

Gen. Koster Censured in Mylai Incident

WASHINGTON, Jan. 30 (AP)—Maj. Gen. Samuel W. Koster, cleared Friday of charges that he had covered up the alleged massacre at Mylai 4, has been censured and could receive further stiff administrative penalties, the Army said Saturday.

A spokesman said that Lieut. Gen. Jonathan O. Seaman, First Army commander at Fort Meade, Md., had handed General Koster a "letter of censure."

"The general tenor of the letter was to censure General Koster for his failure to report civilian casualties and to insure that the circumstances of these casualties were investigated promptly and thoroughly," the Army said.

General Seaman gave General Koster, former West Point superintendent, the letter at the same time that he notified the 51-year-old General Koster that charges that could have resulted in court-martial were being dismissed.

Army to Review Case

General Seaman found that General Koster "did not show any intentional abrogation of responsibilities" while commander of the Americal Division at the time of the alleged massacre of more than 100 South Vietnamese civilians in March, 1968.

The Army spokesman said the dismissal of the criminal charges was final but that the full record of the case, including the letter of censure, would be forwarded to Army headquarters for review.

Secretary of the Army Stanley R. Resor has authority to

take "adverse administrative actions against General Koster if warranted," the spokesman said.

Asked what such actions might involve, the spokesman said possibilities included reduction to the general's permanent rank of brigadier general, a bar to further promotion, a request for retirement, or a reprimand.

The letter of censure, the spokesman said, amounts to a black mark in the general's record and could affect his chances for promotion.

Beyond this, the Army said there would be no comment until the review had been completed.

A spokesman at Fort Meade said General Koster would also have no comment.

General Koster is assigned to First Army headquarters, and the spokesman said he knew of no new assignment at this time.

The dropping of criminal charges against the general leaves only two officers still facing possible court-martial in connection with the alleged cover-up of the Mylai incident—charges that grew out of a three-month Army inquiry into the handling of a field investigation of massacre reports immediately after the episode on May 16, 1968.

The two officers still charged are Col. Oran K. Henderson, who commanded the 11th Brigade, and Capt. Dennis H. Johnson, an intelligence officer.

14 Were Accused

Nearly a year ago, 14 officers were accused after the high level investigation reported evidence indicating that

"certain persons, wittingly or unwittingly, suppressed certain information about the incident from passing up the chain of command."

So far no censure such as General Koster received has been taken against the 11 other officers cleared of charges.

The Americal Division was the parent of an infantry company that swept through Mylai and allegedly killed more than 100 South Vietnamese men, women and children.

General Koster had been charged with failure to obey lawful regulations and with dereliction in the performance of his duties as division commander.

After his Vietnam service, he headed the United States Military Academy at West Point, but was relieved when the charges were filed against him last March.

Three Army officers are charged with murder in connection with the event. The charges have been dismissed against eight other soldiers while two enlisted men were acquitted after courts-martial