



IRAQ INVESTIGATIONS



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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Charges Dismissed Against Marine in Haditha, Iraq Investigation

CAMP PENDLETON, Calif. (Aug. 9, 2007) – Charges against a Marine allegedly involved in the death of Iraqi civilians in Haditha, Iraq in November, 2005, have been dismissed.

Lance Cpl. Justin I. Sharratt was charged Dec. 21, 2006 with three specifications of unpremeditated murder.

As Consolidated Disposition Authority for the Haditha cases, Lt. Gen. James Mattis, dismissed the charges against Sharratt Wednesday.

Lt. Gen. Mattis has released the following statement regarding the dismissal of charges:

“The events of November 19, 2005 have been exhaustively reviewed by Marine, Army, and Naval Criminal Investigative Service investigators. An independent Article 32 Investigating Officer has considered all the facts and determined that the evidence does not support a referral to court-martial for LCpl Sharratt. Based on my review of all the evidence in this case and considering the recommendation of the Article 32 officer, I have dismissed the charges against LCpl Sharratt.

LCpl Sharratt has served as a Marine infantryman in Iraq where our Nation is fighting a shadowy enemy who hides among the innocent people, does not comply with any aspect of the law of war, and routinely targets and intentionally draws fire toward civilians. The challenges of this combat environment put extreme pressures on our Marines. Notwithstanding, operational, moral, and legal imperatives demand that we Marines stay true to our own standards and maintain compliance with the law of war in this morally bruising environment.

The experience of combat is difficult to understand intellectually and very difficult to appreciate emotionally. One of our Nation's most articulate Supreme Court Justices, Oliver Wendell Holmes, Jr., served as an infantryman during the Civil War and described war as an ‘incommunicable experience.’ He has also noted elsewhere that ‘detached reflection cannot be demanded in the face of an uplifted knife.’ Marines have a well earned reputation for remaining cool in the face of enemies brandishing much more than knives. The brutal reality that Justice Holmes described is experienced each day in Iraq, where Marines willingly put themselves at great risk to protect innocent civilians. Where the enemy disregards any attempt to comply with ethical norms of warfare, we exercise discipline and restraint to protect the innocent caught on the battlefield. Our way is right, but it is also difficult.

With the dismissal of these charges LCpl Sharratt may fairly conclude that he did his best to live up to the standards, followed by U. S. fighting men throughout our many wars, in the face of life or death decisions made in a matter of seconds in combat. And as he has always remained cloaked in the presumption of innocence, with this dismissal of charges, he remains in the eyes of the law – and in my eyes – innocent. “

Sharratt is one of four enlisted Marines charged with violations of the Uniform Code of Military Justice on Dec. 21, 2006 for their alleged involvement in the deaths of Iraqi civilians following an improvised explosive device and small arms attack on a Marine convoy in Haditha, Iraq on Nov. 19, 2005.

More information on the investigation and charges against other Marines involved can be found at: <http://www.usmc.mil/lapa/iraq-investigations.htm>

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