

McCaffrey Stands By Decisions in Gulf War

Officers' Criticism Quoted in Magazine

Associated Press

Retired Gen. Barry R. McCaffrey and journalist Seymour Hersh clashed yesterday over charges that troops led by McCaffrey used unnecessary force in a battle with Iraqi troops after the Gulf War cease-fire.

The actions of McCaffrey's troops are questioned by several of McCaffrey's former military colleagues in a report by Hersh in the May 22 New Yorker magazine.



FILE PHOTO/REUTERS

McCAFFREY



FILE PHOTO/ASSOCIATED PRESS

HERSH

Retired Lt. Gen. James H. Johnson Jr. is quoted as saying that "there was no need to be shooting at anybody" on March 2, 1991. "They couldn't surrender fast enough. The war was over."

"They were a defeated army going home, and he attacked them," Hersh said on NBC's "Today" show.

"This is nonsense, this is revisionist history," said McCaffrey, now director of the White House Office of National Drug Control Policy.

McCaffrey said two of his company commanders reported they were under fire and "we obviously had to support our soldiers."

The Army has investigated the allegations and concluded there was no evidence of war crimes or misconduct by McCaffrey or his troops. Hersh "is recycling charges that were investigated 10 years ago. It conclusively demonstrated there was no wrongdoing," said McCaffrey, who also appeared on

other morning news programs.

In a brief statement yesterday, the Army said "no new issues appear to have been raised in the story" and "there is no need to reopen the investigation." It added: "The Army has confidence in the conduct and integrity of the soldiers of the 24th Infantry Division."

White House spokesman Joe Lockhart emphasized that McCaffrey has President Clinton's full support and called the article "false," labeling Hersh "a journalist who thinks if you throw enough stuff up against the wall, maybe something will stick."

The magazine said its research found:

■ The officers assigned to McCaffrey's mobile headquarters disagreed about whether Iraqis had attacked U.S. forces. Patrick Lamar, the operations officer of McCaffrey's division, told the magazine that the skirmish that triggered McCaffrey's order to attack was "a giant hoax. The Iraqis were doing absolutely nothing. I told McCaffrey I was having trouble confirming the incoming fire."

■ Retired Lt. Gen. John J. Yeosock said "what Barry ended up doing was fighting sand dunes and moving rapidly" and McCaffrey was "looking for a battle."

■ Maj. Gen. Ronald Griffith said McCaffrey "made it a battle when it was never one."

The attack ordered by McCaffrey destroyed some 700 Iraqi tanks, armored cars and trucks, the New Yorker reported.

"Hersh says that the Iraqi forces at Rumaylah were in 'retreat,'" McCaffrey said in a response. "However, he wasn't the one watching a force spanning five miles, made up of hundreds of Iraqi tanks, trucks and armored personnel carriers, face him. The Iraqis fired on U.S. forces. The Army investigations unequivocally concluded that the use of force in response was justified."

The magazine noted that there were occasional "bitter disputes" between McCaffrey and other generals over such things as the perceived hoarding of fuel by McCaffrey, whose division performed the famed "left hook" maneuver that blocked the retreat of Iraqi forces from Kuwait.