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CALLEY'S DEFENSE AIDED BY WITNESS

Pilot Says He Saw Bodies
Before Arrival of G.I.'s

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FORT BENNING, Ga., Dec. 11—A former helicopter pilot, testifying for the defense at the murder trial of First Lieut. William L. Calley Jr., said today that a large group of Vietnamese strewn along a trail at the southern edge of Mylai had been killed before any American troops reached the scene.

Prosecution witnesses had sworn that Lieutenant Calley ordered and participated in the slaying of some 30 civilians, mostly women, children and old men, at the same spot.

But former Chief Warrant Officer Scott Baker said American troops were only about one-third of the way through the village when he observed the corpses.

He suggested that they had been killed either by artillery or by helicopter gun ships that he had seen strafing the village.

Mr. Baker's statement contradicted the testimony of members of Lieutenant Calley's platoon, who said early this week that they were standing right beside the young officer when the civilians were killed. They said they had heard him order a soldier to gun down the nonresisting group of non-combatants they had rounded up in the hamlet.

That soldier, Paul D. Meadlo, who refused to testify for the Government last week, broke into tears after killing some of the civilians, prosecution witnesses said, whereupon Lieutenant Calley himself finished off the screaming survivors with an M-16 rifle.

Another witness for the defense, Capt. George C. White of Fort Rucker, Ala., who was a platoon commander like Lieutenant Calley during the action of Task Force Barker at the hamlet of Mylai 4 on March 16, 1968, swore that his men suffered heavy casualties in early operations near the hamlet and that civilians were to blame.

The civilians were a treacherous lot, Captain White said, often shooting G.I.'s in the back or maiming them with mines and booby traps.

In further extenuation of Lieutenant Calley's conduct—he is accused of the premeditated murder of 102 civilians—Captain White said that his unit encountered teen-age girls with rifles among an enemy group. This action took place a month before the Mylai incident, and two of the girls were killed, the witness said.

Captain White told of a "gray curtain" of enemy bullets sweeping the fields near Mylai during one operation. He said his company had been cut to less than one-third its full strength after four actions around Mylai.

At first Americans had ignored the civilians, allowing them to pass unchecked through the lines, he said.

This tolerance had to be stopped, he said, because civilians who infiltrated were suspected of opening fire on the American flanks and rear.

"Our back door was closed by sniper fire," he said, "and we felt these people had something to do with it."

Under cross-examination by Capt. Aubrey M. Daniel 3d, Captain White said that although the civilians of Mylai were not to be trusted he knew of no American order to exterminate them.

In his opening argument yesterday, George W. Latimer, chief counsel for Lieutenant Calley, said he would prove that Lieutenant Calley had orders to "kill every living thing" at Mylai.