

ACCOUNT OF SONGMY PUTS DEATHS AT 600

SAIGON, South Vietnam, Jan. 1 (Reuters)—The militant An Quang Buddhist faction published today an account of the alleged massacre at Songmy, containing charges that almost 600 men, women and children were shot and piled four deep in a ditch.

The most detailed South Vietnamese account of the alleged incident yet published came in a 1,000-word letter to the An Quang Pagoda in Saigon by a former villager at Songmy now living in the Saigon suburb of Giadinh.

In disclosing the letter today, the Buddhist faction did not give the man's name "for security reasons," but gave his initials as "T. M."

The writer said that he was not present during the alleged killings in March, 1968, but had witnessed the scene only three hours after American soldiers had left.

He said that the death toll of civilians was almost 600. He described it as "systematic genocide," and asked for a thorough investigation by the Buddhist authorities.

WASHINGTON, Jan. 1 (Reuters)—The United States officials here declined today comment on the charges. They said that no statements would be issued about any allegations while a Defense Department investigation of the incident was in progress.