

Pentagon Won't Comment on Verdict

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The second-ranking civilian in the Department of Defense said tonight that the court-martial of First Lieut. William L. Calley Jr. was "a pretty wrenching experience" for the Army.

The official, Under Secretary Thaddeus R. Beal, said that the court-martial "has been of great concern to anybody who cares about the Army."

But neither Mr. Beal nor senior military officials at the Pentagon, conscious of the significance and sensitivity of the Calley case, would comment directly on the verdict.

Maj. Gen. Winant Sidle, chief of public information for the Army, said that his office had carefully considered the expected requests for comment on the verdict.

"There isn't any reaction," General Sidle said. "What can anybody say?" In talking of an appeal, he said that comment "by any of our top people is not appropriate."

Impact on All Services

The same caution was shown by some former generals, including a past commandant of the Marine Corps, retired Gen. Wallace M. Green Jr.

"It certainly has an impact on all the military services," he said. "But I wouldn't want

to make a comment. Let the Army do that."

A colonel with extensive experience in Vietnam said that the conviction would not impair Army morale.

The colonel, who asked not to be identified by name, said: "As people look into the evidence, they'll see that there's a clear line between what must happen and what must not. People have been leading platoons into places like Mylai for years, and nothing like this happened."

A retired general who has been a frequent critic of the Vietnam war, James M. Gavin, said that the conviction was "devastating in its implications for the morale of the Army."

"Junior officers," he said, "are bound to feel that they're carrying the terrible burden of the war, that the buck stops with them."

'Scapegoating' Charged

General Gavin, who is now chairman of the board of Arthur D. Little, Inc., said that it was "tragic when a lieutenant in the infantry gets convicted and officers flying bombers don't."

The retired general suggested that a Presidential commission be appointed to study "the whole problem of war crimes" and to decide "who is responsible for what."

Representative Ronald V.

Dellums, Democrat of California, has proposed legislation for a Congressional inquiry into United States military policy in Indochina.

Today, Mr. Dellums said that Lieutenant Calley's conviction made "imperative immediate Congressional action on the war crimes issue." He called the verdict "scapegoating."

Members of a special investigating panel of the House Armed Services Committee, which conducted an inquiry into the Mylai affair last year, refused to discuss the verdict in detail today.

The chairman of the panel, Representative F. Edward Hébert, Democrat of Louisiana, would not comment. Representative Claude Pepper, Democrat of Florida, in whose district Lieutenant Calley lived, said that the conviction "simply points up the poignant tragedy of war."

In Austin, Tex., a spokesman for former President Lyndon B. Johnson said that he would have no comment.

Walt W. Rostow, who was Mr. Johnson's special assistant for national security affairs, reached by telephone in Austin, where he is on the faculty of the University of Texas, said that he had been unaware the Calley court had reached a verdict.

"I have no comment whatsoever," he added.

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