

Officer Testifies on False Report of Mylai

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—A leading prosecution witness in the court-martial of Col. Oran K. Henderson admitted today that he had signed a false statement in the aftermath of the Mylai 4 slayings that told of heavy fighting between American troops and enemy forces in the South Vietnamese hamlet on March 16, 1968.

The witness, Lieut. Col. Fred-eric W. Watke, said under cross-examination that he had approved the description of such a battle that was contained in a recommendation for a medal for an enlisted man in his helicopter company.

Testimony came during Colonel Watke's second full day on the witness stand at the trial of Colonel Henderson on charges that the latter tried to cover up the Mylai incident and had failed to report a war crime.

Yesterday, Colonel Watke, who was a major at the time of the Mylai infantry sweep, said he had reported the allegations of civilian slayings to his superiors, partly in the belief that there was no armed, resisting enemy in the village on March 16.

Under cross-examination by defense attorneys today, Colonel Watke also conceded that his testimony before an Army board of inquiry that a good many civilian casualties had been caused by artillery was incorrect.

"Since that inquiry, I have listened to tapes and have had a chance to reconsider the events at Mylai," Colonel Watke said.

He indicated that his previous testimony had come at a

time when he had not thought about the Mylai operation for more than a year.

He acknowledged that members of the inquiry board, headed by Lieut. Gen. William R. Peers had "helped me remember" some of the things he had forgotten. The officer insisted, however, that "what I have recalled here today is the truth."

The colonel stuck to his testimony that he had reported the allegations by helicopter pilots in his unit that unarmed civilians had been killed at Mylai and that one of his pilots had warned an infantry officer that he would fire on American troops if they attempted to interfere with the rescue of a group of villagers.

Later, under questioning by the prosecution, Colonel Watke explained that on April 10, 1968, he had signed a false report of fighting at Mylai in the belief that it would obtain a posthumous medal for one of his men.

He told the court that the man, Specialist 4 Glen U. Andreotta, had been burned to death when a helicopter on which he was a gunner was shot down on April 3, 1968.

Colonel Watke said that Specialist Andreotta had been a gunner on the helicopter of Warrant Officer Hugh C. Thompson during the Mylai attack when their aircraft landed and Mr. Thompson directed the rescue of a group of civilians in the path of the advancing American infantry.

Colonel Watke said that Specialist Andreotta had exhibited courage on other missions and that he deserved the Bronze Star for valor.

"The operation of March 16 was a major one in the eyes

of the division," he testified. "If we wrote it up that way, it would either get the division to admit it wasn't a big operation or else it would get Andreotta the award. "I made a false statement in order to get him that award."