

SAIGON'S SENATE WILL INVESTIGATE ALLEGED ATROCITY

It Will Examine Why Thieu
and U.S. Disagree—Lower
House Weighs Inquiry

EX-GENERAL IN CHARGE

Tran Van Don Says Even
Allies of President Back
Study of Songmy Case

By HENRY KAMM

Special to The New York Times

SAIGON, South Vietnam, Nov. 27 — Two South Vietnamese Senate committees decided today to conduct a joint inquiry into the alleged massacre at Songmy, in which American soldiers are accused of having killed as many as 567 villagers last year. A similar move is making headway in the South Vietnamese House of representatives.

Senator Tran Van Don, who was named to head the Senate investigation, said that its purpose would be to resolve the apparent contradiction between the official positions of the United States and South Vietnam.

The United States Army will try by court-martial First Lieut. William L. Calley Jr. on charges of multiple murder, has charged S. Sgt. David Mitchell with assault with intent to murder and is investigating the possible participation of 24 others.

Thieu's Allies Join

The Saigon Government, on the other hand, declared in an official statement Saturday that the incident on March 16, 1968, was a normal act of war and that the great majority of the victims, which it put at 145, had been Vietcong guerrillas and not innocent civilians.

The Defense Committee of the Senate, headed by Senator Don, was joined by the Interior Committee in a unanimous vote in favor of an inquiry. Senator Don, a retired general and former Defense Minister and Chief of Staff, said even Senators allied with President Nguyen Van Thieu supported the decision.

Senator Bui Van Giai, chairman of the Interior Committee and a member of the Defense Committee, affiliated his group with the investigation, Senator Don said. Each committee will have three members on the panel.

Senator Don said that the results of the inquiry might become the basis of a full Senate debate of great political significance. He said the issue of Saigon's relationship with Washington would be involved.

Deputy Tran Ngoc Chau, a retired army officer and a de-

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termined opponent of Mr. Thieu, said that the Government's blanket absolution of the American soldiers in the face of the continuing American inquiry and impending court-martial was a disservice to both countries. He said it reinforced charges that the United States was the real master of South Vietnam and the Thieu Government only its puppet.

Despite continuing indications of the Government's intent to consider the case closed, the public appears gradually to be taking an interest.

Breaking the editorial silence on the subject, three newspapers today published editorials praising the United States for discussing the case in public and criticizing Saigon's reticence. The independent-minded newspaper Chinh Lun said:

"If their own government should consider [the victims'] deaths as insignificant, although they died at the hands of those who presumably came here to save them, then this attitude is indeed one of sheer irresponsibility, denoting cowardice and worthy of contempt."

Routine Killings Charged

LONDON, Nov. 27 (UPI) — A British doctor who spent five years in Vietnam said today that he had seen South Vietnamese troops pass through villages and regularly set fires and loot and kill unarmed civilians.

The physician, Dr. Alje Venemma, said he recalled an instance early in 1965 when a 16-year-old boy was taken behind a building and shot by South Vietnamese national policemen.

He said he had been "amazed" that American officials denied knowledge of the March 1968, Songmy killings, because a "very high" South Vietnamese official in Quangngai City, where he worked with a Canadian medical team had told him of the killings and that American authorities knew about them.

Dr. Venemma, speaking at the London hospital where he does postgraduate work, refused to say whether the high official was the Quangngai Province chief.

He said he had been so accustomed to deaths of civilians on a wide scale, killed intentionally and by accident, that when he heard about Songmy, he had not thought it out of the ordinary, although he had noted it in his diary.

He said South Vietnamese troops were "much much worse" than American troops.