

NO BLAME IS FOUND FOR WESTMORELAND

WASHINGTON, Oct. 16 (AP)—Secretary of the Army Stanley R. Resor has dismissed allegations by a soldier-defendant who charged Gen. William C. Westmoreland with over-all responsibility for the actions of his troops in the alleged Sonmy massacre, it was announced today.

General Westmoreland, now Army Chief of Staff, "had no knowledge" of the Sonmy case "until many months after he returned to the United States" from Vietnam, the Army said.

The four-star general was in command of American troops in Vietnam on March 16, 1968, the day a rifle company of the American Division swept through the hamlet of Sonmy. Ten members of the company are charged with murder and other crimes in the deaths of more than 100 civilians in the village.

One of these men, S. Sga. Esequiel Torres, 22 years old, of Brownsville, Tex., at his pre-trial hearing Sept. 9 formally accused General Westmoreland of dereliction of duty. Sergeant Torres contended that General Westmoreland was "responsible for whatever casualties that were inflicted on Vietnamese civilians" by failing to control troops within his command.

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Responsibility for Mylai

To the Editor:

Secretary of the Army Stanley Resor's dismissal of the allegations of Gen. William C. Westmoreland's responsibility in the Mylai case barely made the papers. The Times printed it on the back page of its Oct. 17 edition. Yet the statement bore on a fundamental question of history: Who is responsibility for the over-all conduct of our military involvement in Vietnam?

The question can not be easily dismissed when over a million civilians have died in Vietnam since the American buildup in 1965.

The Resor statement is the official denial that a concept of command responsibility exists for the American military. This concept, which insists that a commander is responsible for controlling the actions of his troops was established by Americans in the case of Gen. Tomoyuki Yamashita, whom an American military court hanged for not controlling the rampages of his troops in the Philippines in 1945.

The ring of Resor's words that General Westmoreland "had no knowledge" of the Mylai case "until many months after he returned to the United States" are strangely reminiscent. No one claimed that General Yamashita had any knowledge of the massacres in the Batangas Province, because his communications were cut. Yet General Westmoreland communicated his congratulations to Company C for their body count of 129.

It is no wonder that Mylai has clarified the moral bankruptcy of our leadership for many young people. They are led to believe that by going into the Army an individual puts his moral being in the hands of leaders who perceive a higher national interest. And then after all the training to kill and the training to obey orders unquestioningly — not to mention the prevalence in Vietnam of civilian deaths by mistake, by design, or by the nature of the war that our military, and especially General Westmoreland, has chosen to fight there—a Mylai results, and the individual G.I. is abandoned as a criminal by his superiors.

Secretary Resor's evasion of the issue should not end the inquiry into the political and the command responsibilities for Mylai.

JAMES RESTON JR.
Hume, Va., Oct. 20, 1970