

UPDATE: Convicted Civilian killing Marine to serve No Jail Time

by Craig McMurtrie via stan - ABC (Oz) Tuesday, Jan 24 2012, 9:45pm

international / injustice/law / other press

Marine escapes jail time over Haditha killings

The US Marine who led a squad involved in the killing of 24 unarmed Iraqi civilians in the town of Haditha in 2005 will serve no time behind bars.



Stf Sgt Frank Wuterich, smiling sociopath

Staff Sergeant Frank Wuterich pleaded guilty to one charge of negligent dereliction of duty over the massacre.

Most of the victims were shot in the head, including 10 women and children.

The more serious charges of involuntary manslaughter and aggravated assault were dismissed as part of a plea deal, and Wuterich was sentenced to a demotion to the rank of private.

Wuterich was accused of being the ringleader in a series of shootings and grenade attacks on November 19, 2005 that left two dozen civilians dead in Haditha, a town west of Baghdad that was then an insurgent hotspot.

Witnesses at his court martial described a massacre carried out by Marines under his command after a member of their unit was killed in a roadside bomb blast.

The 31-year-old marine used his pre-sentencing statement to express sorrow for the killings, which sparked international condemnation of American troops.

Addressing surviving family members, he said he never fired at women or children but said he realised he would always be known as a "cold-blooded baby killer".

But he insisted that no one in his combat unit "behaved in any way that was dishonourable or contrary to the highest ideals" of the Marine Corps.

The plea deal cut short Wuterich's court martial and ended the final prosecution over the killings. 'Shoot first'

As part of the deal, Wuterich accepted responsibility for providing negligent verbal instructions to the Marines under his command when he told them to "shoot first and ask questions later".

"The intent wasn't that they should shoot civilians - it was that they would not hesitate in the face of the enemy," he said.

The squad leader, who was originally charged with murder in the case, said he and his fellow Marines behaved honourably under extreme circumstances.

"Words cannot express my sorrow for the loss of your loved ones," he said of the family members of those killed.

But he insisted civilians were not singled out for attack.

In a final plea for leniency, Wuterich's civilian defence lawyer Neal Puckett said his client "is not evil".

"He is decent and moral, and his integrity is unfaltering," he said.

"He knows that his Marine Corps career has come to an end."

Haditha residents and relatives of the victims voiced shock and disgust over the plea deal.

"This is an assault on the blood of Iraqis," said Khalid Salman, a Haditha city councillor and lawyer for the victims.

"That is only a punishment for ... small crimes... This is an assault on humanity."

Wuterich enlisted in the Marines in 1998 and was serving his second tour of duty in Iraq when the Haditha incident occurred.

Any discharge process faced by Wuterich will be separate from his sentencing.

Six out of the eight Marines originally accused in the case had their charges dismissed by military judges, and a seventh was cleared of criminal wrongdoing.

© 2012 ABC

[This is what happens when decent people ignore their responsibilities to society. Lawlessness and criminal corruption run rampant. Needless to say, it all ends badly for everyone.]

See also:

<http://cleaves.zapto.org/news/story-2955.html>

<http://tinyurl.com/7hnwglx>

Cleaves Alternative News. <http://cleaves.lingama.net/news/story-2956.html>

