

29 DEC 69

THE NEW YORK TIMES, M

Inquiry Into Alleged Cover-Up On Songmy Moves to Vietnam

SAIGON, South Vietnam, Dec. 28 (UPI)—The United States Army's investigation into allegations of a cover-up in the deaths of civilians at Songmy moved to South Vietnam today. The general in charge said he wanted to look at the hamlet where American troops are accused of having massacred South Vietnamese women and children.

Speaking with newsmen on his arrival from Washington, Lieut. Gen. William R. Peers said he would probably remain in South Vietnam 10 days to two weeks. He was accompanied by five assistants, including two civilian lawyers—Robert MacCrate of New York City and Jerome Walsh.

"We've made tremendous progress into the investigation," General Peers said of the work in Washington. "We've interviewed 39 witnesses, some for two or three hours and some for more than 20 hours."

In Vietnam, the general said, "I want to look at additional reports and records and if possible make an on-site inspection at Songmy."

First Lieut. William Calley

Jr., 26, of Miami, Fla., is charged by the Army with having killed 109 Vietnamese civilians in Songmy on March 16, 1968. The hamlet was a Vietcong stronghold.

The Army investigated the incident last year but determined that there were no grounds for disciplinary action. Then the Army placed charges against Lieutenant Calley, and the Pentagon ordered an inquiry into the handling of the original investigation.

Province Chief Replaced

QUANGNGAI, South Vietnam, Dec. 28 (UPI)—The Vietnamese chief of Quangngai Province, where the alleged Songmy massacre occurred, was replaced today and given a similar position in northernmost Quangtri Province.

An allied source said Col. Ton That Khiem's transfer was a normal administrative change. He was replaced by Col. Nguyen Van Binh, a former staff officer in the First Tactical Corps.

Colonel Khiem told newsmen last month he believed United States air and artillery — and not infantrymen — were responsible for the civilian deaths.