

Panel Says the Army Hampered Investigation on Songmy Incident

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Members of a House panel that investigated the alleged mass killing of Vietnamese civilians at Songmy stepped up their criticism of the Army today, contending that it had hampered their investigation.

"The committee was hampered by the Department of the Army in every conceivable manner," said Representative F. Edward Hébert, a Louisiana Democrat who headed the four-man subcommittee investigating the alleged killings on March 16, 1969, at Mylai 4, a

hamlet in the Songmy village complex.

Another member, Representative Samuel S. Stratton, Democrat of upstate New York, said that the committee was "stymied at every step of the way by the Secretary of the Army and top Army brass."

The accusation that the Army failed to cooperate with the Congressional inquiry was contained in a 53-page report issued yesterday by the subcommittee. The report concluded that mass killings had taken place and that they were "cov-

ered up" by military and civilian officials in Vietnam.

A spokesman for the Department of the Army said that the subcommittee report had been received yesterday afternoon and that the Army was "not yet in a position to comment in detail upon its contents."

Elaborating on the report at a news conference today, the members of the panel disagreed on whether a "massacre" had been committed by United States soldiers. Mr. Hébert said he would not use the term, and he was joined

by Representative Charles S. Gubser, Republican of California.

But Mr. Stratton said, "I wouldn't shy away from the term 'massacre.'" Representative William L. Dickinson, Republican of Alabama, agreed with Mr. Stratton. "I'm convinced that well over 100 people were killed," Mr. Dickinson said.

He added that some of the victims had been "herded together" and then executed in a "group," and said they were of "both sexes and ages." Twelve soldiers have been

charged with participating in the incident.

The report issued yesterday said that "a tragedy of major proportions" had taken place, the same conclusion reached by an official Army panel that reported last March. Both reports had refrained from describing the incident as a "massacre."

The Army panel also refrained from calling the original field investigation a "cover-up," although nine officers have been implicated in an apparent effort to suppress information.