

The WikiLeaks 2010 Release: U.S. Complicity and Cover-Up of Iraq Torture Exposed

The Frago 242 War Logs

By [Tom Burghardt](#)

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In-depth Report: [IRAQ REPORT](#)

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On October 22nd [2010], the whistleblowing web site [WikiLeaks](#) released nearly 400,000 classified Iraq war documents, the largest leak of secret information in U.S. history.

Explosive revelations contained in the [Iraq War Logs](#) provided further evidence of the Pentagon's role in the systematic torture of Iraqi citizens by the U.S.-installed post-Saddam regime.

Indeed, multiple files document how U.S. officials failed to investigate thousands of cases of abuse, torture, rape and murder. Even innocent victims who were targets of kidnapping gangs, tortured for ransom by Iraqi police and soldiers operating out of the Interior Ministry, were "investigated" in a perfunctory manner that was little more than a cover-up.

Never mind that the Pentagon was fully cognizant of the nightmare playing out in Iraqi jails and prisons. Never mind the beatings with rifle butts and steel cables, the electrocutions, the flesh sliced with razors, the limbs hacked-off with chainsaws, the acid and chemical burns on battered corpses found along the roads, the eyes gouged out or the bones lacerated by the killers' tool of choice: the power drill.

Never mind that the death squads stood-up by American forces when the imperial adventure went wildly off the rails, were modeled on counterinsurgency methods pioneered in Vietnam (Operation Phoenix) and in South- and Central American during the 1970s and 1980s (Operation Condor) and that a "Salvador Option" was in play.

Never mind that the former commander of the U.S. Military Advisory Group in El Salvador, Col. James Steele, was the U.S. Embassy's point-man for setting up the Wolf Brigade or the Iraqi Interior Ministry's Special Police Commandos, notorious death squads that spread havoc and fear across Iraq's cities, towns and villages.

The killings and atrocities carried out by American and British clients were not simply random acts of mayhem initiated by sectarian gangs. On the contrary, though sectarianism and inter-ethnic hatred played a role in the slaughter, from a strategic and tactical point of view these were carefully calibrated acts designed to instill terror in a population utterly devastated by the U.S. invasion. As researcher Max Fuller [reported](#) five years ago:

In Iraq the war comes in two phases. The first phase is complete: the destruction of the existing state, which did not comply with the interests of British and American capital. The second phase consists of building a new state tied to those interests and smashing every dissenting sector of society. Openly, this involves applying the same sort of economic shock therapy that has done so much damage in swathes of the Third World and Eastern Europe. Covertly, it means intimidating, kidnapping and murdering opposition voices. ("For Iraq, 'The Salvador Option' Becomes Reality," *Global Research*, June 2, 2005)

Pentagon spokesperson Geoff Morrell denounced the leaks Friday evening, claiming the document dump was a "gift to terrorist organizations" that "put at risk the lives of our troops."

Playing down the significance the files lend to our understanding of the U.S. occupation, Morrell characterized them as "mundane." To the degree that they chronicle the nonchalance, indeed casual indifference towards Iraqi life displayed by U.S. forces, Morrell is correct: they *are* numbingly mundane and therein lies their horror.

The [logs](#) paint a grim picture of life after the "liberation" of the oil-rich nation. As with the organization's publication of some 75,000 files from their [Afghan War Diary, 2004-2010](#), Friday's release provides stark evidence of U.S. complicity-and worse-in the systematic abuse of prisoners.

According to the War Logs, in 2006 an unnamed U.S. Special Operations Task Force was accused of blinding a prisoner in their custody; we read the [following](#):

ALLEGED DETAINEE ABUSE BY TF ___ IN ___ 2006-02-02 17:50:00

AT 2350C, IN ___, WHILE CONDUCTING OUT-PROCESSING, DETAINEE # ___ REPORTED THAT HE WAS ABUSED DURING HIS CAPTURE. DETAINEE IS MISSING HIS RIGHT EYE, AND HAS SCAR ___ ON HIS RIGHT FOREARM. DETAINEE STATES THAT HIS INJURIES ARE A RESULT OF THE ABUSE THAT HE RECEIVED UPON CAPTURE. DIMS INDICATE THAT THE DETAINEE WAS CAPTURED ON ___ IN ___, AND THE CAPTURING UNIT WAS TASK FORCE ___. THE DETAINEES CAPTURE TAG NUMBER IS ___. IN PROCESSING PERSONNEL STATE THAT THE DETAINEE ___ CAPTURE PHOTO DEPICTS A BANDAGE OVER HIS RIGHT EYE, AND INJURY TO HIS RIGHT FOREARM. THE DETAINEE HAS COMPLETED THE DETAINEE ABUSE COMPLAINT FORM, AND WE ARE SEEKING A SWORN STATEMENT FROM THE DETAINEE. PER ORDER OF Task force ___, THE DETAINEE ___ TRANSFERRED AS SCHEDULED, AND CONTINUE CID INVESTIGATION UPON ARRIVAL AT ___ GHRAIB.

File after gruesome file reveals that even when confronted by serious evidence of abuse, the outcome was as sickening as it was inevitable: "No further investigation."

Called "Frago 242" reports for "fragmentary orders," the military files summarized thousands of events. When alleged abuse was committed by an Iraqi on another Iraqi, "only an initial report will be made ... No further investigation will be required unless directed by HQ." Those directives never arrived.

In fact, in a hypermilitarized society such as ours' where the "chain of command" is valued above basic human decency, never mind the rule of law, orders to be "discrete" always come from the top. Investigative journalist Robert Fisk [recounted](#) how during a November

2005 Pentagon press conference:

Peter Pace, the uninspiring chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, is briefing journalists on how soldiers should react to the cruel treatment of prisoners, pointing out proudly that an American soldier's duty is to intervene if he sees evidence of torture. Then the camera moves to the far more sinister figure of Defence Secretary Donald Rumsfeld, who suddenly interrupts—almost in a mutter, and to Pace's consternation—"I don't think you mean they (American soldiers) have an obligation to physically stop it. It's to report it." ("The Shaming of America," *The Independent on Sunday*, October 24, 2010)

In essence, Frago 242 were the *political* means used by the U.S. administration to absolve themselves of command responsibility for the slaughter they had initiated with the March 2003 invasion. "We reported these horrors. What more do you want?"

Eager to pass security management onto their Iraqi puppets and cut their losses, the Pentagon and their political masters in Washington bypassed their obligations as the occupying power to ensure that human rights and the rule of law were respected by the clients whom they had installed to rule over the oil-rich nation. One [file](#) from 2006 tells us:

ALLEGED DETAINEE ABUSE BY IA AT THE DIYALA JAIL IN BAQUBAH

2006-05-25 07:30:00

AT 1330D, ___ REPORTS ALLEGED DETAINEE ABUSE IN THE DIYALA PROVINCE, IN BA' ___ AT THE DIYALA JAIL, vicinity. ___. 1X DETAINEE CLAIMS THAT HE WAS SEIZED FROM HIS HOUSE BY IA IN THE KHALIS AREA OF THE DIYALA PROVINCE. HE WAS THEN HELD UNDERGROUND IN BUNKERS FOR APPROXIMATELY ___ MONTHS AROUND ___ SUBJECTED TO TORTURE BY MEMBERS OF THE / ___ IA. THIS ALLEGED TORTURE INCLUDED, AMONG OTHER THINGS, THE ___ STRESS POSITION, WHEREBY HIS HANDS WERE BOUND/___ AND HE WAS SUSPENDED FROM THE CEILING; THE USE OF BLUNT OBJECTS (. ___ . PIPES) TO BEAT HIM ON THE BACK AND LEGS; AND THE USE OF ELECTRIC DRILLS TO BORE HOLES IN HIS LEGS. FOLLOW UP CARE HAS BEEN GIVEN TO THE DETAINEE BY US ___. THE DETAINEE IS UNDER US CONTROL AT THIS TIME. ALL PAPERWORK HAS BEEN SENT UP THROUGH THE NECESSARY ___ AND PMO CHANNELS. CLOSED: 260341MAY2006. Significant activity MEETS MNC- ___

Two days later, additional torture victims were found in the Diyala Jail, and U.S. military personnel [report](#):

ALLEGED DETAINEE ABUSE BY IP IVO BA': ___ DETAINEES INJ, ___ CF INJ/DAMAGE

2006-05-27 11:00:00

AT 1700D, ___ REPORTS ALLEGED DETAINEE ABUSE IN THE DIYALA PROVINCE, IN BA' ___ AT THE DIYALA JAIL, vicinity. ___. 7X DETAINEES CLAIMS THEY WERE SEIZED BY IA IN THE KHALIS AREA OF THE DIYALA PROVINCE. THEY WERE DETAINED AROUND - ___ AND SUBJECTED TO TORTURE BY MEMBERS OF THE IA AND IP. THIS ALLEGED TORTURE INCLUDED, AMONG OTHER THINGS, STRESS POSITIONS, BOUND/___ AND SUSPENDED FROM THE CEILING; THE USE OF VARIOUS BLUNT OBJECTS (. ___ . PIPES AND ANTENNAS) TO BEAT THEM, AND FORCED CONFESSIONS. ALL DETAINEES WERE DETAINED FOR ALLEGED

INVOLVEMENT IN AN ATTACK ON A IA Check Point IN KHALIS. FOLLOW UP CARE HAS BEEN GIVEN TO THE DETAINEES BY US _____. THE DETAINEES ARE UNDER US CONTROL AT THIS TIME. ALL PAPERWORK HAS BEEN SENT UP THROUGH THE NECESSARY _____ AND PMO CHANNELS. Serious Incident Report TO FOLLOW. CLOSED: 280442MAY2006. MEETS _____

Case closed.

WikiLeaks release prompted the UN's chief investigator on torture, Manfred Nowak, to demand that the Obama administration "order a full investigation of US forces' involvement in human rights abuses in Iraq," [The Guardian](#) reported.

Nowak said that if the files demonstrate clear violations of the UN Convention Against Torture then "the Obama administration had an obligation to investigate them."

A failure to investigate these serious charges "would be a failure of the Obama government to recognise its obligations under international law." There's little chance of that happening under our "forward looking" president.

On the contrary, as [The Washington Post](#) reported Sunday, that former CIA general counsel Jeffrey H. Smith, a current adviser to America's top spook Leon Panetta, wants to hang the messenger.

Smith said, "'without question' he thought that [WikiLeaks founder Julian] Assange could be prosecuted under the Espionage Act for possessing and sharing without authorization classified military information."

The *Post* informed us that Obama's Justice Department "is assisting the Defense Department in its investigation into the leaks to WikiLeaks. Though Smith said he did not know whether efforts were underway to gain custody [of Assange], he said, 'My supposition is that the Justice Department and Department of Defense are working very hard to see if they can get jurisdiction over him'."

As I [discussed](#) in late 2009, perhaps the Pentagon is working feverishly to do just that, deploying a Joint Special Operations Command (JSOC) "Manhunting team" to run Assange and his organization to ground.

In *Manhunting: Counter-Network Organization for Irregular Warfare*, retired Lt. Col. George A. Crawford wrote in a 2009 [monograph](#) published by Joint Special Operations University, that "Manhunting—the deliberate concentration of national power to find, influence, capture, or when necessary kill an individual to disrupt a human network—has emerged as a key component of operations to counter irregular warfare adversaries in lieu of traditional state-on-state conflict measures."

And with an administration that asserts the right to kill anyone on the planet, including American citizens deemed "terrorists," it isn't a stretch to imagine the Pentagon resorting to a little "wet work" to silence Assange, thereby disrupting "a human network" viewed as deleterious impediment to Washington's imperial project.

After all, in Crawford's view, "Why drop a bomb when effects operations or a knife might

do?”

Be that as it may, there was already sufficient evidence before Friday’s release that American military personnel and outsourced “private security contractors” (armed mercenaries) had committed war crimes that warranted criminal investigations.

Even after 2004 revelations by investigative journalist Seymour Hersh in [***The New Yorker***](#) sparked the Abu Ghraib torture scandal, the files show that the systematic abuse and execution of prisoners, along with other serious war crimes, were standard operating procedure by the United States and their Iraqi “coalition” partners.

When Hersh’s investigation first landed on the doorstep of the Bush White House, we were told that detainee abuse was the work of a “few bad apples” on the “night shift” at the notorious Abu Ghraib prison.

While enlisted personnel were charged, tried, convicted and imprisoned for their crimes, senior Pentagon officials including Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld, Deputy Secretary of Defense Paul Wolfowitz and their top aides were exonerated by the White House and their accomplices in the corporate media.

“The truth is” Robert Fisk writes, “U.S. generals ... are furious not because secrecy has been breached, or because blood may be spilt, but because they have been caught out telling the lies we always knew they told.”

*Tom Burghardt is a researcher and activist based in the San Francisco Bay Area. In addition to publishing in Covert Action Quarterly and [Global Research](#), his articles can be read on [Dissident Voice](#), [The Intelligence Daily](#), [Pacific Free Press](#), [Uncommon Thought Journal](#), and the whistleblowing website [WikiLeaks](#). He is the editor of Police State America: U.S. Military “Civil Disturbance” Planning, distributed by [AK Press](#) and has contributed to the new book from [Global Research](#), *The Global Economic Crisis: The Great Depression of the XXI Century*.*

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