

IS DOD SO SURE THEY WEREN'T INVOLVED IN THE RASHID DOSTUM MASSACRE?

Last Monday, I noted two particular details of the Obama Administration's response to news of spiked investigations into General Rashid Dostum's massacre of up to thousands of prisoners in 2001. First, DOD said it didn't need to investigate because there was no evidence American personnel were involved.

There's DOD, which bases its opposition to an investigation on the claim that there's no evidence US forces were involved in the massacre.

Asked about the report, Marine Corps Col. David Lapan, a Pentagon spokesman, said that since U.S. military forces were not involved in the killings, there is nothing the Defense Department could investigate.

"There is no indication that U.S. military forces were there, or involved, or had any knowledge of this," Lapan said.

"So there was not a full investigation conducted because there was no evidence that there was anything from a DoD (Department of Defense) perspective to investigate."

And, President Obama offered up the suggestion that we might have been involved.

PRESIDENT OBAMA: I think that, you know, there are responsibilities that all nations have even in war. And if it

appears that our conduct in some way supported violations of the laws of war, then I think that, you know, we have to know about that.

Which is why Mark Benjamin's addition to this story is so key. He reports that American forces may have observed the men packed into trucks.

Earlier this month, Pulitzer Prize-winning New York Times reporter James Risen advanced the story, revealing that the United States had resisted any war crimes investigation into the massacre, despite learning from Dell Spry, the lead FBI agent at Guantánamo Bay following the U.S. invasion of Afghanistan, that many Afghan detainees were telling similar stories of a mass killing. Spry directed interviews of detainees by FBI agents at Guantánamo Bay, and compiled allegations made by the detainees.

[snip]

What the Times did not say was that these Guantánamo prisoners also said that U.S. personnel were present during the massacre. "The allegation was that U.S. forces were present while Dostum's troops were herding these people into these containers," Spry, now retired from the FBI and working as an FBI consultant, told Salon. "They were out rounding up alleged Taliban and insurgent folks."

Spry said that at the time of the interviews not long after the invasion of Afghanistan he found the detainees' claims of a massacre "plausible," since the detainees separately told similar stories. Spry thought an investigation seemed warranted. He found the claims of the involvement of U.S. personnel, however, more specious, mostly because

he doubted that Americans would participate in or stand by passively during a massacre. "I did not believe that then and I do not believe that now," he said about the alleged involvement of U.S. personnel.

DOD—at least according to the AP story—won't investigate until there's evidence US personnel were present. Yet survivors of the massacre did describe Americans being present at least when the Afghans were loaded onto trucks.

Now, the investigative report Salon includes describes one American present before the Afghans were put into shipping containers, and Americans arriving at the prison a month after the Afghans were saved from the shipping containers. So it may be that any Americans were simply working with Dostum more generally (and photographing captivity operations). But it seems like the reports ought to be enough to require DOD to investigate.

Read the whole story—there's a very disturbing report of the Taliban who currently hold a US soldier captive invoking Dostum. Which might explain why this story originally got dumped into a Saturday news black hole.