

Part of Army's Songmy Inquiry To Visit Site of Alleged Killings

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WASHINGTON, Dec. 26—The Army inquiry into the original investigation on the alleged Songmy massacre divided into two groups today, one heading for South Vietnam for 10 days and the other remaining at the Pentagon to question witnesses in the United States.

Gen. William R. Peers, who heads the inquiry, and his civilian, Robert MacCrate, took a party of 11 officers, civilians and enlisted men to South Vietnam to question possible witnesses, read reports and examine the terrain of the small hamlet where the massacre is said to have occurred.

Bland West, assistant general counsel to the Army and General Peer's deputy in the inquiry, will continue the investigation in the United States with key testimony of Staff Sgt. David Mitchell tomorrow and of Sgt. Michael A. Bernhardt Monday.

The Army has charged Sergeant Mitchell, a former squad leader in Company C, 1st Battalion, 20th Regiment of the 11th Infantry Brigade, the company involved in the alleged massacre, with assault with intent to murder 30 Vietnamese civilians. However, no decision has been made on whether he will be court-martialed.

Sergeant Bernhardt is the soldier who told of a massacre to Ronald Ridenhour, the Vietnam veteran who wrote letters to members of Congress and Defense Secretary Melvin R. Laird, touching off the current investigation.

At a news conference this afternoon, the general and Mr. MacCrate told newsmen they thought their visit to Vietnam would be useful, but little else was revealed.

Mr. MacCrate said that seeing the site of the alleged incident would help the group understand testimony better and provide some standard by which they would be "better able to evaluate the recollection of the witnesses."

The Peers inquiry has heard 39 persons so far, some for a few hours and some for as long as 20 hours, according to the general.

Besides Sergeant Mitchell, the Pentagon group will also hear tomorrow from two civilians who were radio operators with company C, Roger Murray and Louis Martin.

On Monday, two more former radio operators will be heard after Sergeant Bernhardt. They are John H. Paul and Frederick J. Widmer.