

CASE STUDY - HADITHA

WHAT HAPPENED?

*** Watch the [Entire PBS Frontline Story on Haditha](#) before reading the following scenario....

In September of 2005, Marines of Kilo Company, 3rd Battalion, First Marine Division manned Forward Operating Base "Sparta" in the Anbar Province of Iraq near the town of Haditha. This was the company's third deployment having participated in the Invasion of Iraq in 2003 and the battle for Fallujah in 2004. With all of the combat experience, only two-thirds of the Marines had previously been to Iraq when they set up FOB Sparta. The average age of Marines in the Company was twenty one years old and for all but one platoon leader, this was the first Iraq deployment for the officers including the Company Commander.

*Also, the SGT leading the convoy had never been in theater before either.

On 19 November 2005 Lance Corporal Miguel Terrazas was killed and two other Marines were injured when their vehicle was struck by an IED in the city of Haditha, Iraq. After the attack, 24 Iraqi men, women, and children were killed in Haditha by Marines who were in the Terrazas' unit. Initially, the incident was reported by the Marines as an insurgent attack that resulted in 15 civilians being victims of the IED and 8 insurgents being killed when the Marines reacted to the ambush after they were fired upon. However, this report was rebuked by witnesses and experts. Evidence from the scene disputed what was reported by the Marines. Once this contradiction was identified a criminal investigation was opened. After the investigation it was confirmed that all 24 civilian casualties were caused by the Marines, contradictory to the initial report. As a result of the investigation eight of the Marines were charged in connection with the killings. Four of the eight were charged with unpremeditated murder. The Battalion Commander and two Company Commanders were relieved of their command for negligence. They were also charged with infractions such as violating a lawful order, dereliction of duty, obstruction of justice, and making a false statement. As of now all the charges have been dropped for 7 of the 8 Marines while the trial of the eighth is pending.

QUESTIONS TO DISCUSS WITH YOUR SOLDIERS...

1. As a leader, how can you positively influence your soldiers to make moral decisions in stressful combat situations? What is your role in helping soldiers deal with the emotional realities of combat?
2. As a leader, how are Army Values best served if your soldiers perform questionably—by rendering false, incomplete, or misleading reports to "protect" them or by providing "the cold hard truth"? What is your responsibility if you find out that other people are misrepresenting the actions of your soldiers? How do you uphold the value of loyalty in situations where you have to choose between "taking care of your buddies" and working for the greater good of your company, the Army, and country?

3. As a soldier, do you find that you view the value of American life as worth more than non-American life? How do you think authentically moral leaders would respond to your view?
4. As a soldier, at what point do you say “enough is enough” and begin to take action against illegal or immoral activities? In what ways has your training enabled you to develop a capacity to attend to, store, retrieve, process, and make meaning of morally relevant information?