

Two former soldiers from the Army unit responsible for the Wikileaks "Collateral Murder" incident have written an open-letter of "Reconciliation and Responsibility" to those injured in the July 2007 attack, in which U.S. forces wounded two children and killed over a dozen people, including the father of those children and two Reuters employees.

Ethan Mccord and Josh Stieber deployed to Baghdad with Bravo Company 2-16 in 2007. Ethan was on the ground at the scene of the shooting, and is seen on the video rushing one of the injured children to a U.S. Vehicle; "When I saw those kids, all I could picture was my kids back home". Ethan applied for mental health support following this incident and was denied by his commanding officer.

Josh Stieber was not at the scene of the shooting but says similar incidents happened throughout his 14-month tour; "The acts depicted in this video are everyday occurrences of this war." Josh states that these casualties demonstrate the impact of U.S. military policy on both the civilians and the soldiers on the ground.

Ethan and Josh claim that though their unit was following the Rules of Engagement that day, they are taking responsibility for their role in the incident and initiating a dialogue around it; "Though we have acted with cold hearts far too many times, we have not forgotten our actions towards you. Our heavy hearts still hold hope that we can restore inside our country the acknowledgment of your humanity, that we were taught to deny."

The letter, which they hope to get to the family who lost their father and whose children were injured in the attack, states that they "are acknowledging our responsibility for bringing the battle to your neighborhood, and to your family. We did unto you what we would not want done to us."

### BACKGROUND ON JOSH STIEBER:

Branch of service: United States Army (USA) □

Unit: 1st ID □

Rank: Spc. □

Home: Laytonsville, Maryland

Served in: Baghdad (Rustamiyah) 07-08 Fort Riley, KS 06-07, 08-09

**BACKGROUND ON ETHAN MCCORD:**

Branch of service: United States Army (USA)□

Unit: 1st ID□

Rank: Spc.□

Home: Wichita, Kansas

**AN OPEN LETTER OF RECONCILIATION & RESPONSIBILITY TO THE IRAQI PEOPLE**

From Current and Former Members of the U.S. Military

Peace be with you.

To all of those who were injured or lost loved ones during the July 2007 Baghdad shootings depicted in the "Collateral Murder" Wikileaks video:

We write to you, your family, and your community with awareness that our words and actions can never restore your losses.

We are both soldiers who occupied your neighborhood for 14 months. Ethan McCord pulled your daughter and son from the van, and when doing so, saw the faces of his own children back home. Josh Stieber was in the same company but was not there that day, though he contributed to the your pain, and the pain of your community on many other occasions.

There is no bringing back all that was lost. What we seek is to learn from our mistakes and do everything we can to tell others of our experiences and how the people of the United States need to realize we have done and are doing to you and the people of your country. We humbly ask you what we can do to begin to repair the damage we caused.

We have been speaking to whoever will listen, telling them that what was shown in the Wikileaks video only begins to depict the suffering we have created. From our own experiences, and the experiences of other veterans we have talked to, we know that the acts depicted in this video are everyday occurrences of this war: this is the nature of how U.S.-led wars are carried out in this region.

We acknowledge our part in the deaths and injuries of your loved ones as we tell Americans what we were trained to do and what we carried out in the name of "god and country". The soldier in the video said that your husband shouldn't have brought your children to battle, but we are acknowledging our responsibility for bringing the battle to your neighborhood, and to your

family. We did unto you what we would not want done to us.

More and more Americans are taking responsibility for what was done in our name. Though we have acted with cold hearts far too many times, we have not forgotten our actions towards you. Our heavy hearts still hold hope that we can restore inside our country the acknowledgment of your humanity, that we were taught to deny.

Our government may ignore you, concerned more with its public image. It has also ignored many veterans who have returned physically injured or mentally troubled by what they saw and did in your country. But the time is long overdue that we say that the value of our nation's leaders no longer represent us. Our secretary of defense may say the U.S. won't lose its reputation over this, but we stand and say that our reputation's importance pales in comparison to our common humanity.

We have asked our fellow veterans and service-members, as well as civilians both in the United States and abroad, to sign in support of this letter, and to offer their names as a testimony to our common humanity, to distance ourselves from the destructive policies of our nation's leaders, and to extend our hands to you.

With such pain, friendship might be too much to ask. Please accept our apology, our sorrow, our care, and our dedication to change from the inside out. We are doing what we can to speak out against the wars and military policies responsible for what happened to you and your loved ones. Our hearts are open to hearing how we can take any steps to support you through the pain that we have caused.

Solemnly and Sincerely,  
Josh Stieber, former specialist, U.S. Army  
Ethan McCord, former specialist, U.S. Army

**[To add your signature to this letter, click here.](#)**