

# New York Times report from Ramadi: evidence of US war crimes in Iraq

Barry Grey  
6 July 2006

A front page article in the July 5 *New York Times* provides a chilling and damning picture of the daily, murderous violence being perpetrated by US forces in occupied Iraq. Written as an on-the-spot report by *Times* correspondent Dexter Filkins on the activities of US Marines in Ramadi, the capital of the mostly-Sunni Anbar Province, the article begins,

“The Government Center in the middle of this devastated town resembles a fortress on the wild edge of some frontier...”

Noting that much of the area surrounding the government center, the headquarters of the Marine presence in the city, has already been reduced to rubble, Filkins writes:

“In three years there the Marine Corps and the Army have tried nearly everything to bring this provincial capital of 400,000 under control. Nothing has worked.

“Now American commanders are trying something new.

“Instead of continuing to fight for the downtown or rebuild it, they are going to get rid of it, or at least a very large part of it.

“They say they are planning to bulldoze about three blocks in the middle of the city, part of which has already been reduced to ruins by the fighting, and convert them into a Green Zone...”

The methods being employed, and the ethos being promoted among the US troops, are indicated by the following excerpts:

“‘We go out and kill these people,’ said Captain Del Gaudio, the commander here.”

“One of the ‘habits of mind’ drilled into the Marines from posters hung up inside: ‘Be polite, be professional and have a plan to kill everyone you meet.’”

“On a sheet of paper hung up in the Government Center, Marines wrote down suggestions for their

company’s T-shirt once they go home. Most are unprintable, but here is one that got a lot of laughs: ‘Kilo Company: Killed more people than cancer.’”

Filkins notes that US casualties have been high in the face of a relentless and resilient guerilla resistance. The 800-member Third Battalion, Eighth Marine Regiment has lost eleven Marines since arriving in March, he reports, adding that US commanders refuse to disclose the number of wounded.

As for Iraqi dead, he says, almost in passing: “The number of Iraqi casualties—insurgents or civilians—is unknown...”

The *Times*’ article is far from a denunciation of the US military in Ramadi. It has more the character of an apologia, repeating uncritically the official US line that the people of Ramadi are “caught in the middle” of a struggle between American troops and insurgents—an absurd contention on its face given the tenacity of the resistance and the well-known tenet of counter-insurgency warfare that partisan guerrillas fighting foreign occupation rely on popular support and sympathy against the overwhelming military superiority of the occupier.

Nevertheless, the very facts reported by the *Times* make clear that the US is committing war crimes, and that it is doing so in a systematic way and on a massive scale. The vast majority of these crimes go unreported, leaving the American people largely in the dark, unaware of the full extent of the horror being carried out in their name.

In a separate article in the July 5 *New York Times* on the military investigation into the rape and murder of an Iraqi teenager and killing of her family by American soldiers last March, the newspaper makes a highly significant observation. “[R]eaction among Iraqis has been muted,” it reports, and continues:

“The inquiry into the possible executions of 24 Iraqi civilians in Haditha by Marines has also brought the same lukewarm response. *More than three years into the war, many Iraqis say they are no longer surprised by abuses on the part of American troops* [Emphasis added].”

Collective punishment, exemplary punishment, the destruction of entire civilian centers—tactics associated in the last century with Nazi barbarism in occupied Europe—are part and parcel of the modus operandi of the US occupation of Iraq.

The *Times* account—and one can find similar ones scattered among the sanitized reportage in the American press—helps illuminate and place in context the mounting reports of atrocities by US troops against Iraqi civilians. The Iraq war is not only a military and political disaster, it is a moral catastrophe.

Against the pious and cynical tributes from US politicians of both parties to “America’s finest” in uniform, it is necessary to state a few unpleasant truths:

America’s so-called volunteer army is being brutalized and dehumanized by its involvement in a filthy colonialist war. More than three-and-half years into the slaughter, those young men and women in the military, having initially been bombarded with lies and propaganda, who have been able to retain some moral compass, find it increasingly difficult to continue to do so. And there are not a few individuals, who are already emotionally and psychologically damaged, who have been attracted to the military precisely by the brutality and violence of the war.

As the *Times* account makes clear, the US military promotes an ethos of killing and a contempt for Iraqi life. Is it any wonder that the reservoir of outrage and hatred felt by ordinary Iraqis for the American invaders is infinitely deep?

There are, for example, press reports that the US military is investigating the possibility that the capture and killing of three American soldiers in Yusufiya last month was retribution for the rape and murder in nearby Mahmudiyah carried out by soldiers from the same unit in March.

One day before the *Times* report on Ramadi, President George Bush chose to mark the July 4th Independence Day holiday with an appearance before a military audience at the headquarters of the 82nd Airborne Division and US Special Operations

Command at Fort Bragg, North Carolina. In a defiant and provocative speech, meant to underscore his indifference to the overwhelming anti-war sentiment of the American people, Bush declared twice, “We’re not going to set an artificial timetable to withdraw from Iraq,” and added, “[W]e will never accept anything less than complete victory.”

In a typically crude and ignorant amalgam—“from Bunker Hill to Baghdad, from Concord to Kabul”—he equated (and degraded) the revolutionary and democratic origins of the United States in a struggle against British colonial rule with the American imperialist effort to subjugate the Iraqi people and impose colonial-style tyranny.

It’s worth pointing out that the Bush administration, with the support of the entire American establishment, is orchestrating the trial of Saddam Hussein and demanding the death penalty once the inevitable guilty verdict is handed down. But no politician or media pundit dares pose an obvious question.

The deposed Iraqi president is charged with responsibility for the killing of Iraqis involved in insurgent activities against his government. Bush, Cheney, Rice, Rumsfeld and the US military command are organizing the killing of Iraqis, on a far greater scale, who are fighting against the existing government in Baghdad. In this case, however, the government is a quisling regime installed by the US and maintained by some 130,000 American troops.

How is it that the killing carried out by Bush and company is legal, while Hussein is guilty of capital offenses?

The issue of US war crimes in Iraq and elsewhere is an immensely important question—one that in the long run will prove impossible to evade.



To contact the WSWS and the Socialist Equality Party visit:

**[wsws.org/contact](http://wsws.org/contact)**