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Protecting Civilians: Military Expert Marc Garlasco



UPDATE: Human Rights Watch has been looking into the matter of senior military analyst Marc Garlasco's collection of Second World War memorabilia and an inquiry is under way. Garlasco has been temporarily suspended from his research work with full pay pending the inquiry. This is not a disciplinary measure. Human Rights Watch stands behind Garlasco's research and analysis.

(New York) - Several blogs and others critical of Human Rights Watch have suggested that Marc Garlasco, Human Rights Watch's senior military advisor, is a Nazi sympathizer because he collects German (as well as American) military memorabilia. This accusation is demonstrably false and fits into a campaign to deflect attention from Human Rights Watch's rigorous and detailed reporting on violations of international human rights and humanitarian law by the Israeli government. Garlasco has co-authored several Human Rights Watch reports on violations of the laws of war, including in Afghanistan, Georgia and Iraq, as well as by Israel, Hamas and Hezbollah.

Garlasco has never held or expressed Nazi or anti-Semitic views. He prefaced his monograph on military memorabilia by giving thanks that Germany was defeated in the Second World War.

I think that Marc is the prototype of what many nongovernmental organizations are seeking -- that is people with real expertise. I have not always agreed with Marc, but I have never found him to be driven by an ideological agenda.

US Air Force Maj. Gen. Charles J. Dunlap Jr.

[The Washington Post, February 13, 2008](#)

[Garlasco] knows more about airstrikes than anyone in the world who isn't in the military currently.

He knows enough about the professional military to know they make mistakes but that they try

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Garlasco's great-uncle was an American B-17 crewman, who survived many attacks by German anti-aircraft gunners.

Garlasco's own family experience on both sides of the Second World War has led him to collect military items related to both sides, including American 8th Air Force memorabilia and German Air Force medals and other objects (not from the Nazi Party or the SS, as falsely alleged). Many military historians, and others with an academic interest in the Second World War, including former and active-duty US service members, collect memorabilia from that era.

Some bloggers have picked up comments Garlasco made on a memorabilia website in 2005, and a photo of him wearing a sweatshirt with a picture of the Iron Cross and the words in German: "The Iron Cross, 1813, 1870, 1914, 1939 and 1957." The comments reflect the enthusiasm of a keen collector. They are not in any way indicative of support for Nazis, as has been alleged, and have no bearing on Garlasco's work for Human Rights Watch.

Garlasco is the author of a monograph on the history of German Air Force and Army anti-aircraft medals and a contributor to websites that promote serious historical research into the Second World War (and which forbid hate speech). In the foreword he writes of telling his daughters that "the war was horrible and cruel, that Germany lost and for that we should be thankful."

To imply that Garlasco's collection is evidence of Nazi sympathies is not only absurd but an attempt to deflect attention from his deeply felt efforts to uphold the laws of war and minimize civilian suffering in wartime. These falsehoods are an affront to Garlasco and thousands of other serious military historians.

Videos featuring Marc Garlasco:

[Rain of Fire: White Phosphorous in Gaza \(2009\)](#)

[In the Field with Marc Garlasco \(2008\)](#)

[Protecting Civilians in War: Ending the Use of Cluster Munitions \(2007\)](#)

Media profiles of Marc Garlasco

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CBS News - "Bombing Afghanistan"

http://www.cbsnews.com/stories/2007/10/25/60minutes/main3411230_page2.shtml

Spiegel International - "The Pentagon Official Who Came in From the Cold"

<http://www.spiegel.de/international/world/0,1518,617279,00.html>

Reports Co-Authored by Marc Garlasco:

A Dying Practice

Use of Cluster Munitions by Russia and Georgia in August 2008

<https://www.hrw.org/en/reports/2009/04/14/dying-practice-o>

Rain of Fire

Israel's Unlawful Use of White Phosphorus in Gaza

<https://www.hrw.org/en/reports/2009/03/25/rain-fire>

Troops in Contact

Airstrikes and Civilian Deaths in Afghanistan

<https://www.hrw.org/en/reports/2008/09/08/troops-contact-o>

Flooding South Lebanon

Israel's Use of Cluster Munitions in Lebanon in July and August 2006

<https://www.hrw.org/en/reports/2008/02/16/flooding-south-lebanon-o>

"No Blood No Foul"

Soldier's Accounts of Detainee Abuse in Iraq

<https://www.hrw.org/en/reports/2006/07/22/no-blood-no-foul>

Leadership Failure

First Hand Accounts of Torture of Iraqi Detainees by the U.S. Army's 82nd Airborne Division

<https://www.hrw.org/en/reports/2005/09/22/leadership-failure-o>

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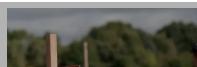
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November 30, 2025 | Commentary

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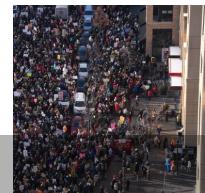
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