



Written by [Alex Newman](#) on September 2, 2011

Reports: U.S. Troops Killed 5 Children In Iraq Raid

According to an American diplomatic cable released by WikiLeaks citing numerous officials and reports, a team of U.S. soldiers in Iraq may have handcuffed and then executed an entire family — including five children under the age of six and four women. The troops, who were previously cleared of any wrongdoing by a U.S. investigation, then allegedly called for an air strike on the home in an apparent effort to cover up the evidence.



The 2006 massacre, which happened in an Iraqi town called Ishaqi, left at least 10 civilians dead. Among them were 28-year-old farmer Faiz Khalaf, his young wife, and all three of their children — aged five, three, and five months. Khalaf's 74-year-old mother, his sister, and his two nieces — five and three years old — were also killed after being placed in handcuffs, officials said.

According to multiple [accounts](#), U.S. forces approached the house for a raid at around 2:30 a.m. on March 15. Shots were reportedly fired, though it remains unclear who was shooting and why. But what happened next — the alleged executions — is being called a war crime.

"The [Multi-National Forces] troops entered the house, handcuffed all residents and executed all of them," [noted](#) a high-ranking United Nations investigator named Philip Alston, whose letter to then-Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice was included in the [leaked diplomatic cable](#). "After the initial MNF intervention, a US air raid ensued that destroyed the house."

Local police, the chief of the U.S.-supported "Joint Coordination Center," morgue officials, neighbors, and multiple reporters all came to the same conclusion at the time. Iraqi TV stations showed gruesome footage of the children's bodies. And autopsies conducted in the nearby city of Tikrit revealed that all of the victims had indeed been bound before receiving fatal bullet wounds to the head.

The story was initially made public in 2006 by high-ranking Iraqi officials and witnesses who spoke to the press. American military officials, however, denied that a crime had taken place following the uproar among local residents and authorities.

A [U.S. investigation in 2006 eventually cleared U.S. troops of wrongdoing](#), though a military spokesperson [admitted](#) that there were "possibly up to nine collateral deaths." American authorities said at the time that one or more insurgents had been seized in a battle that destroyed the house.

But the leaked cable does not mention the arrest of any suspected shooters or the destruction of the house during a gun battle. And now the Pentagon is refusing to comment, [according](#) to news accounts.

Other official reports about what happened, however, would also seem to contradict elements of the



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U.S. military's narrative. An early account by Iraqi authorities largely mirrors the version of events recounted in the leaked cable by Philip Alston, the UN "Special Rapporteur on extrajudicial, summary and arbitrary executions" who investigated the matter.

"The American forces gathered the family members in one room and executed 11 persons, including five children, four women and two men," noted a report from the Joint Coordination Center [cited](#) in the press. "Then they bombed the house, burned three vehicles and killed their animals."

Reporters investigating the massacre who spoke with witnesses and local officials were told the same thing. But [according](#) to the McClatchy news service, citing Alston, the U.S. government never responded to official requests for information.

Until the explosive cable leaked on August 30 made headlines around the world, the matter had apparently been dropped after the military's investigation. During that time, however, the UN had been trying to get to the bottom of it, warning that international law called for accountability.

"I would also recall that the Human Rights Committee has held that a State party can be held responsible for violations of rights under the Covenant where the violations are perpetrated by authorized agents of the State on foreign territory," Alston noted in his letter.

He also asked for a response to a series of questions. "What rules of international law does your Excellency's Government consider to govern these incidents?" Alston wondered. "What procedural safeguards, if any, were employed to ensure that these killings complied with international law?"

But the answers never came, the UN official told the media. "[The U.S. government] studiously avoided responding to any communications sent to it during this period," Alston [explained](#) to the U.K. *Independent*. "The tragedy is that this elaborate system of communications is in place but the [UN] Human Rights Council does nothing to follow-up when states ignore issues raised with them."

And according to Alston's now-public letter, the murders were hardly an isolated incident. "Other reports indicate that over the past five months, there have been a significant number of lethal incidents in which the MNF is alleged to have used excessive force to respond to perceived threats either at checkpoints or by using air bombing in civilian areas," he wrote.

Commentators have seized on the new revelations as further evidence of American misdeeds in the various nations it is occupying. John Glaser with the liberty-minded site [antiwar.com](#), for example, [called](#) the massacre a "heinous war crime" and noted that civilian deaths are common during the frequent raids undertaken by U.S. forces from Iraq to Afghanistan.

As *The New American* [reported](#) last year, a video released by WikiLeaks in April of 2010 entitled "Collateral Murder" showed American soldiers committing multiple war crimes. And more recently, NATO and its rebels in Libya have also been [accused](#) of attacks that violate the laws of war.

According to news reports, Iraq is [re-opening the inquiry](#) following the new revelations about the alleged massacre. But it was not immediately clear if the leaked cable would trigger any U.S. government action or another investigation.

Some analysts and critics suggested that the evidence should be re-examined. Other commentators, however, reacted with incredulity at the allegations and fury that they had been publicized.

Photo: A US soldier guards an arrested man after a gunfight in central Baqouba, 60 kilometers (35 miles) northeast of Baghdad, Iraq, March 29,

2007: AP Images



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