

# US Military Personnel Caught “Stealing, Rigging Contracts and Taking Bribes” in Iraq and Afghanistan

By [Julie Lévesque](#)

Global Research, May 06, 2015

Theme: [Law and Justice](#), [US NATO War Agenda](#)

While no high-level executive has been jailed for the widespread subprime mortgage fraud, which led to the 2008 financial crisis, and no US government official was prosecuted for lying to go to war in Iraq, “at least 115 enlisted US personnel and military officers [were] convicted since 2005 of committing theft, bribery, and contract rigging crimes valued at \$52 million during their deployments in Afghanistan and Iraq, according to a comprehensive tally of court records by the Center for Public Integrity.” (Julia Harte, [U.S. military personnel have been convicted of \\$50 million worth of crimes in Iraq and Afghanistan](#), The Center for Public Integrity, May 5, 2015)

The in-depth report details of the criminal behavior of US personnel in combat zones, lured by “[l]arge cash transactions, loose military oversight, and deeply corrupted local cultures...” Although such misconduct by army personnel is rarely reported, it seems to be part of the military culture and cannot only be blamed on the “deeply corrupted local cultures”:

Soldiers who had little or no prior criminal history... say the circumstances of their deployments made stealing with impunity look easy... They say that they knew of other military personnel who also broke the law, but without getting caught...

Additional crimes by military personnel are still under investigation, and some court records remain partly under seal. The magnitude of additional losses from fraud, waste, and abuse by contractors, civilians, and allied foreign soldiers in Afghanistan has never been tallied, but officials probing such crimes say the total is in the billions of dollars...

MacDonald, 68, editor-in-chief of the website [MilitaryCorruption.com](#), co-founded the site after a 33-year career in the Army and Army Reserve during which he says he witnessed many small instances of corruption. “What you can make out of these [recent] wars is staggering. It’s an opportunity for anybody, even a non-commissioned officer, to become very rich overnight,” MacDonald said.

Even though these crimes should be punished, it is easy to understand why soldiers might be tempted to commit crimes when corporate and political leaders constantly do so with impunity. Soldiers are simply emulating the ones sitting at the top of the social and military hierarchy.

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Julie Lévesque is a journalist and researcher with the Centre for Research on Globalization (CRG), Montreal. She was among the first independent journalists to visit Haiti in the wake of the January 2010 earthquake. In 2011, she was on board "The Spirit of Rachel Corrie", the only humanitarian vessel which penetrated Gaza territorial waters before being shot at by the Israeli Navy.

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