

WHITE HOUSE SAYS U.S. POLICY BARS ANY MASS SLAYING

Incidents Such as Alleged
Vietnam Massacre Held
'Abhorrent' to Nation

'COVER-UP' IS CHARGED

Congressmen See Pictures
of Dead Shown by Resor
—Some Are Sickened

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WASHINGTON, Nov. 26 —

The White House said today that an incident such as the alleged Songmy massacre "is in direct violation not only of United States military policy, but is also a abhorrent to the conscience of all the American people."

The statement by Ronald L. Ziegler, President Nixon's press spokesman, came two weeks after the first press reports indicating that a massacre may have occurred.

Signs of shock — at both the alleged shooting of Vietnamese civilians by United States troops and at the possibility of a "cover-up" by the Army — spread through the capital.

Congressmen Shaken

Some members of Congress were particularly shaken by the appearance of Secretary of the Army Stanley R. Resor before panels of both the Senate and House Armed Services Committees. Mr. Resor showed color slides of what some of the Congressmen said were dead Vietnamese civilians — men, women and children.

Senator Daniel K. Inouye, Democrat of Hawaii, who lost an arm while serving in the Army in Europe during World War II, emerged from the briefing and said:

"Having been in combat myself, I thought I would be hardened, but I must say I am a bit sickened."

Representative Leslie C. Arends came out of the House briefing an hour after it began.

"The pictures were pretty gruesome," the Illinois Republican explained. "That's why I walked out. I have one of those queasy stomachs."

New Allegations

Meanwhile, two Congressmen said they had received allegations of other massacres.

Representative Lionel Van Deerlin, Democrat of California, said he had informed the Pentagon of an incident described to him by two of his constituents, the parents of a medical officer who was on duty in Vietnam.

Mr. Van Deerlin said the medical officer, who is now back in this country, had told of soldiers "firing on village huts for target practice" at the orders of the commander of a company in the Ninth Infantry Division.

The medical officer reported that the incident took place last June in the Mekong Delta, northwest of the town of Dongtam, Mr. Van Deerlin said.

"I won't give out any of the names until the Pentagon has 48 hours on it," he said.

Mr. Resor later confirmed that Army investigators were looking into the allegation.

A spokesman for Senator Charles E. Goodell, Republican of New York, said that since

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he Senator made public a letter in which he asked for an inquiry into the alleged massacre, he had received allegations concerning "four or five" other incidents.

"The difficulty," the spokesman explained, "is in trying to ascertain the reliability of the reports we have. We are aware that those opposed to the war could concoct incidents."

He said Mr. Goodell planned to submit the allegations — and some pictures that accompany them — to the Senate Armed Services Committee.

At the White House, Mr. Ziegler said in response to a question that Mr. Nixon knew of the allegations concerning the Songmy incident before the news reports containing them broke. He said it would be fair to assume that the President had known of the alleged massacre for "several months."

Mr. Ziegler also said that this was the only such alleged incident of which the President had been informed.

Asked what action the Administration had taken before the news broke, Mr. Ziegler said that the Defense Department and the Army began a "full investigation" in April.

He called the delay of a year between the occurrences of the alleged incident and the initiation of the inquiry "regrettable."

The inquiry began after the President, Secretary of Defense Melvin R. Laird and many Congressmen received a letter in April from Ronald Lee Ridenour, a 23-year-old former serviceman, alleging that a massacre had taken place.

"The Secretary of the Army is continuing his investigation," Mr. Ziegler said. "Appropriate action is and will be taken to assure that illegal and immoral conduct, as alleged, be dealt with in accordance with the strict rules of military justice."

"This incident should not be allowed to reflect on the some million and a quarter young Americans who have now returned to the United States after having served in Vietnam with great courage and distinction."

Mr. Ziegler added that it would be inappropriate for him to comment further because "the alleged incident is now moving through the military-judicial process."

Senator Inouye said the color slides that were shown to the Senate Armed Services Committee depicted "men, women and children — I presume non-combatants—dead and bloody."

"It is apparent," he added,

"that noncombatants were shot."

"To one sitting here in Washington," Mr. Inouye went on, "it is totally inconceivable that a matter of this sort, involving over 100 people, that it could have been kept secret for over a year."

This feeling was echoed by other Congressmen, who said they felt there had been a cover-up by Army officers in Vietnam.

Senator Richard S. Schweiker, Republican of Pennsylvania, said he was "convinced" there had been a cover-up. He cited these reasons for his belief:

¶The availability of the photographs to the investigators. "If you saw the pictures that are to be printed next week in Life, you had to be convinced something happened," Mr. Schweiker said. The color pictures that Life magazine will print include some of those that were taken by Ronald L. Haeberle, a combat photographer, and shown to the Congressmen this morning.

¶The availability of at least 100 witnesses—the members of the Army task force involved—for questioning.

¶The presence at the alleged incident of helicopter pilots who "saw what was going on," and "one of whom tried to stop it."

Senator Stephen M. Young, Democrat of Ohio, said he knew Mr. Haeberle and called him "a high-class young man from my home city of Cleveland."

Speaking on the basis of the briefing and the photographs, Mr. Young said: "this was an abominable atrocity — murder at point-blank range.

"The company commander [Captain Ernest M.] Medina, did nothing to stop it. The only one who did anything to stop it was a helicopter pilot. He landed from his helicopter, and that was after they had lined up [the villagers]."

Captain Medina, who is now stationed at Fort Benning, Ga., has declined to answer questions concerning the allegations against him, referring questions to his attorney. The attorney, Major Edwin Richards, has said he will make no comment "at this time."

Mr. Young said he had talked to the photographer and to Paul David Meadlo, a disabled Army veteran who has said he probably killed 10 to 15 people in Songmy.

Both of them had been told, he said, that "you must not write your Congressman." The Senator said Captain Medina had told them that and "there-

by tried to shut off any investigation."

Senator Young said: "Those over there—the officers over there—whitewashed it."

"Suddenly they went into this village. And the officers told them to clean up the village and shoot everything in sight. And they did."

Describing the slides that he had just seen, the Senator said, "You saw a mother begging for her life. Then a picture of a youngster with his intestines hanging out . . .

"It's really terrifying and horrible looking at a Vietnam woman — a young woman — standing up and begging, with young people all about her, and knowing that she would be killed an instant later by American bullets. No one can question there was an atrocious slaughter of from 200 to 700 civilians."

Mr. Resor read a five-paragraph statement to the press after his appearance before the House subcommittee, then submitted to only three questions.

As he walked to the elevator, he was asked why he had cut off questioning. He replied:

"Because I want to be careful of what I say. I don't want in any way to say anything that would prejudice the matter."

Asked if an attempt had been made within the Army to cover up the alleged massacre, Mr. Resor said: "I have no reason to believe it was."

Gerald R. Ford, the House Republican leader, said yesterday that high Army officials were aware of the incident shortly after it happened, although he declined to name individuals.

Today, Mr. Ford said he had not meant to imply that Mr. Resor or Gen. William C. Westmoreland had known of the incident.

"But I reaffirm," he said, "that responsible people in the Department of the Army in Vietnam knew all about this shortly after it occurred. It is not my position to reveal the names."

At a news briefing this morning, a Pentagon spokesman said no high Army official or Defense Department officials in Washington were aware of the alleged massacre until March or April of this year.

Secretary of State William P. Rogers said in an educational television program taped for presentation tonight that "if the allegations are true, it is a shocking, shocking incident, and all we can do is to court-martial any responsible persons and to show the world that we don't condone this."