

GENERAL DEMOTED OVER MYLAI CASE

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Koster Reduced One Grade for Failure to Conduct an Adequate Investigation

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WASHINGTON, May 19 —

The Army disciplined two generals today for failing to conduct an adequate investigation into the slayings of South Vietnamese civilians at Mylai in 1968.

Army Secretary Stanley R. Resor announced the immediate demotion, from two-star to one-star rank, of Maj. Gen. Samuel W. Koster, former commander of the Americal Division, units of which were involved in the killings.

He also stripped General Koster and Brig. Gen. George H. Young Jr., assistant division commander at the time, of their Distinguished Service Medals and directed that letters of censure be placed in their personal records.

Representative Samuel S. Stratton, Democrat of upstate New York, criticized the Army's action as a "slap on the wrist" and urged that a formal court-martial be convened to determine whether the generals had "deliberately covered up the real facts" to

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shield the Army from damaging publicity.

However, an Army spokesman said that the service considered the case closed as far as the two officers were concerned.

General Koster, whose new rank will be that of brigadier general, was superintendent of the Military Academy at West Point at the time the charges against him were originally announced.

Army sources noted that he and General Young could elect to remain in service with pay and privileges commensurate with their rank. As a practical matter, however, neither is likely to get further promotions, one senior officer said.

Secretary Resor's administrative actions followed months



Associated Press

Brig. Gen. George H. Young
Jr. was also disciplined.

of study after the dismissal of criminal charges against the two generals and 11 other officers accused of failure to investigate properly or report the incident in the hamlet of Mylai 4 in the Sonmy village complex. The Army said that administrative study continued in the other cases.

In a statement explaining his actions today, Mr. Resor said, "An officer's performance of duty not only must be lawful, but also must conform to the established standards of his profession."

A great deal of information "suggesting that a possible tragedy of serious proportions had occurred" at Mylai was available to General Koster, he said.

General Koster did not fully "utilize the investigative staff resources available to the division either to conduct an investigation or to review the investigations which were conducted," the Secretary went on.

"As the division commander, General Koster clearly must be held responsible for ascertaining the accuracy of the information which he had about Mylai, as that information indicated that his troops might have been guilty of serious misconduct," Mr. Resor declared. "Any other conclusion would render essentially meaningless the concept of command responsibility accompanying senior positions of authority."

Koster Decries Move

In a statement issued from Fort Meade, Md., where he is now stationed, General Koster called the action today "unfair and unjust," and based on "faulty conclusions."

Secretary Resor said that General Young was told to look into reports of misconduct at Mylai shortly after the incident but appeared to have "disassociated himself from the substance of the subsequent investigation."

But because General Young appeared to be unaware of some conversations about the incident between General Koster and subordinates, Mr. Resor said he had rejected a recommendation by the Army's military chain of command that General Young be demoted to colonel.

General Young, now attached to the Army Matériel Command here, has said, "I cannot help feeling like a political scapegoat."

Informed of Decisions

Mr. Resor noted that he held extensive talks with the two generals and their lawyers before making the decisions. He called in the two men to inform them personally of his judgment before the public announcement.

First Lieut. William L. Calley Jr. has been convicted of premeditated murder of at least 22 civilians at Mylai. His conviction and sentence of life imprisonment are under review.

Capt. Ernest L. Medina, Lieutenant Calley's company commander at the time, faces court-martial on charges of being "responsible" for murder of civilians.

Capt. Eugene M. Koutouc, S. Sgt. David Mitchell and Sgt. Charles E. Hutto have been acquitted of criminal charges stemming from the incident.

The only officer ordered to trial on coverup charges is Col. Oran K. Henderson. Preliminary arguments in his case are now under way at Fort Meade.