

US Apache Helicopter massacring Iraqis

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*** [U.S Apache Helicopter massacring Iraqis \(Video\)](#)

at <http://www.globalresearch.ca/audiovideo/apachehit.mpg>

Graphic video footage from the gun camera of a U.S. Apache helicopter provides a window into the rules of engagement that often determine life and death in Iraq.

By Martha Raddatz

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The video, obtained by ABCNEWS, shows grainy images of three Iraqis on the ground handling a long cylindrical object that the helicopter pilots believe is a weapon.

The pilots, from the Army's 4th Infantry Division, ask their commanders for permission to engage, then take the three men out one by one, using the Apache's devastating 30 mm cannons.

Nighttime Scene

The video opens with the helicopter tracking a man in a pickup truck north of Baghdad on Dec. 1, one day after the 4th Infantry Division engaged in the bloodiest battles with Iraqi insurgents since the end of major combat.

The pilots watch as the man pulls over and gets out to talk to another man waiting by a larger truck.

"Uh, big truck over here," one of the pilots is heard saying. "He's having a little powwow."

The pickup driver looks around, then reaches into his vehicle, takes out a tube-shaped object that appears to be about 4 or 5 feet long, and runs away from the road into a field. He drops the object in the field and heads back to the trucks.

"I got a guy running throwing a weapon," one of the pilots says. Retired Gen. Jack Keane, an ABCNEWS consultant who viewed the tape, said the object looked like a rocket-propelled grenade launcher, "or something larger than a rifle."

The pilots check in with their operational commander, who is monitoring the situation. When they tell him they are sure the man was carrying a weapon, he tells them: "Engage. Smoke him."

The pilots wait as a tractor arrives on the scene, near the spot where the pickup driver dropped the object. One of the Iraqis approaches the tractor driver.

Then, within minutes, the Apache pilots open fire with the heavy 30 mm cannon, killing first the Iraqi in the field, then the tractor driver. The pilots then fire at the large truck and wait to see if they hit the last of three men.

When he rolls out from under the truck, one of the pilots says, "He's wounded."

The other pilot says, "Hit him," and the Apache opens fire again, killing the man.

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Engagement Called Justified

A senior Army official who viewed the tape said the pilots had the legal right to kill the men because they were carrying a weapon. He said there were no ground troops in the area and if the Apache pilots had let the three Iraqis go, the men might have gone on to kill American troops.

Keane agreed. "Those weapons were obviously not being pointed at them in particular, but they [the three Iraqis] are using those weapons in their minds for lethal means and they [the Apache pilots] have a right to interfere with that," he said.

Anthony Cordesman, an ABCNEWS defense consultant who also viewed the tape, said the Apache pilots would have had a much clearer picture of the scene than what was recorded on the videotape. He also said they would have had intelligence about the identity of the men in the vehicles. "They're not getting a sort of blurred picture. They have a combination of intelligence and much better imagery than we can see."

As to whether the Apache pilots could have called in ground troops to apprehend the men, Cordesman said: "In this kind of war, wherever you find organized resistance among the insurgents, you have to act immediately. If you wait to send in ground troops almost invariably your enemy is going to be gone."

Army officials acknowledged that the 30 mm cannons used by the Apache gunners were far bigger than what was needed to kill the men, but said it is the smallest weapon the Apaches have.

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