

Two Villages of Mylai Survivors Laid Waste by Enemy in Drive

NYTimes

By FOX BUTTERFIELD APR 26 1972

Special to The New York Times

QUANGNGAI, South Vietnam, April 25—Near the green, overgrown ruins of Mylai 4 stand two new mounds of blackened ashes—all that remains of the two villages rebuilt last year by the survivors of the 1968 Mylai massacre. The villages were burned to the ground last week, along with 21 neighboring villages, reportedly by the Vietcong.

Thirty thousand people have been listed homeless and 23 civilians reported killed, so far, as a consequence of the Vietcong's swift, violent and largely unopposed sweep through this area, the Batangan Peninsula, about 50 miles south of Danang.

An inspection of the sandy coastal plain and green rice paddies around Mylai by heli-

copter today revealed only one charred village after another. Most of the inhabitants are hiding in the fields, American officials here think, while others have fled to Government refugee centers on Route 1, five miles to the west. But no one was visible today.

"It's a two-to three-year effort at pacification, at trying to convince the people that the Government can protect them, down the drain," one American remarked as he surveyed the desolation reported by the work of the Vietcong 48th Battalion. It was the 48th Battalion that Lt. William L. Calley and his platoon was seeking on that morning four years ago when they reportedly shot

Continued on Page 17, Column 8

Villages of Mylai Refugees Razed by Foe

Continued From Page 1, Col. 7

several hundred villagers and burned Mylai 4.

The enemy troops reportedly chose their time and targets carefully. It is said that they waited to begin their attack here until the Saigon command had transferred nine battalions of rangers and regular army troops of the Second Division, which ordinarily provide a protective screen for the Batangan Peninsula, to the northern front in Quangtri.

And almost all the villages that were burned were new settlements, built in the last year or two under the Government's "return to the village" program, by peasants who had earlier been uprooted from their native villages by the Americal division to which Lieutenant Calley had belonged.

Help From Government

In the "return to the village" program, considered a key part of pacification, the Government provides the refugees with 10 sheets of tin roofing, 7,500 piasters—about \$20—and several months' supply of rice to help them move back to their home areas.

American and South Vietnamese officials were particularly proud of the newly rebuilt villages in the Batangan Peninsula, for the inhabitants had been strong supporters of the Communists since the early days of Ho Chi Minh and the Vietminh in the late 1940's. Their return to Government sponsored settlements was

taken as a sign of a switch in allegiance.

"The people there had been getting fat and happy since they returned," one local official said today. "So the Vietcong decided to rupture the pacification program where it would hurt most."

Bridges Blown Up

In addition to burning the 23 villages, the enemy forces blew up several new bridges linking the settlements, and kidnapped an unknown number of residents. The Government's territorial militia, known as the Regional and Popular Forces, is still slowly trying to push its way back into the devastated area. Until it does, the full extent of damage will not be known.

Some allied officials in Quangngai insist that the Vietcong action around Mylai was a sharply limited success and a sign of weakness rather than strength.

"Certainly, we admit that we suffered a serious short-term setback in the Batangan," argued a senior officer. "But that only affected 5 per cent of the province's 700,000 people. Compared to their Tet 1968 offensive here when they overran Quangngai city and several district towns, they haven't been able to mount much of anything. If I were the local VC commander, I'd be embarrassed by how little I was able to accomplish."

The only other fighting in Quangngai in the enemy offensive has been in Moduc dis-

trict southeast of Quangngai, the provincial capital, where three villages were overrun after local militia garrisons fled. Most of the province, in fact, has not been touched by the war this spring.

No American help, even air strikes, has been made available to the Government forces in Quangngai, for it is considered a secondary front. From all accounts, the South Vietnamese, forced to rely on their own resources, have responded slowly and cautiously, but have finally begun to make a considerable effort.

After fighting for six days without air support, the local militiamen are now getting air strikes from the South Vietnamese air force. A small flotilla of South Vietnamese gunboats armed with 75-mm. guns has begun bombarding the coast, and a squadron of tanks and armored personnel carriers from the Second Division have arrived to help the militia retake the burned villages.

Aid to Peasants Pledged

Most of the Vietcong, however, are believed to have disappeared back into their hideouts in the mountains to the west.

The provincial government, in addition to setting up three new refugee centers, has promised to provide another allotment of tin roofing, money and rice to peasants willing to put up their houses again.

From the air today, a few scattered, shiny tin roofs could be seen near the charred ruins

of Tucung and Mylai, the two settlements built last year by the survivors of the Mylai massacre.

Apparently some of the survivors of this second destruction have decided to stay and have begun rebuilding with whatever materials they could salvage.