

The Mysterious Death of Marla Ruzicka:

The US Military has Detailed Statistics on Civilian Casualties

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Marla Ruzicka: Dec 31, 1976 - April 16, 2005

"On the road from Peshawar, Pakistan, to Jalalabad, crossing the border, I fell in love in 10 seconds. I fell in love with the light, the way the mountains blend with the earth, the colors; the whole place just put a spell on me. It was the sunlight; there was a magic driving down that road. Not too far inside the country, the reality of the past became apparent — tanks were everywhere and I could see 23 years of devastation." (Marla Ruzicka)



"Marla demonstrated that an individual can make a profound difference in this world. Her life was dedicated to innocent victims of conflict, exactly what she ended up being." (Bobby Muller, chairman of the [Vietnam Veterans of America Foundation](#)).

"Actually it's quite fun to fight them, you know. It's a hell of a hoot.. It's fun to shoot some people. I'll be right up there with you. I like brawling... (Lt General James Mattis) ([see Marla Ruzicka's letter to the NYT regarding Lt. Gen. Mattis' statement](#))

The official position within the US Military, which is part of the media consensus, is that "nobody really knows exactly what the civilian toll is".

Marla Ruzicka had refuted the official statements regarding civilian deaths in Iraq. She revealed that 1,995 civilians died and 4,959 were injured in the first 50 days of the invasion (<http://www.uruknet.info/?p=m11278>)

According to official statements, the main cause of civilian deaths is the insurgency. Namely “terrorists” are said to be killing Iraqis who are supportive of US sponsored “democratization”. The US military has, nonetheless, acknowledged in a routine fashion that Iraqi civilian casualties are also the result of unavoidable “collateral damage”, or civilians being “caught in crossfire”.

Marla Ruzicka had discovered, through careful investigation, that the US military authorities were involved in a cover-up. There was a policy of compiling precise statistics on civilian casualties. These figures, however, were classified and were not intended to be made public.

“These statistics demonstrate that the US military can and does track civilian casualties... Troops on the ground keep these records...”

Shortly before her death, she acknowledged having received (classified) statistics on civilian casualties from an unnamed high-ranking US military official:

“The numbers were for Baghdad only, for a short period, during a relatively quiet time. Other hot spots, such as the Ramadi and Mosul areas, could prove worse.”

She had also compiled over a two year period information from a number of sources, including hospitals and household data. Marla Ruzicka created [The Campaign for Innocent Victims in Conflict \(CIVIC\)](#) . Hospital records provided but a partial picture. Few of the injured made it to the hospitals. The data on those killed or wounded had to be established through door to door investigation.

Marla Ruzicka had also documented over a two year period the use of illegal weapons by the US military including cluster bombs, as well “parachute bomblets”, and bombs filled with tiny nails dropped in densely populated urban areas, etc.

In other words, Marla Ruzicka was in possession of sensitive information on US sponsored war crimes, which extended beyond the count of civilian casualties. She was fully aware of the historical significance of this data; there are indications that she planned to release this information:

“The American public has a right to know how many Iraqis have lost their lives since the start of the war and as hostilities continue.”

Circumstances of Marla’s Ruzicka’s untimely Death

According to the reports, aid worker Marla Ruzicka together with her Iraqi colleague Faiz Ali Salim died as the result of collateral damage, “when a car bomb exploded nearby”.

The official story is that a suicide bomber had “infiltrated” the security convoy “that just happened to be passing Marla’s car.” The target was the security convoy, not Marla, whose car was following the convoy:

“a suicide bomber attacked a passing convoy of security contractors and Marla’s car was caught in the blast and engulfed in flames. (Independent, 19 April 2005). “...her car was apparently caught between a suicide car bomber and a U.S. military convoy.” (Capital Times, 21 April 2005)

“A suicide car bomber attacked a convoy of SUVs on the airport road. Marla Ruzicka and her colleague Faiz Al Salaam, 43, were separate from the convoy but their ordinary car took the force of the blast, killing them both. (Guardian, 20 April 2005)

The press reports acknowledge the death of Marla, her Iraqi colleague Faiz Ali Salim and another foreigner. The reports, however, are in many regards contradictory. Confirmed by CNN in its first report:

1) the convoy was not made up of “security contractors”, as conveyed by the media. It was a three car convoy of a US based non-governmental organization, the National Democratic Institute. “A Czech employee of a security firm hired to drive the convoy also was killed”, according to the regional director of the NDI. (quoted by CNN, 17 April 2005).

2) there were no other casualties reported in the NDI convoy, which had according to the reports been the target of the attack. Yet the reports also state that Ruzicka’s vehicle was “separate from the convoy”. The Regional director of the NDI confirmed that there were “no NDI employees in the convoy cars at the time of the blast.” If NDI employees were not in the convoy, who was occupying the three convoy vehicles and why was it is described as a NDI convoy? Why was the convoy unscathed, when it was the target?

3) The first CNN report states that “It’s also unknown whether Ruzicka’s vehicle was associated with the three-car convoy of the ... National Democratic Institute, that was traveling along the same road, the official added. That convoy may have been the target of the attack.” (CNN, 17 April 2005). Now surely, if Ruzicka’s car had been part of the NDI convoy, the NDI regional director interviewed by CNN would have been able to confirm this information.

The NDI, however, is not an ordinary NGO. It is headed by Madeleine Albright. It is a constituent organization of the controversial National Endowment for Democracy, which has close links to the CIA, the State Department and the US Military. In other words, the NDI’s country office in Baghdad is involved in intelligence. Its official mandate is support to civil society organizations, governance and “democratization”.

Marla was scheduled to leave the country. She was in possession of sensitive information on civilian casualties. She had been undertaking research which revealed the extent of US war crimes in Iraq. She had carefully analyzed this sensitive data. She had contacted journalists

regarding her findings as confirmed by CBS's Lee Cowan:

"I just got a handwritten note from her [shortly before her death], actually, that made it's way to me here in the offices in Baghdad saying she wanted to get together for a chat. She, presumably, had some pretty good story ideas to discuss with me...." (CBS News, 18 April 2005).

That same evening, she was scheduled to meet the foreign press corps at the Hamra hotel. The meeting was casually described in one press report as "a party" namely a social event:

"She had summoned the foreign press corps to a party that night at the Hamra hotel and her failure to show was our first inkling that something was wrong." (The Guardian, 20 April 2005)

But this was no ordinary social event, it was a press gathering. Marla Ruzicka was known to use social occasions "to lobby reporters to write about the things that mattered to her [the plight of innocent people]."

The detailed information on civilian casualties in Marla Ruzicka's possession constituted an obvious blow to the Bush administration's shaky legitimacy in the eyes of Americans. As observed by Robert Herbert in the New York Times (25 April):

"The vast amount of suffering and death endured by civilians as a result of the U.S.-led invasion of Iraq has, for the most part, been carefully kept out of the consciousness of the average American. I can't think of anything the Bush administration would like to talk about less. You can't put a positive spin on dead children...."

This stunning lack of interest in the toll the war has taken on civilians is one of the reasons Ms. Ruzicka, who was just 28 when she died, felt compelled to try to personally document as much of the suffering as she could. At times she would go from door to door in the most dangerous areas, taking down information about civilians who had been killed or wounded. She believed fiercely that **Americans needed to know about the terrible pain the war was inflicting, and that we had an obligation to do everything possible to mitigate it."**

None of the embedded reporters in Iraq have seriously covered the broader issue of the Military's classified data banks of killed and wounded Iraqis. Nor have they investigated the circumstances of Marla's untimely death, which occurred barely a month following the attempted assassination of Italian journalist Giuliana Sgrena, who had also uncovered evidence of US sponsored war crimes.

Kamikaze attacks are invariably the object of detailed investigation which seeks to establish the author of the attack.

While there is no firm evidence that Marla Ruzicka was the target of a political

assassination, the families and the American public must demand a full independent investigation into the circumstances of the tragic deaths of Marla Ruzicka and Faiz Ali Salim.

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Marla Ruzicka's text written one week before her death:

[These statistics demonstrate that the U.S. military can and does track civilian casualties": Recording and publicly releasing Iraqi civilian casualty numbers](#) , Marla Ruzicka

See also

Marla Ruzicka: born December 31st, 1976; died April 16th, 2005: [Tireless young campaigner for the victims of wars](#)

Related Articles

There have been several documented cases of assassinations of journalists and aid workers in Iraq, not to mention the attempted assassination of Italian journalist Giuliana Sgrena:

My Truth by Giuliana Sgrena, <http://globalresearch.ca/articles/SGR504A.html>

Affaire Sgrena : Les USA ne veulent pas d'indiscrètes en Irak, par Geert van Moorter, <http://globalresearch.ca/articles/MOO504A.html>

Bush administration clears US troops in slaying of Calipari and wounding of Sgrena by Wayne Madsen, <http://globalresearch.ca/articles/MAD503A.html>

Giuliana Sgrena Shooting: 'Trigger-Happy' Troops or Attempted Assassination? by Ritt Goldstein, <http://globalresearch.ca/articles/GOL503A.html>

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