

Army Drops Charges Against Four in Alleged Mylai Cover-Up

WASHINGTON, Jan. 6 (AP) — The Army dropped today the charges against four more officers in the alleged cover-up of the killing of South Vietnamese civilians at Mylai.

It announced that Lieut. Gen. Jonathan O. Seaman, commanding general of the First Army at Fort Meade, Md., had dismissed the charges against Lieut. Col. David C. Gavin, Lieut. Col. William D. Guinn Jr., Maj. Charles C. Calhoun and Maj. Frederic W. Watke because of "insufficient evidence." The charges had involved dereliction of duty and other alleged offenses.

The action leaves only three officers, including Maj. Gen. Samuel W. Koster, former Americal Division commander

and former West Point superintendent, still facing possible court-martial for handling of a field investigation of the Mylai incident nearly three years ago.

Originally, 14 officers were accused after a high-level Army panel reported evidence indicating that "certain persons, unwittingly or unwittingly, suppressed certain information about the incident from passing up the chain of command."

11 Cases Dropped

This finding was made by a panel headed by Lieut. Gen. William R. Peers after a three-and-a-half-month investigation.

The charges against the 14 officers were filed last March 17. Subsequently, three trial investigations have resulted in

dismissals of the accusations against 11 of them.

In addition to General Koster, charges are still pending against Col. Oran K. Henderson, who was commanding officer of the 11th Infantry Brigade in General Koster's division, and Capt. Dennis H. Johnson, a military intelligence officer with the 11th Brigade at the time of the Mylai incident of March 16, 1968. More than 100 South Vietnamese civilians were allegedly murdered by American troops in the hamlet of Mylai 4 in the Sonmy village complex.

In separate proceedings, the Army has charged 13 soldiers in connection with the deaths of the civilians. Seven of these cases were ordered to trial.

three are pending and three have been dismissed.

Colonel Gavin, 39 years old, was a senior adviser in the Soninh district when the incident occurred. He was charged with dereliction of duty, failure to obey lawful regulations, and false swearing.

Served as Adviser

Colonel Guinn, 41, was a deputy adviser for Quangnai Province. He was charged with dereliction of duty, failure to obey lawful regulations and false swearing.

Major Calhoun, 39, was executive officer and operations officer of Task Force Barker, an element of the Americal Division. He was charged with

dereliction of duty and failure to report possible misconduct to proper authorities.

Major Watke, 37, was commanding officer of Company B, 123d Aviation Battalion. He was charged with dereliction of duty and failure to obey lawful regulations.