

# MY LAI

## Thirty Years After

### 1968



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# MY LAI THIRTY YEARS AFTER

BY RACHEL LOUISE SNYDER

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<http://www.americanheritage.com/content/my-lai-thirty-years-after>



Unidentified Vietnamese women and children from investigations into the My Lai Incident.

RON HERBERLE

**T**HE SUN SCORCHES DOWN ON THE CAR, BAKING THE BLACK VINYL SEATS. THEY FEEL PLIANT AS NEW TAR. TANK TOP AND SHORTS—THE UNIFORM OF CHOICE—OFFERS NO RESPITE, AND MY BANDANNA IS SOAKED IN MINUTES. SWEAT STINGS MY EYES. THE WIND THROUGH THE CAR'S OPEN WINDOWS FEELS LIKE A STEADY BREEZE FROM AN OVEN: CONSTANT, UNBEARABLE. THIS IS VIETNAM IN MID-JULY.

I am on my way to visit the site of the 1968 My Lai Massacre during the Vietnam-American War. On that March day soldiers from Charlie Company fired for four hours on the village of My Lai 4, near Pinkville in Quang Ngai Province. I am an American traveling with an Australian couple three hours by car from Hoi An south to My Lai. I met them days before on a boat trip in Nha Trang, and, as often happens with travelers, our paths crossed again, in Hoi An. After telling them of my plans for the following day, they asked if they could split the cost and accompany me on my journey. We booked a car for seven the next morning, hoping to drive before the worst of the midday heat began. We were promised an English-speaking driver.

"Hello," he said when we climbed in the car. We'd arranged to be picked up outside Hoi An, in an alley where authorities wouldn't see foreigners climbing into a car that wasn't government authorized. If caught, the driver would be heavily fined.

*I greeted him, then asked how far it was to My Lai.*

*"Yes, My Lai," he said.*

*"How far?"*

*"Hello," he said.*

*I hadn't specified how much English was required.*



*The flag of South Vietnam, also known as "Heritage and Freedom flag", It was the flag of the former State of Vietnam (the French-controlled areas in both Northern and Southern Vietnam) from 1949 to 1955 and later of the Republic of Vietnam (South Vietnam) from 1955 until April 30, 1975 when the south unconditionally surrendered to the north, to which it was officially joined in a unified Vietnam a year later., above*



*The flag of North Vietnam, also known as "Red flag with Yellow star", was adopted as the National flag of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam (North Vietnam) on November 30, 1955. It became the national flag of Vietnam following reunification with South Vietnam on July 2, 1976., left*

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## THIRTY YEARS AFTER

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For three weeks I had been in Vietnam, partly through wanderlust but mostly because I had taught Vietnam War literature for nearly three years. I'd researched the topic in graduate school. At first the romance had appealed to me, innocent, doomed young men following the orders of a wrongheaded government, but gradually the romance slipped away, and my interest became academic. And personal. I wanted to be an expert on Vietnam War literature, but I also wanted to experience a Vietnam outside books, a Vietnam before capitalism changed the country's face entirely.

Vietnam has two seasons in July. The far south, beginning at Ho Chi Minh City (formerly Saigon) through the Mekong Delta, and the far north, beginning at Hanoi up to the Chinese border, are in the midst of the rainy season, with heavy monsoons pelting down on buildings, people, and trees every afternoon and often all day. Even rain gear can't keep you dry. Sometimes it rains so hard you can't open your eyes, and water floods the streets, uphill and down. The entire middle section of Vietnam, however, is desert dry and hot, so hot you sweat even in what little air conditioning you can find. You sweat with wind sailing through a moving car's windows; you sweat all night long, tossing and turning in as few clothes as possible and never any covers; you sweat and you wonder how soldiers ever endured it with their gear and their long pants and their boots. How could they have stood the heat, you wonder, without letting yourself imagine how they could have stood the other things.

The mood in the car is somber; no one talks most of the way. Together the Australians and I watch a motorbike buried under more than a hundred dead ducks tied together and slung behind, on top of, and in front of the driver as he pulls beside, then passes our car. The ducks' eyes and beaks are open, flapping with the bumps in the road as if startled to be caught so suddenly by death. One of the Australians asks me how I feel.

"Hot," I tell her. "Sweaty. My water bottle is boiling."

This is not the answer she is looking for, I know. What does she want to hear? I feel guilty that American soldiers killed innocent Vietnamese? A yearning to unravel the world and manipulate the past so that it wouldn't have happened?

*I feel these things.*

*I also feel nothing*

In March of 1968, when Charlie Company opened fire on the civilians of My Lai, I was barely even a fetus. When Lt. William Galley was tried and found guilty, I was learning to wave good-bye. When he was released from house arrest, I was learning to count to three. I never personally knew anyone who died in the war. The Vietnam veterans I have happened to meet are middle-aged men now, some bitter, some angry, some indifferent, and all with other lives. Why does any of this matter to me?

The car turns left off Highway 1, the Ho Chi Minh Trail, and dust flies into our open windows. The North Vietnamese Army and Vietcong used the trail to supply their forces with ammunition, guns, food, and reinforcements. The Americans bombed it repeatedly. Today the road is narrow and bumpy despite the paving, and though there are streetlights in some places, I never saw one lit. Not long ago we passed Chu Lai, an old American base camp, one of the biggest during the war. Now it is nothing but a gate. Students in uniforms pass through this gate daily on their way to school. Beyond the gate they walk through fields devoid of life save for a few dry bushes scattered over the white, cracked earth. We slowed so I could get a photo of the gate. As we passed, a student cursed me.

### WHEN CHARLIE COMPANY OPENED FIRE AT MY LAI,

I was barely even a fetus.  
I never knew anybody  
who died in the war.

*"How do Americans feel about England now?"  
one of the Australians asks.*

*England? I am silent for a moment, wondering  
if I've missed some important news event.*

*"You know," she says, "the war?"*

*"The Revolutionary War?"*

*"Yes."*

I am amazed to be asked this question; I nearly burst out laughing. Does any American harbor resentment about the miseries of the Revolution even in the furthest recesses of his consciousness? England? I think fish and chips, dark beer, castles, and scandalous royalty. It occurs to me she is looking for a connection to My Lai.

I explain to her that the circumstances of the two wars are not comparable. I ask about the connection she's attempting to make, and she mumbles vaguely about imperialism and war. She has seen too much propaganda, I think. In Vietnam, Americans are referred to as the imperialist aggressors.

We are close to My Lai, and I feel my stomach muscles start to tighten. What will I find there? Will I be cursed? Hated? Or am I



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## THIRTY YEARS AFTER

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shielded by time, gender, age? The Australians in back have begun to lather themselves with suntan lotion; here the sun can blister through No. 30 sun block in minutes. I am hoping the couple does not hate me by the end of the day.

The car pulls into a long driveway and parks under the shade of a tree. To enter the My Lai monument site, we are each charged twenty thousand dong, just under two dollars. To say that the Vietnamese have learned to market the American war may sound cynical and defensive, but you can buy Zippo lighters and flak jackets at Ho Chi Minh City's war-surplus market; you can buy compasses and rusting dog tags in every town along the coast from Ho Chi Minh City to Hanoi.

"I wait," our driver says, urging us forward. A long sidewalk leads into an enormous concrete sculpture, though it is so far away I can't quite make it out. I look away, unprepared to discover exactly what it is yet. My palms are clammy. I grin stupidly at the Australians. They are waiting for me to proceed. I am the expert here.

To my left is the grave of Mrs. Thong, her children, and two relatives. I read and reread the names on the stone marker, calculate the ages of the victims had they lived, compare them to my own twenty-nine years. We walk forward. I am all jumbled up, a curious mixture of emotion and numbness. Several stone statues are lined up along the sidewalk. These sculptures, all but the huge one in the distance, were done by a group of artists in Hanoi.

One stone woman falls forward, her hand clutching her stomach, a replica of a famous picture taken by Ronald Herberle, the American photographer who was there that day. Another woman kneels, her hair blowing in the wind as she falls sideways, one arm outstretched. Opposite her, down a thin sidewalk

bordered by yellow wildflowers, is the museum. A woman leans in the doorway, arms crossed, waiting for us. She wears long brown pants and a pink long-sleeved blouse, both of light, silky material. I am amazed at how the Vietnamese withstand the heat. Women ride bicycles covered head to toe, saving their skin from the sun, complete in elbow-high gloves and hats. In the mountains of Da Lat, where it may get down to seventy-eight degrees Fahrenheit at night, people wear winter coats, sweaters, scarves, and knit caps.

The woman greets us in flawless English. Like most Vietnamese, she speaks quietly, gently. She welcomes us to My Lai and tells us she is a guide and will show us around. No other visitors are here, and the silence is a sound all its own. The museum is maybe ten by twenty feet. She asks where we are from.

*"Australia," my companions say together, perhaps a little too proudly.*

*"America," I say, shifting my weight from foot to foot, "the States."*

She smiles at us, looking at me a second longer than the Australians, though this may be my imagination. First she explains that we need to look at a map of the area to understand how the Americans planned the attack.

*"Planned?" I ask her.*

*She nods. "Yes, the massacre was planned."*

I hear the Australians gasp slightly. The woman continues to smile.

Planned? How could it have been planned? A recon patrol, perhaps, was planned, maybe even a search and destroy mission: Burn the hamlets, interrogate the villagers, and all that. But a massacre? Strategies are planned.

Brutalities just happen. My heart is thumping. She shows us how My Lai is actually a series of villages: My Lai 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6. She points to the hill near My Lai 4 where the Americans were based. She explains how the Americans knew the people of My Lai 4, how the soldiers would come to play with the children. No one planned this, I think. Can't moral men do immoral things? Don't right men do wrong things? People are dead, I remind myself. What if it was my family? My little brothers, my aunts, my father? Wouldn't I be entitled to a little more anger, a little more of whatever it takes to live with tragedy?

*"So you can see," she says softly, "how this wasn't an accident."*

### THE GUIDE SMILES AND SAYS

the map will show us  
how the Americans planned  
the massacre.

"Planned?" I ask.

*Sculpture  
in the  
garden of  
the My Lai  
massacre  
memorial  
site, near  
Quang  
Ngai,  
Vietnam.*



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– Continued –

No, I want to tell her, I don't see. I don't see what you see at all. I see men who obeyed the leaders of their country, then lost themselves. The Australians are nodding, horrified. I want to tell them she is wrong, but I hesitate, and the three of them move on to other displays. I stumble, follow, stand behind them.

The woman walks us around the room. On the walls there are pictures of people: Lieutenant Calley, who was the first platoon leader; Capt. Ernest Medina, the company commander; Oran Henderson, the brigade commander. Of them all, soldiers and commanders, Calley was the sole man tried and found guilty. He served three years under house arrest. There are others, Ron Ridenhour, the soldier whose letters spurred the initial investigation in Washington, Ron Herberle, whose photos told the story of My Lai 4, and two South Vietnamese interpreters, who testified to the massacre in 1978.

There are pictures of helicopters landing, soldiers walking with guns drawn or M-16s blasting away, hamlets burning. The black-and-white photos have been blown up so that the details are blurry, as though the world that day was trapped in clouds.

Glass cases hold items from the villagers: one woman's conical hat and betel-nut spittoon, a young girl's shoe, a bullet-riddled cooking pot, marbles, and a little boy's school notebooks. There are enlarged news clips from papers all over the world. The woman points to the photo of a wounded American soldier after he shot himself in the foot because he refused to participate.

*"He killed himself a few years ago," the woman tells us. She adds, "He was unable to live with the memories of the massacre."*

Does she know how many men and women are unable to live with the memories? Or how many are forced to? Yes, men from my country did a horrible thing. But men from my country also brought this horrible thing to light. Men from my country fed Vietnamese citizens, played with Vietnamese children, fought for something they had been led to believe was worthwhile.

The woman leads us outside, where the sun again is blazing. She points out the statues, then leads us to the enormous one at the end of the sidewalk. To the left is a palm tree, its trunk pocked with bullet holes. The statue depicts a small band of people, some dead, some dying. One woman holds the limp form of a baby, her other arm raised high in proud defiance. One slowly dies in the arms of another. The artist, our guide explains, is from Hanoi. He married one of the six survivors.

Our guide shows us the graves of entire families killed—504 dead in all, she tells us. Next to each grave are the remnants of what was once the family's dwelling. Though they were all burned down, the foundations remain, a foot or so high and covered with

grass, weeds, flowers. There are two replicas of bomb shelters, which we crawl inside (the darkness is remarkably cool), and a monument next to an irrigation ditch where more than one hundred bodies were found. I come to a wall of tiny colored tiles, a mosaic. Flames shoot up and around people running, falling, screaming. It is mostly red. There is a heated stillness to everything here. Not a sound, as if the horror of that day were the final voice, the village now enshrined in silence.

The woman leads us to a tiny room next to the museum where we are offered hot tea and given a large red book to record our thoughts in. She leaves for a few minutes, then returns, places a box on the table for donations. I do not remind her that we already paid entrance fees. The Australians and I leave the box untouched. I am glad to see that on this small coercion they feel as I do.

The guest book is passed to me, and I suddenly feel the pressure to write something profound and remorseful. I thumb through the hundreds of entries. A few from U.S. soldiers catch my eye; they all write their ranks and the years of their tours of duty. Many apologize. There are foreigners: Germans, Australians, Dutch, Japanese. Some write about war in general, how wrong and evil it is. Others are more personal. "The Americans should pay retribution," declares one German. "How can the Americans commit such atrocities?" a Japanese woman asks. What country in the world, I wonder, can claim freedom from terrible mistakes? Who are you in

Germany to cast judgment? You in Japan, China, Africa? Wars, whether just or unjust, are still simply, horribly wars.

I write something general in the book, about wanting better for the future, about learning to have the character to admit our blunders. What I really want to write, though, is how strangely proud I am, at that moment, for that one hour and on that one day in the relentless heat of a murdered village, to be an American confronting an ugly passage in her nation's past, to see how no one—no history, no country—is free from its dark moments, and that it is in this human frailty that we can find unity, that we can work toward a future where My Lais will never happen again. ♦



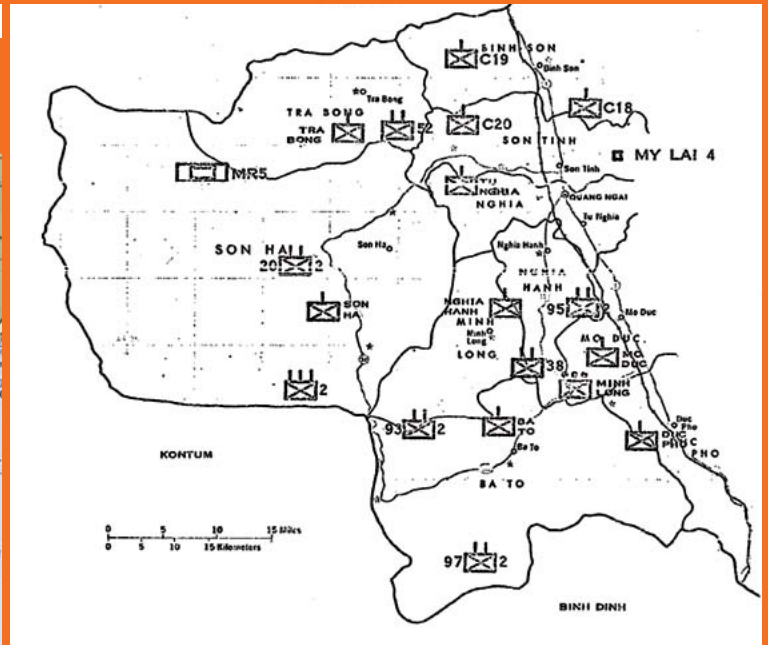
**OF THEM ALL, SOLDIERS AND COMMANDERS,** Second Lieutenant Calley was the sole man tried and found guilty.



# MY LAI MAPS OF VIETNAM

[http://www.lib.utexas.edu/maps/middle\\_east\\_and\\_asia/vietnam\\_pol01.jpg](http://www.lib.utexas.edu/maps/middle_east_and_asia/vietnam_pol01.jpg)  
[http://www.loc.gov/rr/frd/Military\\_Law/pdf/RDAR-Vol-IIIBook5.pdf](http://www.loc.gov/rr/frd/Military_Law/pdf/RDAR-Vol-IIIBook5.pdf)

Current map of Vietnam, below.



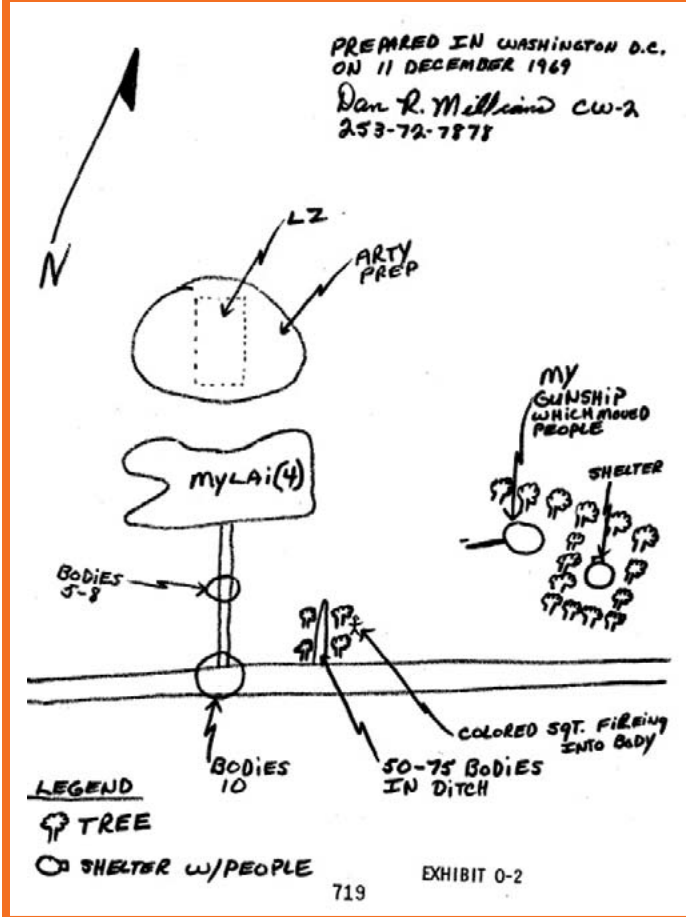
Military map of Quang Ngai (South Vietnam) from the Report of the Department of the Army Review of the Preliminary Investigations into the My Lai Incident, above. Arrow points to Quang Ngai, left. March 31, 1968 | Page 549 | Volume III | Book 5 | 14 Mar. 1970

The My Lai Massacre took place in the Son My village of the Quang Ngai Province in South Vietnam.

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## MAPS OF VIETNAM

- Continued -



Sketch of My Lai incident Exhibit 0-2. Report of the Department of the Army Review of the Preliminary Investigations into the My Lai Incident. Volume III Book 5 14 Mar.1970, left.  
[http://www.loc.gov/rr/frd/Military\\_Law/pdf/RDAR-Vol-IIIBook5.pdf](http://www.loc.gov/rr/frd/Military_Law/pdf/RDAR-Vol-IIIBook5.pdf)

Oblique Photo of "Ditch" Exhibit p116. Report of the Department of the Army Review of the Preliminary Investigations into the My Lai Incident. Volume III Book 6-Photographs 14 Mar.1970.  
[http://www.loc.gov/rr/frd/Military\\_Law/pdf/RDAR-Vol-IIIBook6.pdf](http://www.loc.gov/rr/frd/Military_Law/pdf/RDAR-Vol-IIIBook6.pdf)



*In this ditch, approximately 100 civilian bodies, including women and children, were discovered murdered as a result of the My Lai Massacre., above.*



Oblique Photo of My Lai (4) From West to East Exhibit p-114, Report of the Department of the Army Review of the Preliminary Investigations into the My Lai Incident. Volume III Book 6-Photographs 14 Mar.1970.  
[http://www.loc.gov/rr/frd/Military\\_Law/pdf/RDAR-Vol-IIIBook6.pdf](http://www.loc.gov/rr/frd/Military_Law/pdf/RDAR-Vol-IIIBook6.pdf)



# MY LAI

## HOW TO LET GO—GRACEFULLY

VAUGHN SHOEMAKER | CHICAGO AMERICAN | 1965

<http://www.loc.gov/exhibits/cartoonamerica/cartoon-political.html>



*The political cartoon above depicts President Lyndon B. Johnson clinging to a tiger (Vietnam) as it leaps through a dark night sky, signifying that it was going to be difficult for America to extricate itself from the conflict. Later, Nixon took over as President of the United States and dealt with the increasing anti-war protests.*



# MY LAI

## FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

REPORT TO THE DEPARTMENT OF THE ARMY REVIEW OF  
THE PRELIMINARY INVESTIGATIONS INTO THE MY LAI INCIDENT

[http://www.loc.gov/rr/frd/Military\\_Law/pdf/RDAR-Vol-IIIBook6pdf](http://www.loc.gov/rr/frd/Military_Law/pdf/RDAR-Vol-IIIBook6pdf)

**T**he My Lai Massacre occurred in the Son My Village of the Quang Ngai Province of South Vietnam.

These findings came after an investigation by General William Peers more than a year after the atrocities occurred. The events at My Lai were concealed until a former serviceman, Ronald L. Ridenhour, wrote a letter to the Secretary of Defense giving an account of the incident based on stories from fellow American soldiers who were involved.

After the investigation, 17 officers were charged, but only Lieutenant William Calley was convicted of premeditated murder.

REPORT OF THE DEPARTMENT OF THE ARMY REVIEW  
OF THE  
PRELIMINARY INVESTIGATIONS INTO THE MY LAI INCIDENT (U)

VOLUME III

EXHIBITS

BOOK 6 - PHOTOGRAPHS

PHOTOGRAPHS ARE IN NUMERICAL SEQUENCE AS  
ENTERED INTO THE INQUIRY RECORD. THE OVER-  
ALL CLASSIFICATION IS CONFIDENTIAL BECAUSE  
OF THE SENSITIVITY OF THE COMPILED DATA.

14 MARCH 1970



Photo taken by United States Army photographer Ronald L. Haeberle on March 16, 1968 in the aftermath of the My Lai massacre showing mostly women and children dead on a road.

# MY LAI

## FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

– Continued –

### Chapter 12 FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

I. ON THE BASIS OF THE FOREGOING, THE FINDINGS OF THE INQUIRY ARE AS FOLLOWS:

A. Concerning Events Surrounding The Son My Operation of 16 - 19 March 1968

(1) During the period 16-19 March 1968, US Army troops of TF Barker, 11th Brigade, Americal Division, massacred a large number of noncombatants in two hamlets of Son My Village, Quang Ngai Province, Republic of Vietnam. The precise number of Vietnamese killed cannot be determined but was at least 175 and may exceed 400.

(2) The massacre occurred in conjunction with a combat operation which was intended to neutralize Son My Village as a logistical support base and staging area, and to destroy elements of an enemy battalion thought to be located in the Son My area.

(3) The massacre resulted primarily from the nature of the orders issued to persons in the chain of command within TF Barker.

(4) The task force commander's order and the associated intelligence estimate issued prior to the operation were embellished as they were disseminated through each lower level of command, and ultimately presented to the individual soldier a false and misleading picture of the Son My area as an armed enemy camp, largely devoid of civilian inhabitants.

(5) Prior to the incident, there had developed within certain elements of the 11th Brigade a permissive attitude toward the treatment and safeguarding of noncombatants which (contributed to the mistreatment of such persons during the Son Ply Operation.

(6) The permissive attitude in the treatment of Vietnamese was, on 16-19 March 1968, exemplified by an almost total disregard for the lives and property of the civilian population of Son My Village on the part of commanders and key staff officers of TF Barker.

(7) On 16 March, soldiers at the squad and platoon level, within some elements of TF Barker, murdered noncombatants while under the supervision and control of their immediate superiors.



# MY LAI

## FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

– Continued –

(8) A part of the crimes visited on the inhabitants of Son My Village included individual and group acts of murder, rape, sodomy, maiming, and assault on noncombatants and the mistreatment and killing of detainees. They further included the killing of livestock, destruction of crops, closing of wells, and the burning of dwellings within several subhamlets.

(9) Some attempts were made to stop the criminal acts in Son My Village on 16 March; but with few exceptions, such efforts were too feeble or too late.

(10) Intensive interrogation has developed no evidence that any member of the units engaged in the Son My operation was under the influence of marijuana or other narcotics.

B. Concerning The Adequacy Of Reports, Investigations And Reviews

(11) The commanders of TF Barker and the 11th Brigade had substantial knowledge as to the extent of the killing of noncombatants, but only a portion of their information was ever reported to the Commanding General of the Americal Division.

(12) Based on his observations, WO1 Thompson made a specific complaint through his command channels that serious war crimes had been committed but through a series of inadequate responses at each level of command, action on his complaint was delayed and the severity of his charges considerably diluted by the time it reached the Division Commander.

(13) Sufficient information concerning the highly irregular nature of the operations of TF Barker on 16 March 1968 reached the Commanding General of the Americal Division to require that a thorough investigation be conducted.

(14) An investigation by the Commander of the 11th Brigade, conducted at the direction of the Commanding General of the Americal Division, was little more than a pretense and was subsequently misrepresented as a thorough investigation to the CG, Americal Division in order to conceal from him the true enormity of the atrocities.

# MY LAI

## FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

– Continued –

(15) Patently inadequate reports of investigation submitted by the commander of the 11th Brigade were accepted at face value and without an effective review by the CG, Americal Division.

(16) Reports of alleged war crimes, noncombatant casualties, and serious incidents concerning the Son My operation of 16 March were received at the headquarters of the Americal Division but were not reported to higher headquarters despite the existence of directives requiring such action.

(17) Reports of alleged war crimes relating to the Son My operation of 16 March reached Vietnamese government officials, but those officials did not take effective action to ascertain the true facts.

(18) Efforts of the ARVN/GVN officials discreetly to inform the US commanders of the magnitude of the war crimes committed on 16 March 1968 met with no affirmative response.

### C. Concerning Attempts To Suppress Information

(19) At every command level within the Americal Division, actions were taken, both wittingly and unwittingly, which effectively suppressed information concerning the war crimes committed at Son My Village.

(20) At the company level there was a failure to report the war crimes which had been committed. This, combined with instructions to members of one unit not to discuss the events of 16 March, contributed significantly to the suppression of information.

(21) The task force commander and at least one, and probably more, staff officers of TF Barker may have conspired to suppress information and to mislead higher headquarters concerning the events of 16 - 19 March 1968.

(22) At the 11th Brigade level, the commander and at least one principal staff officer may have conspired to suppress information to deceive the division commander concerning the true facts of the Son My operation of 16-19 March.

(23) A reporter and a photographer from the 11th Brigade observed many war crimes committed by C/1-20 Inf on 16 March. Both



# MY LAI

## FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

– Continued –

failed to report what they had seen; the reporter submitted a misleading account of the operation; and the photographer withheld and suppressed (and wrongfully misappropriated upon his discharge from the service) photographic evidence of such war crimes.

(24) Efforts within the 11th Brigade to suppress information concerning the Son My operation were aided in varying degrees by members of US Advisory teams working with ARVN and GVN officials.

(25) Within the Americal Division headquarters, actions taken to suppress information concerning what was purportedly believed to be the inadvertent killing of 20 to 28 noncombatants effectively served conceal the true nature and scope of the events which had taken place in Son My Village on 16-19 March 68.

(26) Failure of the Americal Division headquarters to act on reports and information received from GVN/ARVN officials in mid April served effectively to suppress the true nature and scope of the events which had taken place in Son My Village on 16-19 March 1968.

(27) Despite an exhaustive search of the files of the 11th Brigade, Americal Division, GVN/ARVN advisory team files, and records holding centers, with few exceptions, none of the documents relating to the so-called investigation of the events of 16-19 March were located.

#### D. With Respect To Individuals

(1) During the period March-June 1968 a number of persons assigned to the Americal Division and to US Advisory elements located in Quang Ngai Province had information as to the killing of noncombatants and other serious offenses committed by members of TF Barker during the Son My operation in March 1968 and did one or more of the following:

a. Failed to make such official report thereof as their duty required them to make;

b. Suppressed information concerning the occurrence of such offenses acting singly or in concert with others;

c. Failed to order a thorough investigation and to insure that such was made, or failed to conduct an adequate investigation, or

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## FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

– Continued –

failed to submit an adequate report of investigation, or failed to make an adequate review of a report of investigation, as applicable;

or committed other derelictions related to the events of the Son My operation, some constituting criminal offenses.

(2) attached to this chapter at Inclosure 1 is a list of such persons and the omissions and commissions of which they are suspected and upon which the above findings are based.

a. The officers named in Inclosure 1, their position in 1968, and their current grade and status, are listed below:

<u>NAME</u>	<u>GRADE</u>	<u>POSITION</u>	<u>CURRENT STATUS</u>
Koster, Samuel W.	MG	CG, Americal Div	Active Duty
Young, George H.	BG	ADC (OPS), Americal Div	Active Duty
Henderson, Oran K.	COL	CO, 11th Inf Bde	Active Duty
Hutter, Dean E.	COL	Senior Advisor 2nd ARVN Div	Active Duty
Luper, Robert B.	COL	CO, 6-11th Arty	Active Duty
Parson, Nels A.	COL	Chief of Staff	Active Duty Americal Div
Barker, Frank A.	LTC	CO TF Barker	Deceased
Gavin, David C.	LTC (then MAJ)	Senior District Advisor Son Tinh District	Active Duty
Guinn, William D.	LTC	Deputy Senior Advisor, Quang Ngai Province	Active Duty
Holladay, John L.	LTC	CO, 123d Avn Bn	Active Duty
Lewis, Francis R.	LTC(Ch)	Div Chaplain Americal Div	Active Duty

–CONTINUED–



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## FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

– Continued –

<u>NAME</u>	<u>GRADE</u>	<u>POSITION</u>	<u>CURRENT STATUS</u>
Calhoun, Charles C.	MAJ	XO/S3, TF Barker	Active Duty
McKnight, Robert W.	MAJ	S3, 11th Inf Bde	Active Duty
Watke, Frederic W.	MAJ	CO, Co B, 123d Avn Bn	Active Duty
Boatman, Kenneth W.	CPT (then 1LT)	Forward Observer Command Group B/4-3	Active Duty
Creswell, Carl E.	CPT (Ch)	Div Arty Americas Div Chaplain	Civilian
Johnson, Dennis H.	CPT (then 1LT)	Military Intelligence officer in support of TF Barker	Active Duty
Koutoc, Eugene M.	CPT	S2, TF Barker	Active Duty
Medina, Ernest L.	CPT	CO, C/1-20 Inf	Active Duty
Michles, Earl A.	CPT	CO, B/4-3 Inf	Deceased
Vazquez, Dennis R	CPT	Artillery Liason officer in support of TF Barker	Civilian
Willingham, Thomas K.	CPT (then 1LT)	Plt Ldr, 1st Plt, B/4-3 Inf	Active Duty
Calley, William L., Jr.	1LT (then 2LT)	Plt Ldr, 1st Plt, C/1-20 Inf	Active Duty
Alaux, Roger L., Jr.	2LT	Arty Forward Observer attached to C/1-20 Inf	Civilian
Brooks, Steven K.	2LT	Plt Ldr, 2d Plt, C/1-20	Deceased
LaCross, Jeffrey U.	2LT	Plt Ldr, 2d Plt, C/1-20	Civilian

-CONTINUED-

# MY LAI

## FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

– Continued –

<u>NAME</u>	<u>GRADE</u>	<u>POSITION</u>	<u>CURRENT STATUS</u>
Lewis, Michael L.	2LT	Plt Ldr, 2d Plt, B/4-3 Inf	Deceased
Mundy, John E.	2LT	Executive Officer B/4-3	Civilian

b. The following enlisted members of the Army operating in support of TF Barker, on 16 March 1968 and now civilians, by reason of their military training and assignment, and having a particular duty to report any knowledge of suspected or apparent war crimes which came to their attention, failed to perform this duty:

<u>NAME</u>	<u>GRADE</u>	<u>POSITION</u>
Haeberle, Ronald L.	SGT	Photographer, Info Office 11th Inf Bde (31st PID)
Roberts, Jay A.	SP5	Senior Correspondent, Info Office, 11th Inf Bde (31st PID)

(3) Evidence adduced in this Inquiry also indicates that, numerous serious offenses in violation of the Uniform Code of Military Justice and the law of war may have been committed by military personnel who participated in the TF Barker operation in Son My during the period 16 - 19 March 1968. Evidence of these suspected offenses has been furnished to representatives of the Provost Marshal General of the Army for further investigation.

(4) Some of the officers and enlisted men concerned fulfilled their minimum obligation to report their knowledge of crimes committed during the Son My operation to their commanding officers. However, had they exhibited deeper concern for their units, the United States Army and the Nation by taking action beyond that which was technically required, it is probable that the details of the Son My incident would have come to light promptly. Those who failed to do so have contributed to a serious obstruction of justice.

E. Concerning The Adequacy of Certain Policies, Directives, And Training

(1) In 1968, the then existing policies and directives at every level of command expressed a clear intent regarding the proper treatment and safeguarding of noncombatants, the humane handling of



# MY LAI

## FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

– Continued –

prisoners of war, and minimizing the destruction of private property.

(2) Directives prescribing the procedures for the reporting of war crimes were not clear as to the action which should be taken by subordinates when their unit commander participated in or sanctioned a war crime. Directives prescribed only that war crimes would be reported to the commanding officer.

(3) Many soldiers in the 11th Brigade were not adequately trained as to:

a. Their responsibilities regarding obedience to orders received from their superiors which they considered palpably illegal.

b. Their responsibilities concerning the procedures for the reporting of war crimes.

c. The provisions of the Geneva Conventions, the handling and treatment of prisoners of war, and the treatment and safeguarding of noncombatants.

#### F. Peripheral Issues

Findings regarding peripheral issues are discussed in Annex B.

#### II. IT IS RECOMMENDED THAT:

A. You take cognizance of the findings set forth above.

B. The names of the members of the Army listed in paragraph D (2) a, above, together with information concerning their omissions and commissions, be referred to their respective general court-martial convening authorities for possible disciplinary or administrative action.

C. Consideration be given to the modification of applicable policies, directives, and training standards in order to correct the apparent deficiencies noted in paragraph IE above. ♦

# MY LAI

## DITCH CLAIMS ANOTHER VICTIM

Published in the Los Angeles Times, 1971

Artist Paul Conrad, 1924-2010

<http://teachinghistory.org/outreach/history-education-news/volume-six>



*This political cartoon comments on the American reaction when Lieutenant William Calley was convicted for his involvement in the My Lai Massacre. Originally, the American reaction to the incident was restrained until a participant recounted the events in a nationally televised interview several months after Calley was indicted. Many Americans felt Calley was simply a scapegoat for the crimes.*

**MY LAI****CENSUS OF CIVILIAN CASUALTIES | 17 FEB. 1970**

REPORT TO THE DEPARTMENT OF THE ARMY REVIEW OF THE PRELIMINARY INVESTIGATIONS  
INTO THE MY LAI INCIDENT | PAGE 515 | VOLUME III | BOOK 5 | 14 MAR. 1970

**HENRY H. TUFTS, COLONEL, MPC**

[http://www.loc.gov/rr/frd/Military\\_Law/pdf/RDAR-Vol-IIIBook5.pdf](http://www.loc.gov/rr/frd/Military_Law/pdf/RDAR-Vol-IIIBook5.pdf)

PMGA-D2

17 February 1970

SUBJECT: Census of Civilian Casualties - My Lai (4)

Tab A

The Provost Marshal General  
ATTN: PMGS-C  
Washington, O. C. 20314

1. Reference is made to:
  - a. Memorandum, CS (PEERS INQUIRY), 10 February 1970, subject as above.
  - b. Letter, PMGS-C, OTPMG, 13 February 1970, subject as above.
2. The US Army CID Agency estimates 347 persons were killed in My Lai (4) on 16 March 1968. The methodology used in determining this estimate was as follows:
  - a. From statements of former residents of My Lai (4) and others who were able to provide useful data, a list was compiled indicating; all persons believed to have been present in the village on 16 of March 1968.
  - b. Efforts were then made to further identify these persons by family name, aliases, age, sex, relation, occupation, place of residence, or other means.
  - c. Finally, efforts were, made to isolate the names of those persons who were said by the interviewees to have been killed.



# MY LAI CENSUS OF CIVILIAN CASUALTIES

– Continued –

3. It must be emphasized that the accuracy of the estimate is questionable  
MGA-D2

17 February 1970

SUBJECT: Census of Civilian Casualties - My Lai (4)

and that omissions, duplications, and other errors probably exist for the following reasons:

a. Approximately 20 months passed between the alleged incident and the interviews; consequently, names, ages and other data given by the interviewees often were conflicting or unknown.

b. Many interviewees were reluctant to talk.

c. Translation was difficult due to illiteracy and variations in dialects.

d. Common names, aliases, and official titles were used frequently.

e. Exaggerated or fabricated accounts might have been given, possibly for personal gain, sympathy, or political purposes. (Intelligence sources classified some of the interviewees as Viet Cong, Viet Cong sympathizers, and civil defendants.)

4. In view of the above, caution should be exercised in the use of this estimate.

HENRY H. TUFTS  
Colonel, MPC  
Commanding

# MY LAI

## AMERICAL BRIGADE HITS VC THREE TIMES IN SAME VILLAGE

AMERICAL 10 REPORTER | 1 JUNE 1968

[http://www.loc.gov/rr/frd/Military\\_Law/pdf/RDAR-Vol-IIIBook5.pdf](http://www.loc.gov/rr/frd/Military_Law/pdf/RDAR-Vol-IIIBook5.pdf)

### Americal Brigade Hits VC 3 Times In Same Village

CHU LAI, (AMERICAL-10)—

For the third time in recent weeks, the Americal Division's - 11th Brigade infantrymen from Task Force Barker raided a Viet Cong stronghold known as "Pinkville." The raid on the village, located six miles north-east of Quang Ngai, ended with 128 enemy killed.

The action occurred in the Coastal town of My Lai where, three weeks earlier, another company of the brigade's Task Force Barker fought its way out of a Viet Cong ambush, leaving 80 enemy dead.

The action began as units of the task force conducted a combat assault into a known Viet Cong stronghold. Gunships of the 174th Aviation Company escorted the troops into the area and killed four enemy during the assault. Other choppers from the 123rd Aviation Battalion, killed two enemy.

"The combat assault went like clockwork" commented Lt. Col. Frank Barker, the task force commander. "We had two entire



*WARY ADVANCE-Task Force Barker infantrymen from the Americal Division's 11th Infantry Brigade move toward an enemy stronghold near My Lai. Three raids into the area have cost the enemy 272 killed.*

companies on the ground in less than an hour."

A company led by Capt. Ernest Medina killed 14 VC, minutes after landing. They recovered two M1 rifles, a carbine, a short-wave radio and enemy documents.

The attack on the village accounted for 69 enemy killed, some of which were attributed suspect told the interpreter that a large VC force had sent the night in the village.

Another platoon was airlifted to an area south of the village along the beach. This unit, under 2nd Lt.

Thomas Willingham, immediately ran into enemy fire. When the VC fled, they left 30 dead.

The platoon then continued to move up the beach where they saw an enemy soldier slipping into a tunnel. The tunnel turned out to be an enemy underground complex, where the platoon killed eight VC.

The swiftness with which the units moved into the area surprised the enemy. After the battle, the 11th Brigade soldiers moved into the village, searching each hut and tunnel.

This article written shortly after the My Lai Massacre paints a very different picture of what occurred on May 16, 1968. The Americal Division concealed the incident by withholding information.