

Excerpts From Calley Testimony on

Special to The New York Times

FORT BENNING, Ga., Feb. 23—Following are excerpts from testimony here today by First Lieut. William L. Calley Jr. at his court-martial for the murder of Vietnamese civilians:

Q. [Direct examination] Insofar as possible, as far as your recollections are concerned, will you give the statements made by Captain Medina [at a briefing on the eve of the attack] as closely as you can, and his actual wording?

A. Well, he started off when he listed the men that we had lost, which was—I think surprised everybody.

Not everybody in the company had known who exactly we had lost out of other platoons.

He said it was completely essential at no time that we lose our momentum of attack, because the other two companies that have assaulted the time in there before had let the enemy get behind them, or he had passed through the enemy, allowing him to get behind him and set up behind him, which would disorganize when he made his final assault on Pinkville. It would disorganize him, they would lose their momentum of attack, take heavy casualties, and be more worried about their casualties than they would their mission. And that was their downfall

So it was our job at this time to go through, neutralize these villages by destroying everything in them, not letting anyone or anything get in behind us. And move on into Pinkville.

Q. Was anything said in that briefing that you recollect about the people who might be left in Pinkville, if there was anybody there? Did he characterize that? A. Yes, sir.

Q. And what did he say about that? A. Well, there was the 48th V.C. battalion, was in Pinkville itself, sir. And he said they would be destroyed once and for all, sir.

Q. Did he make any comments about the civilians, as to what they might be? A. Well, the only remark he made as to civilians, about civilians, was that the psy [psychological] war had prepped the area, and the area had been completely covered by psy war operations. That all civilians had left the area, there were no civilians in the area. And anyone there would be considered enemies.

Q. Now, did you have a second briefing? A. Yes, sir, we did.

Q. And who attended the second briefing? A. Platoon leaders, basically.

Q. And who conducted that briefing? A. Captain Medina, sir.

Q. Did he make any comments there about the manner of operation, what should be done in connection with the turning out the area, or in connection with what should be made certain in regards to the mission?

A. Yes, sir. He re-emphasized on us, on platoon leaders, that under no circumstances would we let anyone get behind us, nor would we leave anything standing in these villages. At least we would get out with what we had and we wouldn't be entrapped. That it was of the utmost to keep the high speed of attack going on. Platoon leaders would not stop for their own wounded. If a man went down, you had to keep going; Third Platoon would pick up casualties.

Q. Now, going back to the principal briefing of the company, do you have any recollection of anybody asking Captain Medina a question about who were civilians? A. I believe there was a question raised.

Q. What is your recollection? A. I believe somebody asked if that meant women and children, sir.

Q. Did Captain Medina respond to that question? A. Yes, sir.

Q. What did he say? A. He said that meant everything. He said that—he said he meant everything.

Mylai Killings

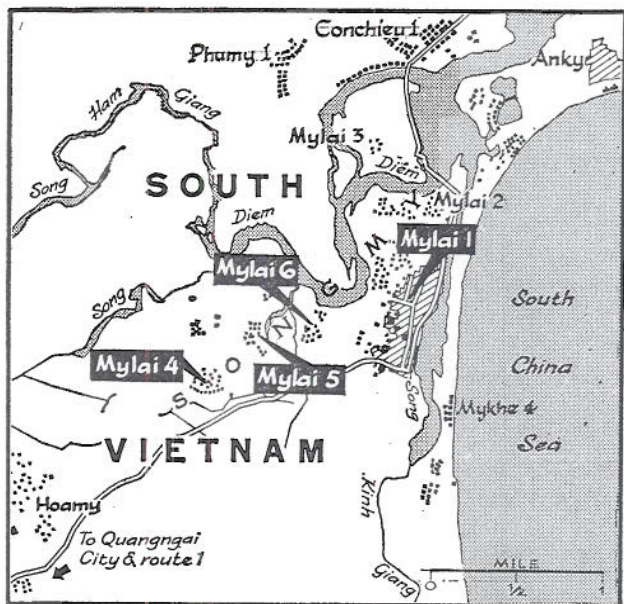
'Had Political Clearance'

Q. Was anything said at that briefing—had anything been told to you about the nature of this area, specifically, whether it was classified by either being or not being a free-fire zone? A. As long as I have known the area, this area was in the general classification of the word of free-fire zone. On this operation, we had political clearance to destroy everything in the area, sir.

Q. In the context of what was told you, that is the interpretation you put on what the free-fire zone was, based on what you had previously known and what you were told there? A. Yes, sir. In the area you could engage any target of opportunity and, on suspected areas, you could use indiscriminate artillery, sir.

Q. In the briefing with the platoon leaders, was there anything said at that briefing by Captain Medina about what to do with the prisoners? A. No, sir, there wasn't.

Q. Was there a policy that had developed in that area as Task Force Barker, in connection with the use of Vietnamese in connection with



The New York Times

Feb. 24, 1971

Blocked out areas are where First Lieut. William L. Calley Jr. said platoon was ordered to operate March, 1968.

clearing minefields? A. I don't think it was said. It was understood when we made our final assault on My Lai 1, we would have had civilians pulled in front of us, yes, sir.

Q. And what was the purpose for that? A. Clear the minefields, sir.

Q. Tell the court your travels, where you went and what you did, to the best of your recollections? A. Well, after Captain Medina called me that time and I told him what was slowing me down, he told me to hurry up and get my people moving and get rid of the people I had there that were detaining me.

Q. And what did you do? A. I started moving over to Sergeant Mitchell's location to speed 'em up, find out

what was over in that other part. When I broke out of the village on the southeastern trail. I at that time ran into Paul Meadlo that was there with a large—well, a group of people.

Q. You state what you said and what Meadlo said? A. I asked something to the effect if he knew what he was supposed to be doing with those people. He said he did. I told him to get moving, get on the other side of the ditch.

Q. What was the substance of that [later] conversation between you and Captain Medina? A. He asked me why I was disobeying his orders.

Q. Was anything else said by him? A. Well, I explained to him why—what was slowing me down, and at that

time he told me to waste the Vietnamese and get my people out and line—out in the position they were supposed to be.

Q. What did you do? A. I yelled at Sergeant Bacon and told him to go and start searching hooches and get your people moving right on—not the hooches but the bunkers—and I started over to Mitchell's location. I came back out. Meadlo was still standing there with a group of Vietnamese, and I yelled at Meadlo and asked him—I told him if he couldn't move all those people, to get rid of them.

Q. Did you fire into that group of people? A. No, sir, I did not.

Q. After that incident, what did you do? A. Well, I told my men to get on across the ditch and to get into position after I had fired into the ditch.

Q. Now, did you have a chance to look and observe what was in the ditch? A. Yes, sir.

Q. And what did you see? A. Dead people, sir.

Q. Did you see any appearance of anybody being alive in there? A. No, sir.

Q. There has been some information disclosed, that you heard before the court, that you stood there at the ditch for a considerable period of time; that you waited and had your troops push them in the ditch and that you fired there for approximately an hour and a half as those groups were marched up. Did you participate in any such a shooting or any such an event?

A. No, sir, I did not.

Q. Did you at any time direct anybody to push people in the ditch?

A. Like I said, I gave the order to take those people through the ditch and had also told Meadlo, if he couldn't move them, to waste them, and I directly—other than that, there was only that one incident, I never stood up there for any period of time.

Q. Now, why did you give Meadlo a message or the order that if you couldn't get rid of them to waste them? A. Because that was my order, sir. That was the order of the day, sir.

Q. Who gave you that order? A. Captain Medina, sir.

Q. And stated in that posture, in substantially those words, how many times did you receive such an order from Captain Medina? A. The night before in the company briefing, platoon leaders briefing, the following morning before we lifted off and twice there in the village.

Q. I am going to ask you this: During this operation, My Lai 4, did you intend specifically to kill Vietnamese, man, woman or child? A. No, sir, I did not.

Explains His Intentions

Q. Did you ever form any intent, specifically or generally, in connection with that My Lai operation to waste any Vietnamese man, woman or child? A. No, sir, I didn't.

Q. I will ask you whether during that operation you at any time consciously conceived or sat down and formed an opinion to waste any man, woman or child Vietnamese? A. No, sir, I didn't.

Q. Now, did you intend on that occasion to waste something? A. To waste or destroy the enemy.