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CALLEY DISPUTED ON MYLAI DEATHS

Ex-Officer Heard at Trial—
Medina Testifies Today

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FORT BENNING, Ga., March 9—First Lieut. William L. Calley Jr. that he had orders to kill everyone at Mylai except a few Vietnamese civilians who were to be used as human mine detectors was disputed today by a fellow officer.

Former Second Lieut. Jeffrey LaCrosse of Big Rapids, Mich., who commanded the third platoon of Charley Company, Task Force Barker, in the assault on the hamlet of Mylai on March 16, 1968, said that his men had turned over 23 civilian prisoners to the company commander, Capt. Ernest L. Medina. He said that he understood that Captain Medina had released the civilians after interrogation.

Lieutenant Calley, who commanded Charley Company's first platoon, testified two weeks ago that the orders to kill civilians had come from Captain Medina.

Captain Medina will testify here tomorrow. The Government completed its case today against Lieutenant Calley, who is charged with the premeditated murder of at least 102 non-combatants at Mylai.

Captain Medina, who yesterday was ordered to stand trial at Fort McPherson, Ga., on charges of murdering 102 civilians, will appear as a witness for the court, his testimony having been requested by one of the six officers of the jury.

'The Accepted Thing'

Mr. LaCrosse, the last of the 58 Government witnesses, admitted that he had used four Vietnamese males to walk ahead of his men through a suspected mine field at Mylai.

It was "the accepted thing," he said. But it wasn't a brutal thing, he added.

The civilians who were forced to become human mine detectors were employed simply as "guides" he said; they were never used to clear mines.

"They were never put out like cattle to blow up mines," he testified. "They would never walk across a place where they'd blow themselves up."

The villagers were expected to know the symbols employed by the Vietcongs and the North Vietnamese to mark the perimeter of minefields, he said. Sometimes the symbol was bamboo sticks, sometimes wire.

But apparently not all the villagers knew the symbols. Mr. LaCrosse said that his platoon had had to evacuate two mutilated Vietnamese who had tumbled into a mine.

Mr. LaCrosse could not recall that any member of his platoon had shot a civilian at Mylai but said that he answered "six" when Captain Medina asked him that night for a body count of enemy dead. Lieutenant Calley reported 60, he testified, and Lieut. Stephen Brooks of the second platoon also reported 60.

"I thought six was a nice conservative number," Mr. LaCrosse said with a quiet smile.

Says He Saw Bodies

Lieutenant Calley testified that Captain Medina had pressed the platoon commanders for a body count during a luncheon break at Mylai but Mr. LaCrosse, who said that he was present, could recall no such discussion.

The witness, whose platoon had the mission of searching and burning the huts of Mylai after the assault platoons had passed through, said that he had seen between 22 and 28 bodies in the village.

He said that when his men had rounded up some survivors he "called the old man [Captain Medina] and asked what we should do with them."

"The old man said 'Leave 'em,'" Mr. LaCrosse said.

After both sides rested, Col. Reid W. Kennedy, the military judge, informed the jury that Captain Medina, and S/Sgt. David Mitchell, who was acquitted in January of charges of assault with intent to kill at least 30 Vietnamese at Mylai, would be heard tomorrow. Col. Oran K. Henderson, who has been accused of covering up the incident, will be heard later this week.