

The Human Cost Of War

By [American Civil Liberties Union](#)

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ACLU Releases Navy Files On Civilian Casualties In Iraq War ACLU

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Public Has A Right To Unfiltered Information About The Human Cost Of War, ACLU Says

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE CONTACT: (212) 549-2666; media@aclu.org

NEW YORK – The American Civil Liberties Union today released thousands of pages of documents related to Navy investigations of civilians killed by Coalition Forces in Iraq, including the cousin of the Iraqi ambassador to the United States. Released today in response to a Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) request by the ACLU filed in June 2006, these records provide a vivid snapshot of the circumstances surrounding civilian deaths in Iraq.

“At every step of the way, the Bush administration and Defense Department have gone to unprecedented lengths to control and suppress information about the human cost of the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan,” said Nasrina Bargzie, an attorney with the ACLU National Security Project. “Our democracy depends on an informed public and that is why it is so important that the American people see these documents. These documents will help to fill the information void around the issue of civilian casualties in Iraq and will lead to a more complete understanding of the prosecution of the war.”

The ACLU obtained documents from eight Naval Criminal Investigative Service (NCIS) investigations. One of the files documents the investigation of the death of Mohammed al-Sumaidaie, a cousin of the Iraqi ambassador to the U.S, Samir al-Sumaidaie. In 2006, the ambassador accused Marines of “intentionally” killing his cousin and today’s records shed light on al-Sumaidaie’s NCIS investigation for the first time. Among the findings uncovered in this file are conflicting accounts of events, questions of credibility, possible command influence issues and cover-ups.

“As these files remind us, many charges of war crimes in Iraq have not seen the light of day,” said Michael Pheneger, a retired Army intelligence colonel who is also a board member of the ACLU. “There are many discoveries here that should bring pause to any American who cares about this country and hopes to restore the United States’ respected role in the world. It is time to bring the facts about this war into the sunlight and end practices that go against our laws and national values.”

Through its FOIA project, the ACLU has made public information on Defense Department policies designed to control information about the human costs of war. These practices

include:

- Banning photographers on U.S. military bases from covering the arrival of caskets containing the remains of U.S. soldiers killed overseas;
- Paying Iraqi journalists to write positive accounts of the U.S. war effort;
- Inviting U.S. journalists to “embed” with military units but requiring them to submit their stories for pre-publication review;
- Erasing journalists’ footage of civilian deaths in Afghanistan; and
- Refusing to disclose statistics on civilian casualties.

Today’s documents are available online at: www.aclu.org/natsec/foia/NCIS_log.html

Attorneys involved in this project are Bargzie, Ben Wizner and Jameel Jaffer of the ACLU National Security Project. In a separate lawsuit, the ACLU sued for records concerning the abuse of prisoners held by U.S. forces in Iraq, Afghanistan, and Guantánamo Bay. To date, that request has resulted in the release of more than 100,000 pages, all of which are available online at: www.aclu.org/torturefoia

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