

White House and My Lai

--Suppressed Report

Oklahoma City

Aides of former President Nixon suppressed the Army's secret report on the My Lai massacre for several years despite public statements to the contrary, it has been learned.

The decision to prohibit public release of the controversial 1971 report was made by White House officials over private recommendations by the Army that it be released, according to military sources in Washington.

Several sources, including the author of the report, retired Lieutenant General William R. Peers, now say an expected new plea to President Ford may result in release of the four-volume Peers report.

The document is an outgrowth of an Army investigation, headed by Peers, into the initial coverup of the 1968 massacre committed by U.S. troops in Vietnam. That investigation led to charges against 14 officers, none of whom were convicted.

The only man convicted was Lieutenant William Calley, the My Lai platoon leader, who was charged on the basis of another investigation.

For years, the Army has maintained that the decision

on whether to release the report has rested solely with three successive secretaries of the army.

High Army officials now admit privately that the White House was secretly calling the shots all along. They say those responsible were former chief domestic adviser John D. Ehrlichman, former presidential counselor John W. Dean III and his successor, J. Fred Buzhardt, a former Defense Department general counselor.

None of these former aides would respond to inquiries.

Pentagon sources suggest that the White House aides did not want the report made public because they feared it would revive the

bitter My Lai controversy.

The Army also has not wanted portions of the report released — those dealing with unproved charges against some officers — but top officials are known to favor release of the remainder, including the report's basic findings.

Official spokesmen at the White House, the Defense Department and the Department of the Army have repeatedly denied any White House involvement in suppressing the Peers report.

But one Army official, N. J. (Bill) Donohoe, a consultant to the chief of information, acknowledged that such reports are "exactly right . . . quite accurate."

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