the Machine

certain quarters even as official denials piled up...

While it has long been claimed that US troops are notorious among Iraqis, for their willingness to shoot any Iraqi in sight in the immediate aftermath of an insurgent attack, a number of recent incidents have yielded some positive proof of these claims. One such incident took place in the town of Ishaqi, where Iraqi police stated that US troops had shot dead 11 people, including five children, in their home. According to the police chief, autopsies showed that all the victims had been shot in the head. "It's a clear and perfect crime" he said *(UK Independent)*.

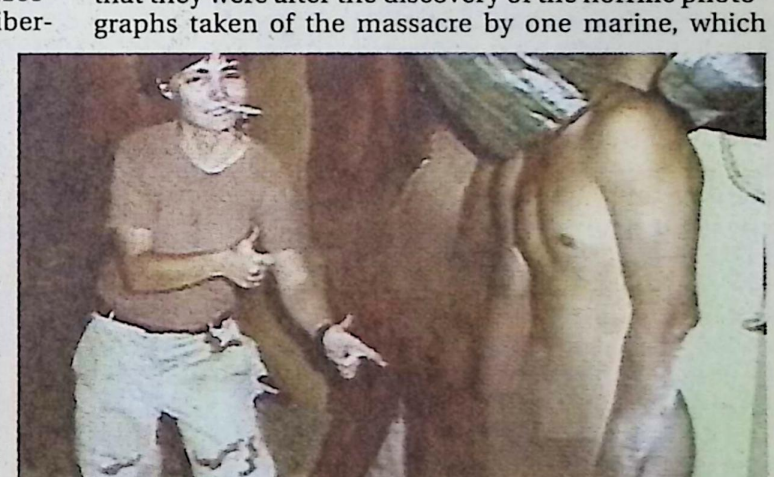
Although an American military investigation subsequently cleared US troops of rounding up and deliberately shooting those 11 people as well as blowing up the building in Ishaqi, the Iraqi government reacted furiously to the ruling and pledged to continue its own enquiries into allegations of US war crimes. "We have (heard) from more than one source that the Ishaqi killings were carried out under questionable circumstances...This report was not fair for the Iraqi people and the children who were killed" said an aide to Nuri Al-Maliki, the Prime Minister.

In a similar incident, an alleged massacre took place in the town of Haditha in November 2005. The official account of what happened there centred on claims that one Marine and 15 Iraqi civilians were killed when a roadside bomb went off next to a military convoy passing through the town. It was stated that gunmen "attacked the convoy with small-arms fire" and that Marines returned the fire killing a total of nine insurgents - eight who died on the spot, and a ninth man who was wounded and died subsequently. This brought the total number of Iraqi dead to 24.

However, unlike the killings at Ishaqi, the official version of events at Haditha were questioned because of eyewitness accounts by local people, as well as a video shot by an Iraqi journalism student that contradicted official claims. After an Iraqi human rights group obtained the video, it revealed that no Iraqis were killed in the bomb explosion. Furthermore, the houses where they died were bullet-riddled on the inside but had no external marks, calling into question the soldiers' claims that there had been a firefight.

After *Time* magazine picked up the story, an infantry colonel carried out an enquiry in Haditha, concluding that 15 civilians (including women and children) had died as a result of the Marines' actions rather than the bombings. Even then however, the deaths were termed "collateral damage" an obscene euphemism for death and destruction. Meanwhile, the marines were still claiming that the nine young men who died - five in a taxi nearby, and four brothers in a nearby house - were armed fighters.

These stories were effectively exposed for the lies that they were after the discovery of the horrific photographs taken of the massacre by one marine, which were found on his mobile phone. The photographs that were seized by the US Naval Criminal Investigative Service revealed that many victims were shot at close range in the head and chest, including one image of a mother and young child who lay on the floor, shot dead.



The prisoner abuse scandal of Abu Gharaib is a glaring example of the double standards and callousness of the occupying forces.

Details emerging from the official investigation since then have confirmed that all the Iraqis killed were civilians, and that all the shooting that day was by the Marines. It appears that one Marine was killed by a roadside bomb, and that his colleagues then moved through the surrounding area, shooting five men