM, EUCOM, SOUTHCOM, the Joint Staff, DTRA, and the Department of State's Civilian Harm Response Guidance (CHIRG) team. Topics included: case studies from U.S. operations in Iraq, Syria, and the Balkans; best practices for responses to local populations reporting civilian harm; and methods to assess and address target misidentification and collateral effects as causes of civilian harm. The pilot course concluded with a capstone course applying civilian harm assessment in an LSCO scenario where U.S. forces were operating in a contested operational environment, challenging the training audience to scale Civilian Harm Assessments to the expected demands of future contexts.

C. LESSONS LEARNED AND GUIDANCE FOR ADDRESSING CIVILIAN HARM ACROSS THE FULL SPECTRUM OF ARMED CONFLICT, INCLUDING OPERATIONAL REPORTING AND RESPONSE [10 USC § 184(B)(2), (3), AND (6)]

1. CHMR NOTES

The CP CoE developed and disseminated ten CHMR Notes capturing advancements in CHMR concepts, practices, and operating procedures for the Joint Force. CHMR Notes equip staff officers across the Department with references on core concepts, best practices, and a common lexicon for personnel from a range of functional and professional backgrounds. Fully consistent with Department-wide policy and doctrine, they provide interim guidance for CHMR implementation as practices become formalized. Subjects include: CHMR in Joint Planning; CHMR in Joint Targeting; the Civilian Environment; CHMR in Multinational and Partnered Operations; Assessing Civilian Harm; and Responding to Civilian Harm.

2. REPORT: OPTIMIZING CIVILIAN HARM ASSESSMENTS IN LSCO

The CP CoE commissioned the Institute for Defense Analyses (IDA) to examine options for optimizing civilian harm assessments in LSCO to enhance operational effectiveness. Drawing upon 25+ expert interviews, literature review, and case studies, the study developed scalable assessment methods tailored to LSCO, which may require macro-level assessments rather than incident-based approaches common to counterterrorism operations. The study concluded that Commanders would benefit from a framework grounded in operational attributes, including permissiveness, tempo, violence scale, and data availability, to select appropriate assessment methods. Key findings emphasized integrating assessment results into planning and targeting cycles, leveraging artificial intelligence for data analysis, and collaborating with allies and NGOs to enhance data collection. The report is expected to be published in FY26.

3. REPORT: LESSONS LEARNED DURING OPERATION ROUGH RIDER (ORR)

Beginning in August 2025, the CP CoE conducted a qualitative lessons learned study on CENTCOM's ORR (Yemen, March-May 2025). The study examined how the operational environment shaped civilian harm mitigation and assessment to identify lessons for scenarios lacking air and information dominance. Drawing upon interviews with practitioners from CENTCOM and U.S. Special Operations Command (SOCOM), the study provided actionable, practitioner-validated insights to inform policy, doctrine, training, and force development, consistent with DoDI 3000.17, *Civilian Harm Mitigation and Response*, and 10 USC § 184. The resulting report is intended to help Commanders to make risk-informed decisions that safeguard civilians while maintaining operational effectiveness in contested environments. The classified report was disseminated in FY25.

4. WHITE PAPER: CIVILIAN HARM ASSESSMENTS

To support CHMR integration across the Joint Force, the CP CoE developed a white paper establishing a foundation for compatible civilian harm assessment practices across operational theaters, incorporating guidance from the CHMR-AP, DoDI 3000.17, CJCSI 5840.01, and leading practices. The white paper provides Combatant Commanders with operational guidance on detection, assessment, and response procedures tailored to diverse conflict environments, emphasizing proactive identification of civilian harm, objective fact-finding using the "more likely than not" standard, and rapid institutional learning to enhance targeting precision and operational effectiveness.

5. CHMR LIBRARY

In FY25 the CP CoE prioritized the consolidation and archiving of all CHMR guidance, training, and educational materials produced by the CP CoE and the broader DoW CHMR community, including from practitioners at Combatant Commands. The CP CoE finalized and made available the resulting "CHMR Library" on Intelink to all DoW staff at appropriate classification levels for future uptake and consideration.

D. CHMR DATA MANAGEMENT AND REPOSITORY [10 USC § 184(B)(1) AND (5)]

In FY25, progress on the development of a standardized CHMR data management process and a repository of civilian harm information stalled due to the cessation of the CHMR Data Management Platform (DMP) project during Department-wide realignment of priorities and resources. Prior to this, the CP CoE had participated alongside other Department stakeholders to refine requirements in data management working groups. Following the end of the DMP project, the CP CoE began assessing the potential of interim solutions using existing platforms available within the Department.

CONCLUSION

In FY25, the CP CoE underwent significant changes due to a Department-wide realignment of priorities and resources. However, the CP CoE made progress in each of the Center's purpose areas, as outlined in 10 USC § 184, contributing to the Joint Force's ability to manage risks to civilians while maintaining operational effectiveness, thereby strengthening U.S. military operations across the globe.