

Journalist Who Disclosed the Mylai

By DOUGLAS ROBINSON

Seymour M. Hersh, the journalist who first disclosed the details of the Mylai massacre, has asserted that members of the Army's Americal Division destroyed documents about the incident to protect the officers involved.

The charge is made in the second of two articles written by Mr. Hersh and appears in this week's issue of *The New Yorker*.

Mr. Hersh, who won a Pulitzer Prize for his work in disclosing the extent of the

Mylai atrocity, based his accusation on an examination of the Peers inquiry, a report made by an Army panel under the direction of Lieut. Gen. William R. Peers that studied the possibility of a cover-up.

'Truth Was More Damaging'

The Peers report, which has not been made public by the Pentagon, was a result of extensive hearings in 1969-70 in which 400 witnesses were questioned.

In his article this week, Mr. Hersh contends that the Peers commission concluded its work

"without being able to discover how the Mylai 4 files had disappeared" from the records of the Americal Division in South Vietnam.

General Peers himself, Mr. Hersh writes, suspected that some of the key officers involved at the time were responsible. He adds:

"The truth was more damaging to the Army's system than Peers could imagine; that subsequent officers of the Americal Division, who had no direct involvement with Mylai 4 and its investigation, had destroyed

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Story Now Charges U.S. Officers Destroyed Papers

evidence to protect the officers who preceded them."

Lieut. Col. Stanleigh K. Fisk of the Army's information office at the Pentagon said there would be no official comment on Mr. Hersh's charges "until after we've had a chance to read the article."

Colonel Fisk added that "if we feel it is necessary then to make a statement, we'll make one."

To help support his contention, Mr. Hersh quotes the testimony of Sgt. Kenneth E. Camell before the Peers inquiry that

when he was a clerk in the 11th Infantry Brigade, a unit of the Americal Division, he noticed that material on Mylai was disappearing from the files "in two separate stages."

Papers Reported Missing

Sergeant Camell, who joined the 11th Brigade in October, 1968, seven months after the killings at Mylai, testified that in the spring of 1969, as an inspector general's inquiry into Mylai was getting under way, a senior brigade officer came to him for the file on the incident.

"The indication was that he had to make a report to someone else on it," Mr. Hersh quotes the sergeant as telling the commission. When the folder was returned a few days later, Mr. Hersh writes, the sergeant "noticed that some of the papers were missing."

A few months later, in September, when the Mylai incident was beginning to get more attention, Mr. Hersh says, the sergeant was again asked for the file by a senior officer. The sergeant, he adds, "never saw the file again."

One of the missing documents—the so-called Barker report, named after the late Lieut. Col. Frank A. Barker, who commanded the infantry task force that assaulted Mylai—is described by Mr. Hersh as a "fraud."

Mr. Hersh also asserts in his article that at least one South Vietnamese Army officer wrote a report saying that more than 400 people had been killed by American troops in the Mylai area. The report, Mr. Hersh says, was regarded by American intelligence officers as Vietcong propaganda.