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Video Shows U.S. Killing of Reuters Employees

By ELISABETH BUMILLER
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WASHINGTON — The Web site WikiLeaks.org released a graphic video on Monday showing an American helicopter shooting and killing a Reuters photographer and driver in a July 2007 attack in Baghdad.

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An image from the video of a 2007 helicopter attack in Baghdad, released by WikiLeaks.org. Subtitles of pilot conversations and explanatory comments were added.

A senior American military official confirmed that the video was authentic.

Reuters had long pressed for the release of [the video](#), which consists of 38 minutes of black-and-white aerial video and conversations between pilots in two Apache helicopters as they open fire on people on a street in Baghdad. [The attack killed 12](#), among them the Reuters photographer, Namir Noor-Eldeen, 22, and the driver, Saeed Chmagh, 40.

Reuters employees were allowed to view the video on an off-the-record basis two weeks after the killings, but they were not allowed to obtain a copy of it. The news organization said its Freedom of Information Act requests were not approved.

At a news conference at the National Press Club, WikiLeaks said it had acquired the video from whistle-blowers in the military and viewed it after breaking the encryption code. WikiLeaks edited the video to 17 minutes.

David Schlesinger, the editor in chief of Reuters news, said in a statement that the video was “graphic evidence of the dangers involved in war journalism and the tragedies that

can result.”

On the day of the attack, United States military officials said that the helicopters had been called in to help American troops who had been exposed to small-arms fire and rocket-propelled grenades in a raid. “There is no question that coalition forces were clearly engaged in combat operations against a hostile force,” Lt. Col. Scott Bleichwehl, a spokesman for the multinational forces in Baghdad, said then.

But the video does not show hostile action. Instead, it begins with a group of people milling around on a street, among them, according to WikiLeaks, Mr. Noor-Eldeen and Mr. Chmagh. The pilots believe them to be insurgents, and mistake Mr. Noor-Eldeen’s camera for a weapon. They aim and fire at the group, then revel in their kills.

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"Look at those dead bastards," one pilot says. "Nice," the other responds.

A wounded man can be seen crawling and the pilots impatiently hope that he will try to fire at them so that under the rules of engagement they can shoot him again. "All you gotta do



ended and the pilots open fire on it, it for bringing their kids into a battle,"

drives and appears to roll over one of the the pilots says, chuckling a little.

n working on a report about weightlifting neighborhood, and decided to drive there to

forces and insurgents in the area but there was no fighting on the streets in which Namir was moving about with a group of men," Reuters wrote in 2008. "It is believed two or three of these men may have been carrying weapons, although witnesses said none were assuming a hostile posture at the time."

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The American military in Baghdad investigated the episode and concluded that the forces involved had no reason to know that there were Reuters employees in the group. No disciplinary action was taken.

Late Monday, the United States Central Command, which oversees the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, released the redacted report on the case, which provided some more detail.

The report showed pictures of what it said were machine guns and grenades found near the bodies of those killed. It also stated that the Reuters employees "made no effort to visibly display their status as press or media representatives and their familiar behavior with, and close proximity to, the armed insurgents and their furtive attempts to photograph the coalition ground forces made them appear as hostile combatants to the Apaches that engaged them."

Mr. Schlesinger of Reuters also said in his statement: "The deaths of Namir Noor-Eldeen and Saeed Chmagh three years ago were tragic and emblematic of the extreme dangers that exist in covering war zones. We continue to work for journalist safety and call on all involved parties to recognize the important work that journalists do and the extreme danger that photographers and video journalists face in particular."

Brian Stelter contributed reporting from New York.

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