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Rivers Says Copter Pilot Testified He Saw Bodies but No Actual Killings

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WASHINGTON, Dec. 10—A

Army helicopter pilot who is reported to have told superiors of unnecessary civilian killings at the South Vietnamese village of Songmy "did not report that" to a Congressional panel today, its chairman said.

Representative L. Mendel Rivers, who heads the influential House Armed Services Committee, said his panel had questioned Chief Warrant Officer Hugh C. Thompson about the alleged massacre by American troops in the village on March 16, 1968.

"He didn't give us any information that would lead us to believe anybody ever com-

mitted a massacre," the South Carolina Democrat said after emerging from the closed hearing where Mr Thompson testified.

According to Mr. Rivers, the pilot said that he had seen dead bodies on the ground, but he could not say how they had been killed.

"From his testimony," Mr. Rivers stated, "nobody can be charged, in my opinion, with having massacred anybody."

Full Inquiry Offered

Mr. Rivers also indicated that his investigating subcommittee was prepared to open a full-scale investigation of the incident. He said his committee had authority to extend the

inquiry to South Vietnam to gather evidence.

Asked whether the committee would issue a report, he replied: "We'll have to cross that bridge when we come to it."

At the Pentagon, where the Army is conducting its own inquiry, Robert MacCrate, a New York attorney, said he was satisfied that the Army was not seeking to whitewash the affair.

Mr. MacCrate was appointed last week to share authority in conducting an Army investigation of the original, field-level inquiry of the incident.

The attorney said the validity of the allegations of a massacre must be established be-

fore the adequacy of the original inquiry can be determined.

Although the Army hearing has heard testimony from Warrant Officer Thompson, the helicopter pilot, and from a number of other officers, members of the panel have maintained official secrecy on the substance of the testimony.

On Capitol Hill, however, Mr. Rivers said that in three days of hearings his group had not been given information that would lead members to believe that American troops had engaged in a massacre.

Although Mr. Rivers has talked about the committee

hearing evidence that failed to indicate a massacre had taken place, he declined to talk about what other evidence had been presented.

Capt. Ernest L. Medina, who commanded the company that assaulted the Vietnamese village, was scheduled to testify before the Congressional panel today, but his appearance was postponed until tomorrow.