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# Army Clears General in Viet Murders

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Brigadier General John W. Donaldson was exonerated by the Army yesterday of all charges accusing him of killing six unarmed Vietnamese civilians while a brigade commander in Vietnam.

Dismissal of the charges, said Donaldson, who at 47 is one of the Army's youngest general officers, proves "they are unfounded and reconfirms my full faith" in the Army and its judicial system.

The General gave a brief statement to newsmen gathered outside his home in nearby Alexandria, Va., after Lieutenant General Claire E. Hutchin announced at Fort Meade, Md., that "the evidence established that no offenses were committed by General Donaldson."

Donaldson, in uniform with seven rows of ribbons signifying bravery and service in three wars, said he is delighted by the outcome of the investigation and looking forward to continuing his career. He declined to answer any questions.

The 1944 West Point graduate, was charged June 2 with murder and assault of Vietnamese civilians in seven separate incidents. Helicopter pilots alleged the General fired at the Vietnamese from his helicopter between November, 1968, and January, 1969, while Donaldson, then a colonel, commanded



AP Wirephoto

## GEN. DONALDSON Charges dismissed

the American Division's 11th Infantry Brigade.

The Army said Hutchin, commander of the First U. S. Army at Fort Meade, dismissed the charges on the advice of his legal staff and after considering the report of the Article 32 investigation — the military equivalent of a grand jury.

The investigation covered a four-month period during which 23 witnesses testified and 135 exhibits and documents were considered, the Army said.

Donaldson was the highest

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# U.S. General Exonerated

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ranking officer to be accused of murdering civilians in Vietnam and the first U. S. general to be charged with a war crime since Brigadier General Jacob H. Smith was court-martialed in 1901 for the murder of civilians during the Philippine insurrection.

Lieutenant Colonel Robert Poydasheff, Donaldson's lawyer, said the Army's investigation proved Donaldson fired only at North Vietnamese or Viet Cong soldiers who in at least two of the incidents fired first at Donaldson or his troops.

"Under no circumstances did General Donaldson go around taking pot shots at innocent civilians" as alleged

in the charges, Poydasheff said.

During his two years in Vietnam, Donaldson received 28 medals, including the Silver Star, Bronze Star medal and Distinguished Flying Cross.

Donaldson took over command of the 11th Brigade in 1968, succeeding Colonel Oran K. Henderson, whose trial on charges of covering up the March, 1968, My Lai massacre is expected to end next week at Ft. Meade.

The Army said the investigation of Lieutenant Colonel William J. McCloskey of Wilkes Barre, Pa., charged with murdering two Vietnamese civilians, is continuing. McCloskey was Donaldson's operations officer.