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## GEN. KOSTER SAYS HE WAS NOT TOLD

Ex-Division Chief Testifies  
at Henderson Mylai Trial

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— Brig. Gen. Samuel W. Koster, who was demoted and censured by the Army in connection with the events at Mylai 4, testified today that his subordinates had never told him a mass slaying of civilians occurred during the attack on the South Vietnamese hamlet. General Koster said the reports he received, including at least two from Col. Oran K. Henderson, contended that only 20 civilians had been "inadvertently killed" as a result of artillery shelling, fire from helicopter gunships and "some small-arms fire."

"I accepted these reports," General Koster told the jury of seven officers hearing the case against Colonel Henderson.

"There was no indication of wrongdoing brought to my attention at any time. I thought he [Colonel Henderson] had brought all the facts to me."

### Commanded Division

General Koster commanded the Americal Division at the time of the slayings at Mylai on March 16, 1968. Colonel Henderson commanded the division's 11th Light Infantry Brigade. The attack on Mylai was conducted by elements of the brigade.

Colonel Henderson is accused of participating in an attempt to cover up the slayings and of later lying when he appeared before an Army panel looking into the possibility of a whitewash.

Similar charges of failing to adequately investigate the events at Mylai were once lodged against General Koster and 11 other officers, but they were dropped by the Army following an investigation.

Some months later, however, the Army, in an administrative action, reduced General Koster from two-star to one-star rank, stripped him of a Distinguished Service Medal won in Vietnam and placed a letter of censure in his personal file.

### Denies Hearing Allegations

In his appearance today, General Koster did not often look at the defendant and the two former comrades-in-arms did not speak to each other in the courtroom during the recesses.

Under questioning, the general denied he had been told of a helicopter pilot's allegations that "in excess of 100 civilians" had been slain. He also denied he had been told that the flyer's gunners had threatened to open fire on ground troops if they attempted to interfere with the evacuation of a group of old men, women and children.

He also said he had not been informed that the bodies of a large group of civilians had been seen lying in a ditch near the village.

Two other witnesses — both high-ranking officers with the helicopter unit — had previously testified they had reported these allegations to Brig. Gen. George H. Young Jr., the assistant division commander. General Young, they said, told them he would pass on their allegations to General Koster.

### Tells of 'Impression'

After receiving first an oral report and then a written one from Colonel Henderson, General Koster said, he was "under the impression" that the civilian deaths had occurred during "a contested operation."

Dozens of witnesses at this and at other Mylai court-martials have said that they did not receive any enemy fire in the assault on the village.

General Koster said that although he was satisfied by Colonel Henderson's reports, he had ordered a more formal investigation after reading Vietcong propaganda leaflets saying that Americans had shot down 450 to 500 villagers.

He said that he had read that report, prepared by the late Lieut. Col. Frank A. Barker, head of an infantry task force under Colonel Henderson's command. This was the task force directly involved in the attack. The report, General Koster said, contained some 10 to 20 signed statements and again contended that only 20 civilians had been killed.

The report, the so-called Barker Report, disappeared from the files of the American Division. An Army criminal investigator testified here that of the 1,500 persons interviewed in the Mylai case, no one was found who could recall ever signing a statement of the report.

General Koster also said that Colonel Henderson had told him that the pilot who had made the allegation of indiscriminate shooting at Mylai was an "excitable young man without much combat experience" who "imagined" that the bodies he had seen were those of civilians