

AMERICAN AIDES IN SAIGON SAY U.S. DOES NOT CONDONE ATROCITIES

American Aides in Saigon Say U.S. Does Not

SAIGON, South Vietnam, Nov. 19 (Reuters)—The United States Embassy and the United States military command issued a joint statement today disclaiming approval for such actions as an alleged massacre of civilians by American troops at Songny, south of Danang.

"The United States Government does not condone atrocities in any way, at any time, under any conditions," the statement said. It was issued a day after villagers said United States troops killed more than 300 civilians and burned the village in March of last year.

Any investigations are the responsibility of the Department of the Army and it alone can release information about the case, "since these actions may result in criminal proceedings under the uniform code of military justice," the statement added.

Justice for Individuals

It said, "these procedures are designed to insure that justice is done both in the case of the individuals charged and with respect to the interests of the United States Government."

Two American soldiers now in the United States have been charged in connection with the incident. They are First Lieut. William L. Calley Jr., 28 years old, of Miami, charged with murder, and Staff Sgt. David Mitchell, 29, of St. Francisville, La., charged with intent to commit murder.

Various figures of the number killed in the incident have been given. A Department of the Army statement released in Saigon and Washington today described one estimate of 567 victims, reported by The New York Times and Newsweek, as exaggerated.

"We cannot comment further on the figures," it said.

Investigators Sent to Scene

The statement said the Army Provost Marshal had sent an investigator to the scene. An earlier investigation by the 11th Airborne Infantry Brigade of

the United States Americal Division did not support charges that the Americans had killed civilians.

The military commander of South Vietnam's five northern provinces, Lieut. Gen. Hoang Xuan Lam, went to Quangngai today to investigate the allegations. Mylai is near Quangngai.

President Nguyen Van Thieu has asked the general to report to him, a spokesman said.

Survivors' accounts of the incident, given to reporters this week, have not been reported in Saigon newspapers. Blank spaces appeared on the front pages of several newspapers. The Information Ministry intervened to ask that they should not be published, a newspaper editor said.

Letter on Case Confirmed

WASHINGTON, Nov. 19 (UPI)—The Army confirmed to-

day that a letter from a Vietnam war veteran had prompted the investigation that has resulted in murder charges against two soldiers in connection with an alleged massacre in South Vietnam.

A statement said:

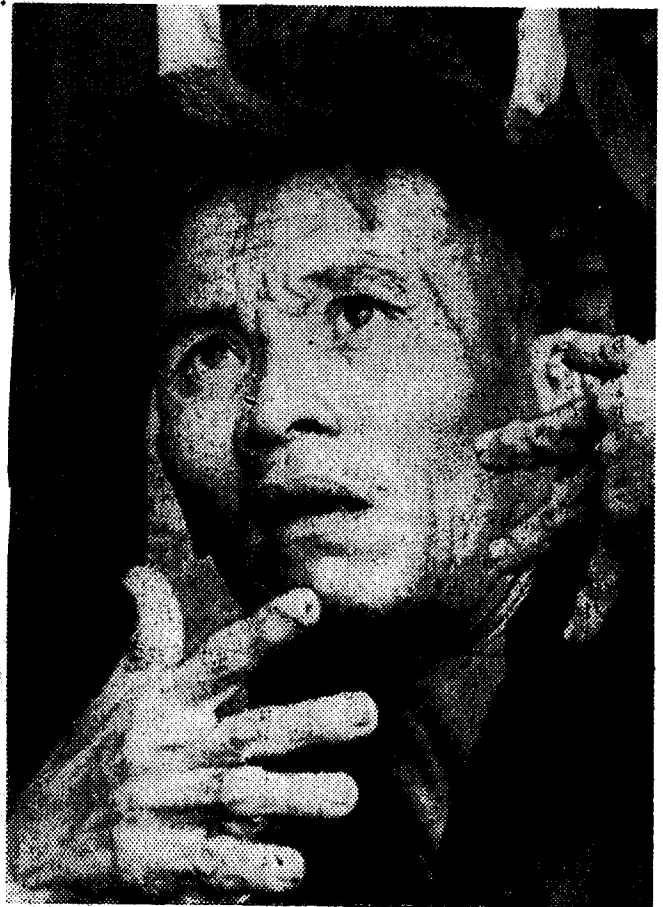
"The army received a letter from a former soldier who had gathered information concerning the alleged incident, and on the basis of this letter an investigation was initiated which developed sufficient evidence to bring charges."

While the Army statement did not name him, the writer of the letter was Ronald Ridenhour, a 23-year-old sophomore at Claremont Mens' College in Claremont, Calif., who conceded that his information was hearsay but said it came from "a kid I know fairly well" who had refused orders to participate in the alleged killings.

Condoned Atrocities



The village of Truongan in Quangngai Province, South Vietnam, is the new home of the residents of Songmy, a nearby village. A group of the villagers reported that U.S. troops slew 567 unarmed civilians there on March 16, 1968.



United Press International
Do Chuc, one of the villagers, said that the Americans arrived by helicopter, ordered everyone out and opened fire. He and others allegedly hid under bodies of victims.