

'I didn't think of Iraqis as humans,' says U.S. soldier who raped 14-year-old girl before killing her and her family

(And this is exactly what basic training is all about! ~ Don Chapin)

By (Daily Mail, UK) Mail Foreign Service, Last updated at 12:14 PM on 21st December 2010

Read more: <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-1340207/I-didnt-think-Iraqis-humans-says-U-S-soldier-raped-14-year-old-girl-killing-her-family.html#ixzz18ruZKKbx>

* Steven Dale launches appeal against five life sentences because he was tried in civilian court

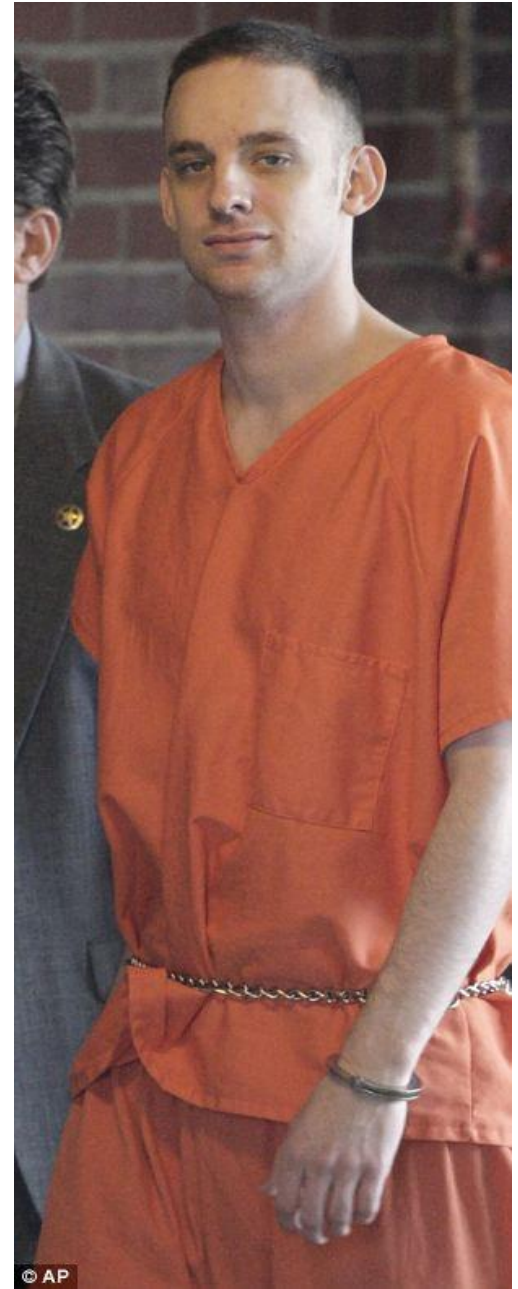
* He says warzone sent him crazy and deaths of two colleagues had 'messed me up real bad'

An Iraq War veteran serving five life terms for raping and killing a 14-year-old Iraqi girl and killing her parents and sister says he didn't think of Iraqi civilians as humans after being exposed to extreme warzone violence.

Steven Green, a former 101st Airborne soldier, in his first interview since the 2006 killings, claimed that his crimes were fuelled in part by experiences in Iraq's violent 'Triangle of Death' where two of his sergeants were gunned down.

He also cited a lack of leadership and help from the Army.

'I was crazy,' Green said in the exclusive telephone interview from federal prison in Tucson, Arizona. 'I was just all the way out there. I didn't think I was going to live.'



Picture, right: *Steven Green, pictured in April 2009, is serving five life sentences for rape and murder in Iraq. He has launched appeal but doesn't have 'much hope' of ever being freed*

Green talked about what led up to the March 12, 2006, attack on a family near Mahmoudiya, Iraq, that left him serving five consecutive life sentences.

The former soldier, who apologised at sentencing for his crimes, said he wasn't seeking sympathy nor trying to justify his actions - killings prosecutors described at trial in 2009 as one of the worst crimes of the Iraq war.

But Green said people should know his actions were a consequence of his circumstances in a war zone.

'If I hadn't ever been in Iraq, I wouldn't be in the kind of trouble I'm in now,' Green said. 'I'm not happy about that.'

Green was discharged with a 'personality disorder' before federal charges were brought against him.

Prosecutors sought a death sentence, but a federal jury in Paducah, Kentucky, opted for five life sentences on charges including the rape and murder of 14-year-old Abeer Qassim Al-Janabi and the shooting deaths of her mother, father and younger sister.

Four other soldiers were convicted in military court for various roles in the attack. Three remain in military prison.

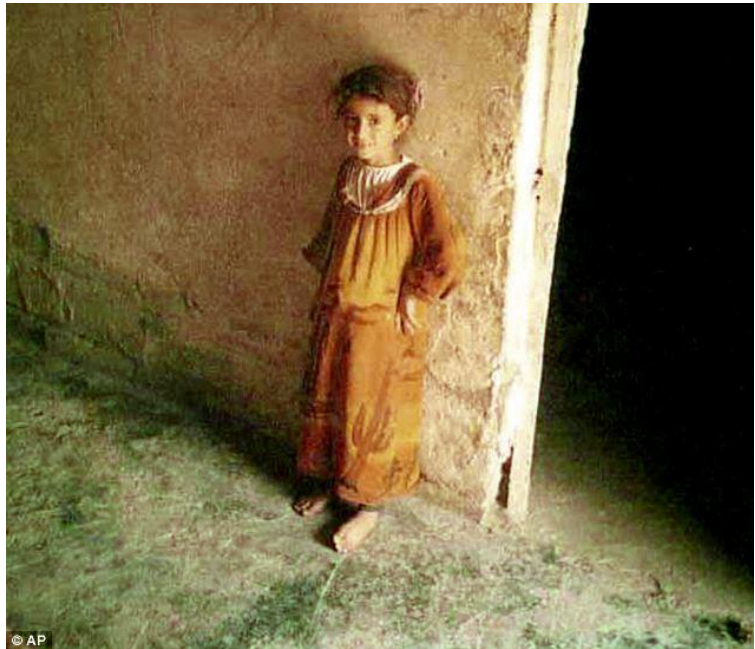
Green is challenging the Military Extraterritorial Jurisdiction Act, which allows the federal government to charge an American in civilian court for alleged crimes committed overseas. He was the first former soldier convicted under the statute. The U.S. 6th Circuit Court of Appeals has scheduled arguments for January 21.

Green is challenging the constitutionality of that law, saying it gives the executive branch too much leeway over whom to prosecute. Prosecutors say the law should be upheld.

'I've got some hope, but I'm not delusional about it,' said Green, now 25. 'I hope it works. But, whenever they give you multiple life sentences, they're not planning on letting you out.'

Green didn't testify at trial. During sentencing, he apologized and said he expects to face 'God's justice' when he dies.

Picture, right: Abeer Qassim al-Janabi, Green's 14-year-old victim, whose parents and sister were also murdered in the attack. Green said deaths of two of his colleagues had 'messed him up real bad'



A 19-year-old high school dropout from Midland, Texas, Green joined the Army after obtaining his high school equivalency diploma from a correspondence school.

He said signing up was easy, born of a sense of duty to defend his country and the opportunities that offered.

'I thought I'd be neglecting my duty if I didn't,' Green said. 'You've got a career, you've got a job. It gives you opportunities to do things with your life.'

The military placed Green with the Fort Campbell-based 101st Airborne. Upon arriving in Iraq, Green said, his training to kill, the rampant violence and derogatory comments by other soldiers against Iraqis served to dehumanise that country's civilian population.

A turning point came on December 10, 2005, Green said, when a previously friendly Iraqi approached a traffic checkpoint and opened fire.

The shots killed Staff Sgt. Travis L. Nelson, 41, instantly. Sgt. Kenith Casica, 32, was hit in the throat. Casica died as soldiers raced him aboard a Humvee to a field hospital.

Green said those deaths 'messed me up real bad.'



The deaths intensified Green's feelings toward all Iraqis, whom soldiers often called by a derogatory term. 'There's not a word that would describe how much I hated these people,' Green said. 'I wasn't thinking these people were humans.'

Picture left: Neighbour

Hussein Mohammed points to the charred and blood-splattered crime scene where the killings took place in Mahmoudiya, Iraq

Over the next four months, Green sought help from a military stress counsellor, obtaining small doses of a mood-regulating drug - and a directive to get some sleep before returning to his checkpoint south of Baghdad.

In the interview, Green described alcohol and drugs being prevalent at the checkpoint. Green said soldiers there frequently felt abandoned by the Army and were given little support after the deaths of Casica and Nelson.

Spc. James P. Barker of Fresno, California, testified that he pitched the idea of going to the al-Janabi family's home to Sgt. Paul E. Cortez of Barstow, California, who was in charge of the traffic checkpoint.

Scene of the attack in Al Mahmoudiya on the outskirts of Baghdad

Picture right: Scene of the attack in Al Mahmoudiya on the outskirts of Baghdad

Green, who talked frequently of wanting to kill Iraqis, was brought along.

Cortez testified that Barker and Green had the idea of having sex with the girl and that he didn't know the family would be killed.



Green, then a private, said he had 'an altered state of mind' at the time. 'I wasn't thinking about more than 10 minutes into the future at any given time,' Green said. 'I didn't care.'

At the Iraqi home, Barker and Cortez pulled Abeer into one room, while Green held the mother, father and youngest daughter in another.

Pfc. Jesse V. Spielman, of Chambersburg, Pennsylvania, stood guard in the hall. As Barker and Cortez raped the teen, Green shot the three family members, killing them.

He then went into the next room and raped Abeer, before shooting her in the head. The soldiers lit her remains on fire before leaving. Another soldier stood watch a few miles away at the checkpoint.

Since his sentencing on September 4, 2009, Green has been attacked at the federal prison in Terre Haute, Indiana, and was then transferred to Arizona.

In prison, Green converted to Catholicism and has corresponded with a nun in Louisville about his faith.

Green described prison life as a 'lonely existence' and said other inmates consider those convicted of sex offenses among the lowest, making life 'hazardous' among the general prison population.

For Green, each day is just a matter of getting through 24 hours so he can do it all again the next day. Meanwhile, he lives with memories of the attack that took away the Iraqi family.

'If I thought that was an OK thing now, I wouldn't be much of a human being,' Green said.

Comment: If you display psychopathic attitudes and tendencies in the British Army you are rooted out and discharged, not encouraged as appears to be the case in the US. Encouraged to become more violent and therefore allegedly more effective on the battlefield - a concept that is obviously heavily flawed. In the British Army you are taught to be magnanimous in victory, and to avoid triumphalism, for the slaughtering of fellow humans should never be taken lightly, even if they are trying to slaughter you. While I think it likely this person may already have had psychological problems before he ended up in the Army, I do not doubt his experiences of being surrounded by people with little or no respect for the sanctity of human life have indeed contributed to this horrific crime. The US needs to look at how it recruits and subsequently trains its forces. This may also put an end to the continual incidents of 'friendly fire', otherwise it will eventually put an end to the 'special relationship'.

- James, Gtr Manchester, 21/12/2010 13:11

NOTE: This is a position that sounds true on the surface, until another story (below) reveals that British troops are just as vulnerable to atrocities as any one else.

Hundreds of Iraqi civilians who wanted to sue MoD over mistreatment by British soldiers lose appeal for public

inquiry By Ian Drury (Daily Mail, UK), Last updated at 4:51 PM on 21st December 2010

<http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-1340554/Hundreds-Iraqi-civilians-wanted-sue-MoD-mistreatment-British-soldiers-lose-appeal-public-inquiry.html>

Picture right: No inquiry: Defence Secretary Liam Fox said that abuse of civilians in Iraq was caused by 'a few bad apples'

More than 200 Iraqi civilians who wanted to sue the Ministry of Defence over alleged war crimes by British soldiers yesterday lost their latest legal battle.

Two High Court judges rejected the demand for a public inquiry into claims they endured years of beatings and abuse at the hands of UK troops and interrogators.



They upheld Defence Secretary Liam Fox's argument that an inquiry was unnecessary as any ill-treatment was caused by a few bad apples' and was not systematic.

The Iraqis claim they were abused between 2003 and 2008 at British bases and detention centres.

Lawyers said they were the victims of inhumane and degrading treatment which included being kept naked, sexually abused, deprived of food, water and sleep to 'soften them up' for interrogation and subject to mock executions.

But the MoD argued that a public inquiry would neither be 'necessary or appropriate' because two other investigations are already under way into specific allegations of ill-treatment.

One concerns Baha Mousa, an Iraqi man who died in British custody in 2003, and the other centres on claims that UK troops executed up to 20 Iraqi prisoners in cold blood and brutally abused nine others after a gun battle in 2004.

The MoD has also set up a dedicated Iraq Historic Allegations Team (IHAT) to look into claims of abuse by British soldiers.

The Iraqis' lawyers argued that these measures were insufficient to meet the UK's obligations under human rights laws to investigate mistreatment of detainees.

But Lord Justice Richards and Mr Justice Silber ruled that while a fresh inquiry might be 'required in due course' Dr Fox did not need to order one 'immediately'.

The judges said the Defence Secretary had 'made clear that he is very concerned about the allegations and extremely anxious to establish whether they are well founded and, if they are, to ensure that lessons are learned for the future'.

They added: 'He has not ruled out the possibility that, in the light of IHAT's investigations and the outcome of the existing public inquiries, a public inquiry into systemic issues may be required in due course.'



Picture left: Tragic death: Baha Mousa died in September 2003 while in the custody of British troops in Iraq

The Baha Mousa inquiry is due to report in early 2011. The other probe - the Al Sweady inquiry - is unlikely to open before the summer. Each one is expected to cost around £13million.

The judges said Dr Fox's 'wait and see' approach was influenced by the cost of establishing another inquiry.

The Iraqi applicants now plan to take their case to the Court of Appeal.

Their barrister, Michael Fordham QC, told the High Court: 'There are credible allegations of serious, inhumane practices across a whole range of dates and facilities concerning British military detention in Iraq.'

Phil Shiner, solicitor for Birmingham-based Public Interest Lawyers, which is representing the Iraqis, said: 'We are bitterly disappointed, as are the hundreds of Iraqi civilians we represent who will have to wait longer for the independent and effective investigation they have been calling for for years.'
