

Semper Fi

As soon as I saw the tape of a U.S. Marine shooting a wounded insurgent in Fallujah, I knew there'd be trouble. The Iraqi had violated the rules of war by fighting from a Mosque and was left for dead in combat. But he wasn't dead. So when a squad of marines entered the Mosque in a mop-up operation and the prone insurgent moved, a young Marine shot him dead.

But the tape of the incident actually helps the Marine because you can clearly hear him yell to his squad, "He's (blinking) faking he's dead! He's (blinking) faking he's dead!" Then the soldier shoots. On the tape you can see the insurgent move before the soldier pulls the trigger.

One day earlier, another Marine in the same unit was killed by a booby trap which was strapped to a dead insurgent's body. The enemy in Iraq rejects all rules of warfare, and American troops know it. Iraqi insurgents and foreign terrorists routinely dress in civilian clothes, hide behind civilians while shooting, mount operations from inside Mosques, wear the uniforms of pro-American Iraqi police and National Guardsmen, attack civilians, and on and on and on.

Having survived a combat situation in Argentina during the Falklands War, I know that life-and-death decisions are made in a flash. If that wounded insurgent had a grenade or other explosive device, the entire marine squad and the photographer could be dead right now. In a killing zone, one cannot afford the luxury of knowing what is certain.

If that young Marine had homicide on his mind, he would have entered the Mosque firing. But he did not. The Marine proceeded cautiously, and reacted to perceived danger. Another wounded Iraqi in the same room identified himself and was taken prisoner. This was not some My Lai action.

But the so called "human rights" groups are all over the

incident, calling it a “possible war crime.” What a bunch of bull. The Marine made a decision that was reasonable. His own words before the fact clarified the danger he felt.

Most of the American press has been cautious in covering the Marine controversy, although the LA Times ran this sub-headline: “Marine May be Charged in the Fallujah Killing of an Unarmed Fighter. The Footage Airs on Arab TV, Further Tarnishing America’s Image.”

Now, there’s nothing factually wrong with that headline. But does it reflect what actually happened? Or is it designed to put the Marine and the USA in a dubious light? You make the call.

The Pentagon is not releasing the name of the Marine, and is investigating. Both of those things are fair. But this case is not complicated, and anyone condemning that soldier should himself be condemned.

The war in Iraq as well as the war on terror is as ugly as it gets. Mistakes will be made. But this action is not one of them.