

Iraq Veterans Against the War director speaks on Haditha massacre

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In an interview Wednesday on the opening of the trial of Marine Sgt. Frank Wuterich in connection with the 2005 massacre of 24 Iraqi civilians in Haditha, Jose Vasquez, a US Army veteran and executive director of Iraq Veterans Against the War (IVAW), told the *World Socialist Web Site*: “Obviously this was a tragic event. But given the multiple deployments of a lot of the troops and what they faced in Iraq, it is not surprising that some of these folks snapped.”

He pointed out that “Winter Soldier” hearings held by the IVAW in 2008 had heard testimony of US troops’ involvement in similar atrocities throughout the war and rules of engagement set by the military command that made them inevitable.

“This was the outcome of military policy,” said Vasquez. “You had a combination of military force being used in occupying a civilian population in which there was always animosity, together with an attitude toward the Iraqi people coming down from the highest command that was racist in nature.” Under these conditions, he added, troops were “asked to go on missions with no idea as to their purpose, often just going out on patrol in order to draw fire.”

The IVAW leader expressed little confidence in that the military justice system would hold anyone accountable for the crimes at Haditha. “In a situation where the military is responsible for prosecuting itself,” he said, “it is in the interest of the career officers to sweep as much as possible under the rug. It is not surprising that the only ones even charged are the lowest ranking enlisted men. Officers generally get off scot-free and at worst are pushed into retirement.”



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