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REPORTS ON MYLAI WERE DISCOUNTED

Ex-Officer Says He Thought
They Were Propaganda

By DOUGLAS ROBINSON

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—A former intelligence officer who worked for Col. Oran K. Henderson said today that while in Vietnam he considered reports of civilian slayings at Mylai 4 to be "Vietcong propaganda."

The officer, Richard K. Blackledge, a retired lieutenant colonel, testified that several weeks after the incident at Mylai he had been told by South Vietnamese agents that the Vietcong was saying that 450 to 500 peasants had been slain in the hamlet by American infantrymen.

"There was even a report that one Vietcong unit was wearing armbands that carried the slogan, 'Determine to avenge the atrocity at Sonmy,'" he said. Sonmy is the name of the larger village complex of which Mylai is a part.

Mr. Blackledge, who now sells insurance in Kaneohe, Hawaii, was the 53d witness to testify at the court-martial of Colonel Henderson on charges of attempting to cover up the Mylai killings, of failing to report a war crime to his superiors and of lying twice in appearances before an official Army board of inquiry.

In the questioning of Mr. Blackledge before the jury, it was disclosed that he accompanied Colonel Henderson to the field two days after Mylai to talk to Capt. Ernest L. Medina, the company commander of the unit that had swept through the hamlet on March 16, 1968.

Mr. Blackledge said that Colonel Henderson had questioned Captain Medina on the how the body count of 128 Vietcong had been obtained, adding, "He wanted to reassure himself the body count was as valid as could be."

"To me, he wasn't suggesting to Captain Medina that it was an invalid body count," the witness said. Mr. Blackledge said he could not recall any questions by the colonel pertaining to the civilian dead.