

Army Officers Disturbed By Calley Case Outcome

By DREW MIDDLETON **APR 10 1971**
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FORT BELVOIR, Va., April 9—The trial of First Lieut. William L. Calley Jr. and its aftermath have left many members of the professional officer corps of the United States Army in a state of anguish and alarm.

In the view of dozens of officers at many posts around the country, the Calley case was an isolated incident in a complex guerrilla war understood by few at home.

"The Army put a couple of million men through Vietnam," a brigadier general said, "and all the people judge us on is the Calley case—one instant in a war most people don't understand or try to understand."

A colonel said: "I wish politicians from the President on down would stay out of this business and let the Army police its own."

And a major said: "Scapegoat, hell. Calley had a gun in his hand, didn't he? A thousand, ten thousand other guys must have been in the same spot. They didn't go ape."

Moreover, many of the officers believe that the Calley case has been a catalyst for those elements of public opinion, left and right, that abuse and disparage the Army.

As they see it, the right criti-

cizes the service for cleaning its own house of the evil done at Mylai while the left cites Lieutenant Calley as a symbol of a brutal and ruthless force fighting an immoral war.

[The military judge at Lieutenant Calley's court-martial said that it was President Nixon's right to make the final determination in the case and that he supported the President's intercession, The Associated Press reported. Col. Reid Kennedy also said he agreed with the removal of Lieutenant Calley from the stockade during the appeal.]

The wide-ranging comments on the Calley case were obtained in personal interviews at Fort Ord, Calif., Fort Belvoir, Va., at The Citadel, South Carolina's military college in Charleston, and at the Pentagon. Other views were received by telephone from Fort Bragg, N. C., Fort Benning, Ga., and Fort Carson, Colo. Three officers telephoned on their own initiative to discuss the situation.

Although the public uproar over the Calley verdict and the President's intervention have provoked much discussion in

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the officer corps, it has led officers to be even more reticent than usual about the use of their names. At a time when the Army, and what they believe it stands for, is under heavy attack, officers did not wish their names attached to comments that might seem to aggravate the situation.

One common concern is that the Calley case has provided an easy target for all those forces in American life that are critical of the Army.

"Sure, it comes from the right as well," a young colonel said. "Those red necks, they want to fight all right, but they never have understood that you have to fight under the rules, that indiscriminate killing is against the rules, that militarily it's counterproductive."

Own Experience Cited

Not one of the professionals excused Lieutenant Calley. But the majority were convinced that his case represented an isolated instance and cited their own experience in Vietnam as evidence.

"I had a battalion out there, a damned good battalion," a brigadier general said in Fort Bragg while the case was being tried. "We had a lot of hard fighting, hairy going when you didn't know friend from enemy. But I never saw or heard of an incident like this one."

The professionals are worried by the use of the Calley case by opponents of the war as evidence that the Vietnam operation is a dirty business.

"Don't they realize we know it's a dirty war," a veteran colonel asked. "All wars are dirty, immoral. War itself is the great atrocity."

"Look," he went on, "we're soldiers. We train men, give them the best weapons and the best doctrine we can get, and, when a politician tells us to go do something, we go and do it. We teach men not to fire on unarmed people or civilians. We always have. Now this one case, this one lousy case, and we're a bunch of murderers."

To such men the Army is more than uniforms, saluting and the officers' club. It is a way of life representing values they believe are disappearing from American society: un-deviating truthfulness; unhesitating obedience to orders, whatever the risk and fidelity to the idea that the honor of the Army and the country come before any personal consideration.

The lasting impression from a week of discussion is that the professionals are deeply concerned because they believe these values have been en-

dangered by the Calley case and its use to increase un-reasoning criticism of the war.

They are ready to accept a changed Army, to see old customs and usages disappear; they are not prepared to abandon the standards they revere.

Although the officers did not try to exculpate Lieutenant Calley, they scorned some of the critics of the lieutenant and the war.

"I commanded a brigade out there," a general said. "We never had anything remotely like the Calley case. But we had bad situations when you

were getting fire from women, when teen-agers were chucking grenades. Politicians talk about a guerrilla war—and tell us how to fight it—but they just don't know what a guerrilla war is like. Unless they do, they ought to shut up."

Capt. Aubrey Daniel's letter protesting President Nixon's intervention had strong support. The captain is not one of them, not a professional, but in arguing that the appeals should be left to the military courts, he reflected dominant thinking among regular officers.

"We always thought the Calley case was the Army's business," a colonel said. "What he had done, he's done in uniform. It was up to us to try him, to follow the case right down to the end. That way we could show the country we could and would do our own dirty work. Personally, I think Calley was lucky. He got off lightly. If there'd been West Pointers on that jury, well . . ."

'Shouldn't Have Happened'

"Calley shouldn't have happened and the case shouldn't have happened," another colonel interjected. He reflected another common feeling—that Lieutenant Calley was a military mistake.

"We had an infantry y

and we needed infantry officers," he explained. "And boys like Calley get commissioned. He wasn't up to the job. In ordinary times he wouldn't have been commissioned, not in a million years, but he was and now the whole Army's paying for it."

The professionals believe that they must live by the rules of war. But some of them feel that some of those rules are outdated.

"Calley loses his head and the Army gets it in the neck," a major said at lunch. "But what about the Navy and the Air Force? Do they always know they're dropping a bomb or firing a shell at strictly military targets?"

A colonel, who had been listening, told the major to take it easy. "Leave the other services out," the colonel said. "This is our problem. We have to live with it. The Army will take a beating. It always does. What you have to remember Major, is that we have a job to do, so that the next time they need us, we'll be ready."

Calley Judge Backs President On Decision to Review the Trial

WASHINGTON, April 9 (UPI)— President Nixon's intention to review the court-martial of First Lieut. William L. Calley Jr., is his right as commander in chief, according to the military judge at Lieutenant Calley's trial.

Col. Reid W. Kennedy, who presided at the court-martial, said yesterday in an interview with Patrick J. Sloyan of the Hearst Headline Service that he supported the President's intention to make the final decision in the case.

Lieutenant Calley was convicted of premeditated murder and sentenced to life imprisonment for his part in the killing of civilians at My Lai in 1968. His conviction is subject to review within the military system of jurisprudence.

Senator Birch Bayh, Democrat of Indiana, among other critics of the Administration, has stated that the White House announcement that Mr. Nixon would make the final determination in the Calley case was politically motivated.

According to Colonel Kennedy there was nothing improper in Mr. Nixon's actions.

"First of all, I agreed with freeing Calley from the stockade during the appeal process," Colonel Kennedy said in the interview.

Mr. Nixon's first intercession in the case was freeing Lieu-

tenant Calley from the stockade. This preceded the White House announcement of a Presidential review and final determination.

"I see nothing wrong with saying that," Colonel Kennedy said, "After all, he is the commander in chief of the military and he is part of the review system. That's the President's right."

Colonel Kennedy was also critical of the prosecutor of Lieutenant Calley at Fort Benning, Ga., Capt. Aubrey Daniel 3d. Captain Daniel earlier this week sent a letter to Mr. Nixon, stating that the President's action in the case had weakened military justice and enhanced the image of Lieutenant Calley as a "national hero." Captain Daniel sent copies of the letter to several Congressmen.

The development touched off a sharp debate in Congress and President Nixon came in for criticism and support, generally along party lines.

"The trouble with Daniel," Colonel Kennedy told Mr. Sloyan, "is that he's a purist. He's a very intelligent young man. But he only sees good and evil. As you get a little older you realize that most people are in between the two extremes."

Thus far, the White House has refused to comment on Captain Daniel's letter other than to say that President Nixon had read it.