that US firepower had inflicted casualties among the noncombatants in My Lai (4). Despite these observations, no action was taken to provide relief or assistance to the noncombatant casualties nor was any significant effort initiated to determine the extent of such casualties until much later in the day when COL Henderson directed TF Barker to send C Company back through My Lai (4) to determine the exact nature of noncombatant casualties. This belated effort was stopped by MG Koster who countermanded the order of COL Henderson, at a time when he already had knowledge that at least "20 to 28" noncombatants had been killed.

b. Gunships and Liftships Fire on My Lai (4)

Another early indicator that commanders in the Son My operation disregarded the safety and welfare of noncombatants is the fact that the firepower of available helicopters was used freely and in some cases indiscriminately in and around the inhabited hamlet of My Lai (4).

CPT Medina stated that as the liftships made their approach to the LZ, the gunships were firing suppressive fire, utilizing 40mm grenades, 2.75 inch rockets, and 5.56mm "miniguns," on both sides of the LZ. As the liftships came in, the door gunners on the outside of the "V" fired M-60 machine-guns in suppressive fire directly into the hamlet until the helicopters touched down. Many of the troops on the first lift corroborated CPT Medina's testimony.

LT (now Mr.) Alaux, (the artillery forward observer attached to the company) stated that gunships fired "into the trees and the hootches" along the outskirts of the hamlet using rockets and miniguns. Alaux testified that at least one of the bodies he observed had been killed by miniguns.

CPT Vazquez indicated that the gunships fired along the sides of the LZ and on the outskirts of the hamlet, but he did not believe they fired directly into the hamlet itself.

WO Hugh Thompson stated that he observed gunships accompanying the liftships "shooting it up pretty good." He also observed these same gunships "working over" the area where he later observed numerous Vietnamese casualties.
A tape recording made by CPT Lewellen in the TF Barker TOC reveals that LTC Barker ordered "no restrictions on door gunners" which had the effect of permitting them to fire suppressive fires into the hamlet of My Lai (4) on the final approach to the LZ.

As was the case in the indiscriminate use of artillery, a knowledge of the planned or actual use of helicopter firepower in support of the Son My operation, despite its tactical desirability, carried with it the awareness that the operation was being conducted with an unusual disregard for the safety of noncombatants. Even again assuming an ignorance of the inhabited status of My Lai (4) prior to the operation—and such an assumption cannot be substantiated—such ignorance was dispelled when people commenced departing My Lai (4) in large numbers, immediately following the landing of US troops.

Again, as was the case in the use of artillery fire, commanders did not react when faced with the knowledge that noncombatant casualties had been unnecessarily caused by US firepower.

c. The Exodus of Civilians

Another early indication that the Son My operation was not a normal, routine, combat assault, occurred shortly after the artillery preparation at C Company's LZ terminated. At this point, the area in the vicinity of My Lai (4) which was to be clear of all "friendly inhabitants" by 0730, suddenly became the scene of a mass exodus of personnel. COL Henderson, aboard his command and control helicopter with LTC (now COL) Luper and the 11th Brigade S3, MAJ McKnight, observed approximately 300 Vietnamese exiting the hamlet of My Lai (4) along Route 521.

According to the tape recording of a portion of the radio transmissions made during the operation on the morning of 16 March, LTC Barker was informed by the 174th Aviation Company gunships commander that most of the Vietnamese in the group moving along the route "look like women and children and farmers." There is no indication that LTC Barker admonished CPT Medina to exercise caution at this time because there were noncombatants in the operational area, contrary to the intelligence given him earlier in the operations order.
CPT Vazquez, who was accompanying LTC Barker on his command and control helicopter, noted that many villagers evacuated the hamlet after the gunships had expended their suppressive ordnance around the LZ. He also noted the bodies of Vietnamese in an area where the gunships had made a firing run.

MAJ Watke observed the exodus while flying as copilot on one of the gunships, and participated in the screening of the Vietnamese from the air.

It is clear that at this point in the Son My operation it should have been apparent to commanders from the platoon to the brigade level, that something had gone wrong in the operation. The fire support plan for the assault at My Lai (4) was based on an assumption that the hamlet would either be occupied by the 48th Local Force (LF) Battalion or uninhabited; the events described in the preceding paragraphs establish that this assumption relating to the absence of inhabitants was false and that noncombatants had been killed. Except for the reported admonition by COL Henderson at about 0900 hours that he did not "want any unnecessary killing going on down there" --an order COL Henderson specifically denied issuing --all commanders concerned apparently elected to ignore the situation.

d. Observation of Burning Buildings

During the Son My operation on 16 March, many individuals noticed burning buildings in the My Lai (4) hamlet complex. According to COL Henderson's testimony, he observed several buildings burning while he was orbiting over the operational area in his command and control helicopter. He contacted LTC Barker to ascertain the reason for the burnings and Barker, in turn, contacted CPT Medina on the ground and posed the question to him. LTC Barker, after his call to CPT Medina, then informed COL Henderson that the structures were being destroyed by the Vietnamese National Police who were accompanying Company C on the operation. (In fact, there were no National Police with Company C at this time.) The National Police had reportedly found "weapons, or hand grenades, or ammunition, or items of military equipment" in the houses and were burning them for this reason. COL Henderson stated he then informed LTC Barker that any National Police accompanying TF Barker
forces fell under his (Barker's) operational control and ordered LTC Barker to have the burning of structures stopped immediately because "we had no authority to burn houses." Although COL Henderson claimed to have taken action to halt the burning of structures, there is considerable evidence in the testimony by members of Company C that the burning of hamlets continued throughout the remainder of the operation.

It is clear that, once again, commanders from the platoon to the brigade level witnessed the occurrence of incidents which were in themselves illegal, but even more important in the instant case, were yet another indication that elements of TF Barker were engaged in an unusual operation. While MG Koster and COL Henderson in their appearance before this Inquiry both maintained the existence of a firm policy against the burning of Vietnamese structures, this policy was patently ineffective in TF Barker on 16 March.

e. Initial Report of High Viet Cong Body Count

Another indication of the unusual nature of events at My Lai (4) is the report concerning casualties inflicted against the enemy force. Within 70 minutes of its touchdown, C Company had reported 90 VC killed in its area of operation. Such reports could be expected to reflect a high degree of satisfaction in the success of TF Barker and could logically expect to cause inquiries concerning tactics used, enemy units encountered, and similar requests for information. It is essential to note that this apparently resounding success passed with no substantive inquiry by commanders at task force, brigade, or division level--this despite the fact that all three were in the area for varying lengths of time on the morning of 16 March. There is little to explain why none of these three commanders ever landed in the immediate vicinity of My Lai (4) or observed what should have been readily apparent to anyone overflying the area at less than 1,000 feet.

The minimum command reaction to the initial report of high VC casualties should have included inquiry concerning location and size of enemy force, unit identification, and the possibility of exploitation. There is no evidence that any such inquiry was made.

f. Report of High Viet Cong Body Count Attributed to Artillery Fire
At 0840 hours, 16 March, TF Barker personnel recorded in their operations journal that C Company had "counted 69 VC KIA" at a location which is almost the center of the hamlet of My Lai (4). This same entry states that the 11th Brigade was advised of this information. However, the Brigade Journal reflects no information concerning this subject until 55 minutes later when the location is shifted to a point over 600 meters northwest of the original site and the cause of death is stated as "artillery fire." This same information is recorded in the Americal Division Journal at 0940 hours and notes that the G2, G3, CofS, and III MAF have been notified. The delay in reporting this information, the significant change in location, and the identification of artillery fire as the cause of death have not been satisfactorily explained. While the truth of the report is certainly in question, the fact remains that shortly after 0940 hours, 16 March, every headquarters in the chain of command from TF Barker to III MAF was aware of the report that artillery fire had killed 69 VC in the Son My operation.

Testimony of all personnel concerned with the Son My operation reveals that this report of outstanding artillery success caused little reaction among either artillery or infantry commanders. The artillery battalion commander, LTC Luper, stated that he received notice of these casualties about 0930 hours, 16 March, while flying aboard COL Henderson's helicopter and after he had seen 15-20 bodies, a number of which were women and children, located on the road south of My Lai (4). When questioned concerning his reaction to this matter, LTC Luper stated that he did not check into it further since he considered it a "normal operation" and that the killing of 69 VC in an artillery preparation of 100 rounds is not unusual "if you are fortunate enough to catch the enemy in the open." There is nothing to indicate that LTC Luper or any other person either saw or received a report of VC in the open. To the contrary, LTC Luper's suspicions should have been aroused when the first large group of people observed was approximately 50 civilians departing the area of My Lai (4) immediately following the artillery preparation on a village which he had believed was "not populated." Despite the fact that LTC Luper knew that women and children had been killed in this operation, and by his own admission, he was aware of the fact that 20 civilians were reported killed by "artillery and/or gunships," Luper made no effort to determine if artillery from his unit had killed noncombatants nor did he question his artillery liaison officer (LNO) at TF Barker, the artillery forward observer.
with the rifle company in My Lai (4), or the artillery battery commander concerning this matter.

It would appear that the single positive action in response to the high casualty count attributed to artillery, was taken by COL Henderson. While COL Henderson indicated his order to turn C Company around and return to My Lai (4) occurred 2 days later, there is little doubt that this occurred on the afternoon of 16 March. In COL Henderson's words, he was "suspicious of the body count" and "didn't believe it was correct, particularly the artillery fire." While there is some question concerning MG Koster's knowledge of the report of 69 VC KIA by artillery at the time he countermanded this order, there is no question that he was, at that time, aware of the fact that from "20 to 28" noncombatants had been killed in My Lai (4), and that the VC body count had reached 128.

g. Low Ratio of Weapons Captured to Viet Cong Killed in Action (VC KIA)

Another fact concerning the Son My operation of TF Barker which indicated an operation of an unusual nature was the paucity of captured weapons experienced by TF Barker. While the TF had a generally low ratio of weapons captured to VC KIA—it averaged approximately 1 to 10 --the ratio of less than 1 to 40, experienced on 16 March should have caused some inquiry. The combined effect of many small incidents related to this low ratio and the general nature of the operation reported by TF Barker on 16 March was sufficient cause for considerable concern and suspicion.

On 15 March the brigade commander visited TF Barker and, in discussing the Son My operation with the assembled commanders and staff officers of TF Barker, made the subject of capturing enemy weapons a matter of primary concern. COL Henderson stated he advised all concerned that they should make a much greater effort to improve their performance in regard to capturing and recovering enemy weapons. Yet on the following day, when the enemy was purportedly caught by surprise in large numbers, the number of weapons captured dropped to a token figure. Again COL Henderson's "suspicions" concerning body count appear to have been well founded. What is difficult to understand is that no such "suspicions" existed at division level. The most cursory analysis of TF Barker's operation of 16 March would have revealed inconsistencies which, as a minimum, dictated a need for guidance from senior commanders. First, there were 90 enemy reported killed in a period of 70 minutes --69 of which had been killed by an artillery preparation lasting only 5 minutes and which, was followed immediately by a combat assault of one rifle company. No further enemy contact was reported by this company for the remainder of the day and yet no command attention was placed on the fact that the unit had not only failed to exploit its
initial success, but also had failed to police the battlefield. Either that conclusion must be drawn or the alternate and more logical conclusion must be examined, viz. unarmed casualties were being identified as VC. The logic of this latter thesis should have been apparent to those who flew in the vicinity of My Lai (4) and observed the large number of people evacuating the area along Route 521. As previously noted, commanders who did overfly the area that morning included: MAJ Watke, LTC Barker, COL Henderson, and MG Koster.

h. Absence of Reports of Enemy Contact and Requests for Fire Support

One of the most significant facts to emerge from an examination of events of 16 March 1968 concerning TF Barker is the almost total absence of reports of enemy contact. Except for a single radio report by an unidentified liftship or gunship pilot during the initial landing of C Company, not one member of TF Barker reported any exchange of fire on 16 March. Commencing at 0735 hours elements of TF Barker reported killing VC; reports of enemy casualties continued to be received until 1420 hours. Not a single journal entry at the TF Barker or 11th Brigade reflects any enemy contact or activity except reports of enemy killed.* During the course of this Inquiry, no individual was encountered who could recall enemy contact on 16 March, other than a few isolated reports of sniper fire, nor could any recall requests for supporting fires

* A search of American Division files by an investigation team from the Office of the Provost Marshal General (OPMG) in Oct 1969 discovered what purported to be a carbon copy of the Division Journal for 16 March 1968 (exhibit M-138). The copy was found in the Division Historian's files; the original reportedly having been forwarded to the USARV records holding area.

A search of the USARV Adjutant General's files in November 1969 uncovered a purported record copy of the 16 March 1968 Division Journal which contains one substantive difference when compared with the carbon copy. In the carbon copy there is an item #94, a 2400 hours summary item concerning TF Barker which reads: "Heavy combat resulted in the area and continued until approximately 1500 hours." This sentence does not appear in the record copy uncovered at USARV, although the journal in general, and item #94 in particular, are essentially the same in all other respects.

This difference raises suspicions which have not been satisfactorily explained. An investigation of the matter is being conducted by OPMG.
which would normally have been required when enemy contact was made.*

After the artillery preparation was fired, no supporting fires were requested—no tactical air, no gunships, no artillery—a most unusual occurrence in the Vietnam conflict where contact with the enemy is typified by a heavy reliance on supporting fire.

Equally difficult to comprehend is the absence of inquiry from commanders at the brigade and division level for information concerning current operations. As the situation was reported on 16 March, a battalion-size task force was engaged in a highly successful operation, yet there were no reports being forwarded outside the TF concerning anything except final results. Even the most cursory inquiry by a senior commander concerning type of opposition, location of enemy, unit identification of VC KIA, nature or size of enemy force, would have revealed the existence of a highly unusual situation requiring a more detailed study. As a minimum, an inquiry should have been made as to the reasons for success and its tactical and intelligence significance.

It is also appropriate to note at this point that the unique nature of combat operations in Vietnam creates an immediate high level of communications activity when contact is made with an enemy force. Radio networks suddenly come alive with a continuous series of messages; supporting arms are employed via radio; helicopter assets are controlled by radio; and higher headquarters are either kept advised of developments through radio messages or inquiries begin to flow to subordinate units. In the case of TF Barker on 16 March, the sense of urgency and closeness of combat which follows from this communications activity could not have existed in the absence of request for supporting fires. To the experienced combat commander, this absence of activity and lack of enemy contact could not be equated with the success being reported by TF Barker.

i. Reports of Departure of VC from My Lai (4)
As has been previously stated, the Son My operation was planned by the 11th Brigade and TF Barker to destroy 48th LF Battalion. Witnesses testified that at the brigade and task force level, intelligence indicated this enemy battalion was located in and near the hamlet of My Lai (4). Assuming such intelligence was valid—and there is a preponderance of the evidence to indicate it was not—the high VC body count reported by TF Barker on 16 March 1968 should not have caused any great surprise among commanders and staff officers in the 11th Brigade.

In view of the intelligence basis for the Son My operation, there should have been suspicions aroused when, early in the operation, it was discovered that the VC had, in fact, left the area before the operation commenced! At 0900 hours the 11th Brigade recorded in its journal a report received from Barker TOC to the effect that information obtained from inhabitants of My Lai (4) revealed that "30-40 VC had departed the area at 0700 hours,..." The journal entry also states that both the brigade S2 and S3 were notified of this fact—the brigade commander at LZ Dottie.

LT (now CPT) Johnson, the Military Intelligence (MI) officer who accompanied C Company in the field on March 16, testified that after landing in My Lai (4), and interrogating village inhabitants, he learned that "the VC had departed the village prior to the combat assault."

LT Alaux, the C Company forward observer (FO) stated in his testimony he recalled receiving information that interrogation of a Vietnamese in My Lai (4) had revealed information that an enemy platoon had been in the village but had departed just prior to the operation.

From the foregoing, it is evident that by 0915 hours, at least the commander of C Company (who is the most probable source of the report which originated with LT Johnson and was transmitted through TF Barker TOC to the 11th Brigade TOC); the commander, S2 and S3 of TF Barker; and the commander, S2 and S3 of the 11th Brigade were all aware of this significant report. Journal entries at the Americal Division do not reflect this information and MG Koster testified that he does not recall receiving such a report.

At the same time these officers possessed information concerning this intelligence report, they were also cognizant of the report of high VC body count; the low ratio of weapons captured to VC killed; the absence of reports of enemy contact; and many of the other "indicators" which have been discussed in this chapter. What is difficult to understand is why none of the officers--
espically those in the intelligence field--acted on this information. If the VC had left the hamlet, who were the people C Company had reported killing? To what unit did the "30-40" VC belong? Where did they go--and a host of other questions all required answers. Yet apparently none of the commanders or staff officers asked these questions, sought additional information, or connected this report with other information they had concerning the unique nature of the Son My operation.

As stated previously, the Americal Division Operations Journal for 16 March 1968 does not reflect this report of 30-40 VC departing My Lai (4). It does, however, contain entries concerning the Vietnamese personnel who were detained by C/1-20 Inf at that time. One significant entry concerning the only status that this individual reports "lots of VC" at the map coordinates which coincide with those recorded in the 11th Brigade Journal at the location at which C Company interrogated the Vietnamese detainess. The significance of this erroneous and/or altered report is discussed in Chapter 11.

j. Low Ratio of United States Casualties to Viet Cong Casualties

One fact which should have become increasingly evident to commanders as the events at Son My unfolded on 16 March, 1968, especially in the C Company area. By 1030 hours, TF Barker had reported a total of 120 VC killed and 13 US casualties--2 KIA, 10 WIA, and 1 self-inflicted wound. Of the 12 casualties caused by enemy contact; that one individual was shot by enemy small arms fire in the area of A/3-1 Inf. On the surface, this ratio of 10 to 1 might be considered the result of a highly successful operation. However, when consideration is given to the fact that C Company, which accounted for 84 VC casualties in 70 minutes, experienced only one casualty, a self-inflicted wound, there is cause for inquiry.

An awareness at the company and TF level of the details concerning US casualties is presumed because of the involvement of commanders in medical evacuation procedures and similar actions requiring radio transmissions. As a minimum, the commanders at these levels, if they were not aware of the true conditions at My Lai (4), should have been making efforts to determine what tactics and/or procedures were causing such remarkable success. It is clear that any such probing would probably have revealed the true events which had transpired in My Lai (4).
At the 11th Brigade level, COL Henderson acknowledged that he was suspicious of the C Company body count and ordered C Company back through My Lai (4) to resolve the matter. Yet when the order was countermanded by MG Koster, COL Henderson took no further action to allay his suspicions until directed to investigate WO1 Thompson's allegations 2 days later.

At the Americal Division headquarters, knowledge of a better than 10 to 1 ratio of VC casualties was known not later than the evening briefing of 16 March. Taken at face value and viewed in isolation from other information, these statistics reflected an outstanding tactical success on the part of TF Barker and 11th Brigade. This conclusion is reflected in the congratulatory message which was sent to the Americal Division by Commander, United States Military Assistance Command, Vietnam (COMUSMACV) as a result of receiving a statistical summary of the Son My operation. That such a conclusion could be reached at the Americal Division headquarters is not as readily understood. By the time the 16 March evening briefing was conducted and an announcement made concerning friendly casualties, the following additional information had also been provided to the division commander:

1. Approximately 20-28 noncombatant casualties had occurred in the C/1-20 Inf area of operations.

2. The 11th Brigade Commander had indicated his concern over irregularities in My Lai (4) to the extent of directing a rifle company to retrace its steps.

Information concerning these items was not transmitted outside the Americal Division.

k. Commander's Order to Return to My Lai (4)

Of all the events which transpired on 16 March, the one which most clearly indicated that something had gone wrong in the Son My operation, was the order issued by COL Henderson to have C Company return through My Lai (4) to count civilian casualties and to determine the age, sex, and cause of death of each. Issued to TF Barker at about 1530 hours, it was transmitted to CPT Medina and almost immediately countermanded by MG Koster. Although both MG Koster and COL Henderson believed that this order was given on 18 March, the preponderance of the testimony and the surrounding circumstances established that the order was given on 16 March.

COL Henderson testified that at the time he gave the order, he was aware of from "12 to 14" civilian casualties, which had been reported to him by LTC Barker, and that he was "suspicious" of the 128 body count because the number of weapons captured (3) was too low. He stated that he dir-
pected LTC Barker to have a company return to My Lai (4) to examine the bodies to determine the exact number of noncombatant casualties, by sex, age group, and apparent cause of death. He also stated that LTC Barker then suggested that C Company should return to make the count since they were more familiar with the area and because they knew where the bodies were.

Both CPT Medina, the company commander, and MAJ Calhoun, the TF S3, agreed in their testimony that this command to return to My Lai (4) was relayed to CPT Medina by MAJ Calhoun over the radio; and that CPT Medina contested the order because of the late hour and the possibility of mines and boobytraps; that CPT Medina reported 20 to 28 civilian casualties had occurred during the operation; and that MG Koster broke into the series of transmissions and countermanded the order.

MG Koster did not recall talking to either MAJ Calhoun or CPT Medina but stated that he believed his conversation over the radio was with LTC Barker. He further stated that he knew at the time he countermanded the order, that at least 20 noncombatant casualties had been reported, and that the purpose of the order to return to My Lai (4) was to recount the noncombatant casualties and determine the cause of death. According to MG Koster, he based his decision to countermand the order on the mines and boobytraps reportedly infesting the area, the late hour, his feeling that the cause of death probably could not be determined accurately by the soldiers, and the shortage of helicopters. MG Koster decided to countermand the order despite the fact that he knew there had been at least 20 noncombatants reported killed during the operation, and that the brigade commander was apparently concerned enough about these casualties to order a return to My Lai (4) for the purpose of determining the number of and the reason for these casualties. MG Koster contended that his action did not preclude COL Henderson's sending the unit back the following day. In countermanding the order he specifically directed LTC Barker to insure that COL Henderson was advised of the action.

The point in issue is not whether the order should have been countermanded, but rather, that the issuance of the order itself should have been a signal to MG Koster that one of his senior subordinate commanders suspected something had gone awry. The fact that CPT Medina advised MG Koster of 20-28 civilian casualties should have acted to reinforce that suspicion or to cause MG Koster to consider a substitute course of action; available testimony indicates it did neither.

6. Initial Investigation and Review

As a result of instructions received from MG Koster, have COL Henderson initiate an investigation of WO1 Thompson's
allegations, BG Young after departing MG Koster's office on 17 March, made arrangements for a meeting of the five principals in the chain of command who were involved: himself, COL Henderson, LTC Barker, LTC Holladay, and MAJ Watke. The meeting was inexplicably not scheduled until 0900 hours the following day, 18 March. However, BG Young did make a visit to LZ Dottie on the afternoon of 17 March and, according to MAJ Calhoun, was briefed by him.

MG Koster testified that on the afternoon of 17 March he too went to LZ Dottie and spoke to LTC Barker concerning the allegations of WO1 Thompson. MG Koster stated that Barker advised him that either he or MAJ Calhoun had been over the area of My Kai (4) throughout the morning of 16 March and that they had not witnessed or heard of any irregularities. MG Koster stated that Barker gave him every assurance that the incident alleged by Thompson had not taken place.

During the initial phase of this Inquiry, considerable disagreement was experienced among witnesses concerning the time and date of this meeting arranged by BG Young. It was finally fixed after MAJ Watke produced a series of letters written to his wife and dated 16, 17, and 18 March 1968. The last of these letters made specific reference to this meeting and established the date as 18 March.

On the morning of the meeting, the five officers concerned at TF Barker's Command Post at LZ Dottie at about 0900 hours, BG Young stated that he met with the group only briefly, addressing himself primarily to COL Henderson and repeating the allegation as understood by BG Young, i.e., that there had been a confrontation between personnel of TF Barker and Company A, 123d Aviation Battalion and that forces of TF Barker had fired on noncombatant civilians while engaging an enemy force. Young advised Henderson of the Division Commander's directive to conduct an immediate investigation and to report the results to MG Koster as soon as possible. BG Young stated that without waiting to hear any explanation of the allegations by Watke or Holladay, he departed LZ Dottie. While such action is possible, it seems quite unusual if not unlikely that an Assistant Division Commander, having been charged by his Commanding General with the task of directing a brigade commander to initiate an investigation, would depart before he was reasonably sure that the brigade commander understood the mission.

Contestation that BG Young remained at Dottie for more than 20 minutes is supported by entries in the TF Barker Journal that indicate that BG Young spent a total of 20 minutes at Dottie at this time.
LTC Holladay recalled the incident as a brief introduction by BG Young and a complete recitation of the Thompson Report by MAJ Watke. MAJ Watke agreed in his testimony that he presented an explanation in the presence of BG Young which was the same in content as his two previous recitations of the event.

COL Henderson related the events of 18 March as commencing with an encounter at LZ Dottie with the Executive Officer of Company B, 123d Aviation Battalion, MAJ (now Mr.) Wilson, who introduced WO1 Thompson as an individual with a serious matter to report. According to Henderson, Thompson then described the events of "extremely wild shooting" by troops and helicopters; troops shooting at everything that moved; of having seen "a lot of civilian bodies on the ground" and an incident where a captain shot a unarmed and wounded female civilian. COL Henderson further stated that within an hour of this meeting with Thompson and Wilson, the meeting with BG Young took place and during which the confrontation between the helicopter pilot and ground troops and other incidents which occurred on 16 March was discussed. MAJ Wilson stated that he had no knowledge of taking WO1 Thompson to LZ Dottie to see COL Henderson on any occasion and denies any knowledge of the event related by COL Henderson.

Once again, after considering all available evidence, it appears that the events as related by LTC Holladay and MAJ Watke represent the most probable occurrences of that time. BG Young's contention that he merely summarized the allegations of WO1 Thompson and then departed, is refuted by the testimony of Holladay and is incompatible with the conduct that would be normal for a general officer under the circumstances.

There is general agreement that the exchange of information between WO1 Thompson and COL Henderson did not occur before the meeting with BG Young but took place after that event. The previous paragraph provides a summary of COL Henderson's version of the meeting between these two individuals which is in substantive conflict with WO1 Thompson's recollection that he told COL Henderson all the details of the incident at My Lai (4) in an interview which took from 20 to 30 minutes. COL Henderson also stated that he spoke to no other pilot of crewmen concerning this matter. However, MAJ Watke stated he sent three individuals to see him. There is testimony by WO1 Thompson, SP4 Colburn, and CWO Culverhouse that each of these individuals was interviewed by COL Henderson and that each provided him detailed information concerning the incidents which occurred at My Lai (4) on the morning of 16 March.

It is significant to note that during these interviews, none of the individuals was placed under oath nor were any statements reduced to writing; records of the event were limited to notes COL Henderson made in a small green notebook which was subsequently destroyed.
While there is some evidence to indicate that two of these individuals may have spoken to "another colonel at LZ Dottie" other than COL Henderson, there is little doubt concerning the extent of COL Henderson's knowledge at this point in time. There is no other evidence to show that there was another officer in the grade of Colonel at LZ Dottie on that day. All available evidence confirms the fact that not later than the morning of 18 March, COL Henderson was in receipt of all allegations contained in the Thompson Report; that these allegations had been presented to him by at least one and probably three eyewitnesses; and that he was aware of the existence of many more possible eyewitnesses.

There are other inconsistencies in COL Henderson's testimony at this point, but for the purpose of continuing with a presentation of facts concerning the chain of events following My Lai (4), it is sufficient to state that following the meeting at LZ Dottie, BG Young departed with the understanding that COL Henderson was to undertake a prompt and thorough investigation into the allegation made by WO1 Thompson concerning the operations of TF Barker on 16 March 1968.

A brief summary reveals the following significant facts which emerge at this point: first, COL Henderson had been charged with investigating events which actually represent only a part of what happened at My Lai (4); second, COL Henderson was aware of a disparity between the allegation he was charged with investigating and the dimensions of the events which had been observed and described by eyewitnesses; and finally and most significantly, COL Henderson may well have concluded that MG Koster and BG Young were not aware that extensive killing of noncombatants had occurred on 16 March 1968. It is in the context of this knowledge that COL Henderson's subsequent actions will be considered.

As previously mentioned, there is disagreement concerning both the sequence of events as they occurred on the morning of 16 March and the substance of the information discussed by personnel interviewed by COL Henderson. For the purpose of relating later events, it is sufficient at this point to state that in the morning of the meeting with BG Young at LZ Dottie, COL Henderson also met with WO1 Thompson and, as a result of this meeting, flew directly to the field location of C Company to speak to CPT Medina about the Thompson allegation. CPT Medina explained the shooting incident to COL Henderson's satisfaction—a matter of self-defense—but could not satisfy COL
Henderson's requirements for detailed information concerning noncombatant casualties. CPT Medina explained at this point that he had seen "between 20 and 28" civilian casualties. COL Henderson contended in his testimony that it was at this point that he alerted C Company to a possible requirement to move back through My Lai (4) to conduct a count of all non-combatant casualties. COL Henderson stated that he issued the order for such a move shortly after the meeting, and after discussing the matter with LTC Barker. The evidence to refute this contention is overwhelming and it is clear that such an order was issued on the afternoon of 16 March.

There is agreement in the testimony of Henderson and Medina that the substance of this meeting concerned the incident of Medina's shooting the wounded woman and a discussion concerning noncombatant casualties and the body count of 128 VC KIA. No mention was made of such incidents as the confrontation, the bodies in the ditch, or the firing into the ditch.

In his testimony, LTC (now ret.) Blackledge stated that he especially recalled this meeting because of the subject matter discussed and the extent to which COL Henderson questioned Medina. Blackledge stated he had not been advised of the purpose of the meeting and observed that Henderson pursued the matter of civilian casualties to a point that Blackledge considered a "little unusual" and in a matter which seemed to be investigatory. It is significant to note that this constituted the only meeting of COL Henderson with CPT Medina at which the subject of Thompson's allegations was discussed. Again, as was the case in the interviews with aviation unit personnel, no oaths were administered nor were statements reduced to writing.

The next step of COL Henderson's "inquiry" involved a visit with troops of C Company as they deplaned on the afternoon of 18 March at LZ Dottie. COL Henderson assembled a group of 30 to 40 soldiers primarily from the 1st and 2d Platoons of C Company who had just debarked from helicopters. After complimenting them on their performance during the previous few days, he told them that there had been some "unsubstantiated reports that we had killed some noncombatants" and then asked the group if any of them had any knowledge of "anybody killing civilians during this operation." COL Henderson testified that the response to this was silence and he then directed his comments to specific individuals, saying: "How about you?" and pointing to an individual or small group. The response in each case, COL Henderson stated, was a "loud and clear, 'No sir!'" This totally meaningless action constituted the entire effort by COL Henderson to interrogate members of Company C. Testimony by individuals who were present during COL Henderson's
interrogation of this group revealed that, in at least one case, when addressed individually by COL Henderson, a sergeant responded to his question concerning possible irregularities during the My Lai (4) operation with "no comment" but, inexplicably, he was not questioned further.

COL Henderson stated that he then departed LZ Dottie and returned to his headquarters at Duc Pho and either at that time, or after the evening briefing on 18 March, spoke to MAJ Gibson, CO, 174th Aviation Company. COL Henderson related that he advised MAJ Gibson of the allegations made by WOL Thompson concerning wild shooting and killing of civilian noncombatants and asked MAJ Gibson to survey all of his pilots who had participated in this operation to determine if any of them could provide further information. COL Henderson further stated that after the evening briefing on either the 18th or 19th of March at brigade headquarters, he called MAJ Gibson aside and asked for his report. According to Henderson, Gibson replied that he had spoken to each of the pilots who had been involved in the My Lai operation and that "not a single one of them observed any noncombatants being killed nor were any (174th) gunships out of control...." MAJ Gibson denied that he was ever requested to provide the information and that he made such a report to Henderson.

Except for COL Henderson's claim of an 18 March visual reconnaissance over the village of My Lai (4) in which field glasses were used to aid in observation, the aforementioned actions constitute the total effort expended in the initial inquiry by COL Henderson. It should be noted that at no time during COL Henderson's "inquiry" was there ever an effort made to put people on the ground at My Lai (4) or even to make a meaningful reconnaissance of the area. In summary, COL Henderson's investigative efforts, by his own account, were completed later than the evening hours of 18 March except for the report he had purportedly requested from MAJ Gibson.

COL Henderson testified that on 19 March he advised BG Young of the people to whom he had spoken and the negative findings he had reached and was advised by BG Young to make his report to MG Koster on 20 March.

COL Henderson stated that on the morning of 20 March he reported to the Chief of Staff of the Americal Division, COL Henderson, advising him of the purpose of the meeting and then,
before completing the substance of the report, was ushered in
to see MG Koster. COL Parson was unable to shed additional
light on this matter since he stated he could not recall the
incident. COL Henderson stated that his oral report was sub­
mitted with no witnesses present. He recounted that he com­
menced his discussion by first advising the Commanding General
that the total number of civilian casualties reported by TF
Barker for 16 March was 20. He then proceeded to advise
MG Koster that reports of indiscriminate killing were not
substantiated; that CPT Medina had been able to provide a
satisfactory explanation for the shooting of the wounded
female; that the matter of the confrontation had been "put
to bed" with the re-establishment of a rapport between MAJ
Watke and LTC Barker; and that after completing the inquiry,
WOl Thompson was the only individual COL Henderson could find
who could allege that "something" happened in My Lai (4).

MG Koster testified that he received this initial report
in a series of conversations; some with BG Young who relayed
interim reports from COL Henderson, and the remainder as direct
discussions with Henderson. MG Koster did not recall a meeting
in which the entire report was presented as a "single wrap-up." However, his recollection of the substance of all the con­
versations is in general agreement with what Henderson testified
that he presented in his 20 March report. MG Koster's
testimony is in general agreement with that of BG Young who
also recalled that Henderson's report was a series of conversa­tions with BG Young, conversations which Young then relayed
to MG Koster. BG Young also recalled that Henderson told him
he had delivered an oral report to MG Koster who had instructed
him to reduce the report to writing. BG Young testified that
he confirmed this with MG Koster, but he could not recall any
of the details of the discussion for this Inquiry.
There was a further report reaching the Americal Division command group which deserves mention. LTC Holladay stated that after the meeting with himself, Watke, and BG Young, he went to the Division Chief of Staff and related to him the allegations which had been made by WO1 Thompson. It is significant to note that Holladay's version of the allegations included all of MAJ Watke's version plus information concerning a ditch containing bodies, an individual shooting into that ditch, and the use of the term "murder." COL Parson testified that he did not pass this information on to BG Young or MG Koster because "In my mind, the generals were doing what needed to be done. The generals took this part over.

Such a detached attitude on the part of a division chief or staff of the rank and experience of COL Parson seems unlikely.

COL Henderson stated that the matter was next brought to his attention approximately 2 weeks after the 20 March meeting, when BG Young advised him that MG Koster desired the oral report of 20 March be submitted in writing, as a matter of record.

COL Henderson testified that he then prepared a three-to-five-page typewritten report and personally delivered it to COL Parson at division headquarters on either 4, 5, or 6 April, and that several days after, BG Young advised him that MG Koster had seen the report, passed it on to BG Young, and that BG Young believed MG Koster to be satisfied with the report. MG Koster denied ordering such a report prepared; BG Young denied advising COL Henderson to prepare it; and COL Parson denied any knowledge of it.

There is some corroboration of COL Henderson's statement regarding this written report. MAJ McKnight testified that he read a written report which was shown to him by COL Henderson "in late March or early April"; however, when shown exhibit R-1 (a report submitted on 24 April by COL Henderson and which is discussed in detail in section B), McKnight identified the exhibit as the report he had read in 1968. CPT Henderson, who was MAJ McKnight's assistant, testified that he recalled seeing a one-page written report about a week after 16 March." CPT Henderson stated that McKnight was in possession of the report which concerned the matter of civilian casualties and allegations by helicopter pilots. When asked if he could identify the previously mentioned 24 April 1968 report of COL Henderson (exhibit R-1), CPT Henderson stated he could not and that he was certain exhibit R-1 was not the report he had seen in MAJ McKnight's hands.

A thorough search of currently available records and files failed to reveal a trace of any report which could possibly fit the description which COL Henderson provided. To date, the only written report recovered has been the report of 24 April 1968.
There is considerable conflict in the testimony of MG Koster, BG Young, and COL Henderson concerning the actual submission of the initial report by the latter and the subsequent events and directives as they concern additional investigative efforts. MG Koster was clear that he considered BG Young to be his principal agent in overseeing the investigative efforts of COL Henderson; BG Young, on the other hand, took the position that after the initial directive was issued to COL Henderson, and the oral report was made to MG Koster, the matter became one of direct contact between the Division Commander and the CO of the 11th Brigade, and largely excluded the Assistant Division Commander. According to BG Young's testimony, after 20 March, when MG Koster received a preliminary report from COL Henderson, BG Young took no further action in pursuing the allegations made by WO1 Thompson or in supervising the investigative efforts of COL Henderson. However, MG Koster and others stressed the continuing contact of BG Young with the matter and the fact that this, as other division business, was routinely shared with the maneuver ADC.

As concerns actions between MG Koster and COL Henderson, conflicts in testimony can be resolved to the extent that an oral report was received by MG Koster from COL Henderson sometime between 20 March and early April. As a result of this report, MG Koster concluded that COL Henderson had interrogated responsible personnel in the chain of command, as well as a cross-section of both aviation and ground troops, and that there was no basis for a formal investigation. MG Koster considered the matter closed and placed no further requirement on COL Henderson concerning this matter until sometime in mid-April when receipt of VC propaganda and further information from GVN channels reopened the question of civilian casualties in the Son My operation.

7. Report Through Chaplain Channels

There is one further report which was made during the Son My operation and which concerned the actions of C Company as observed by WO1 Thompson. On either 16 or 17 March, WO1 Thompson went to see the Division Artillery Chaplain, CPT (now Rev.) Carl Creswell, regarding the events he had witnessed at My Lai (4). Thompson was at the time taking instructions regarding confirmation in his faith by Chaplain Creswell and in the course of such instructions, he saw the chaplain regularly.

According to Chaplain Creswell, when Thompson came to see him, he was "terribly upset" and asked for advice concerning what actions he should take. WO1 Thompson related to the chaplain the substance of his observations, and Chaplain Creswell advised him that he should make his official protest through command channels while he, CPT Creswell, would do the same thing through "Chaplain Channels."
Chaplain Creswell then went to see LTC LeNis, the Chaplain, related the story told to him by WO1 Thompson, and recommended that an investigation be conducted. Chaplain Creswell stated that Chaplain Lewis assured him that he would take the matter up with the appropriate authorities. Approximately 3 weeks later, after continual prodding of Chaplain Lewis by Chaplain Creswell and repeated assurances by Chaplain Lewis that an official investigation was underway, Chaplain Creswell acknowledged with remorse that he did nothing further.

Chaplain Lewis recalled that Chaplain Creswell came to see him on 17 March with information concerning WO1 Thompson's complaints. Chaplain Lewis could not recollect the details of the conversation but did recall that it included the specific allegation that a sergeant had fired into women and children and that the general content of the allegation dealt with the unnecessary killing of women and children.

When questioned concerning the order of magnitude of the killings, Chaplain Lewis stated that while he was not sure of the source of the figure, the figure 124 is what he seemed to recall as the number of noncombatants killed.

In reconstructing Chaplain Lewis' actions relevant to this event, it can be established that he spoke to the Americal Division CoS, COL Parson, and the G5, LTC Anistranski. LTC Lewis stated he also spoke to the G1, LTC Qualls; the G2, LTC Trexler; and the G3, LTC Balmer. These latter three, in their testimony, had any recollection of an occasion wherein LTC Lewis made inquiry concerning serious allegations against TF Barker, the 11th Brigade, or any operations which involved WO1 Thompson in the two instances where key staff officers recollected a discussion with Chaplain Lewis, it is clear that the discussion was not one of an official nature concerning a serious allegation rather, a request from Chaplain Lewis concerning the status of any investigation concerning "some pretty bad things" that Lewis had heard.

From the testimony of individuals familiar with Chaplain Lewis, it was common practice for him to visit with key members of the staff on an informal basis and during such visits the Chaplain would frequently make reference to stories or reports he had heard concerning the unnecessary use of force or firepower by combat troops. It appears probable that any "reports" Chaplain Lewis may have made concerning Thompson's allegations were most likely delivered and received in that context. It is clear that Chaplain Lewis did not make any timely effort to transmit the information he received from Chaplain Creswell to the command group of the Americal Division. By his own recollection, it was approximately 10 days after receiving the report from Creswell that he made his "informal" call on the CoSs.
Chaplain Lewis stated he continued his personal inquiry into the matter, speaking to LTC Barker, and MAJ (now LTC) Hoffman, 11th Brigade Chaplain. Chaplain Lewis stated that LTC Barker assured him that while there had been some casualties among the noncombatants, these were inadvertent and were a natural consequence of the type of combat units faced in inhabited areas.

MAJ Hoffman in testifying before the Inquiry stated that Chaplain Creswell said that he had heard reports that "our people had fired into women and children." Chaplain Hoffman further stated that Creswell continually "ragged" him and "pulled his leg" and Hoffman did not take him seriously. Chaplain Hoffman stated that after this matter was brought up on several occasions, he replied to Creswell that the 11th Brigade had not killed the civilians, "it was Div Arty firing the (artillery) prep." Chaplain Hoffman stated that this caused Creswell to "stop his ragging a little bit." Hoffman went on to state that Creswell never gave him specific information nor did he make any specific allegations. He also stated that he was quite certain that Chaplain Lewis did not speak to him about this matter at any time.

It is clear from the actions—and the acts of omission—of Chaplains Lewis and Creswell, that while both were aware of the serious nature of the charges alleged by WO1 Thompson, neither took adequate or timely steps to bring these charges to the attention of his commander. It should have been evident to both these chaplains that the idea of conducting an investigation of a war crime through chaplain channels was preposterous.

8. Summary of the Initial Reports, Investigations, and Reviews

In concluding this portion of the report, it should be noted that the Inquiry has been faced with a difficult task of attempting to determine precisely what actions transpired among the members of the Americal Division command groups upon receipt of the Thompson Report. No written record of anything pertaining to Thompson's complaint has been found—if one ever did exist. All references to the Thompson Report and its allegations were omitted from such written reports as have been found. Thus it was solely through testimony that the facts have been reconstructed. The task has been complicated by the apparent reluctance of some of the principals to testify frankly on the matter and by the significant contradictions in their testimony.

While there is evidence that the seriousness of the Thompson Report may have been muffled in the process of being passed to HS
Young and MG Koster, it is clear that there was available at the
time the report was received, sufficient information of an oper­
ational and intelligence nature available from other sources,
which should have placed the recipients on notice that the events
at Son My were of an exceptional nature.* Evaluation of subseq­
uent actions by key personnel of the Americal Division, indicates
that such notice was not acknowledged. Instead, it seems likely
that when the Thompson Report was received at Division Headquar­
ters it was related to the report concerning 20-28 noncombatants
deaths which MG Koster had previously received.

There was at least a tacit decision to withhold from higher
headquarters any information concerning the incident. Adopting
a "close-hold" attitude concerning all information relating to
this matter, MG Koster directed the incident be investigated by
COL Henderson, but neither MG Koster nor others in the Division
command element took any steps to insure that an adequate inves­
tigation would be conducted. From the start, COL Henderson must
have recognized the lack of any real appreciation at Division for
the enormity of the incident and it appears that he deliberately
set about to conceal information which would indicate its true
nature.

The Inquiry does not exclude the possibility that from an
early time there was a greater appreciation at Division as to the
seriousness of the situation. MG Koster acknowledged that he and
MG Young at some time discussed and dwelt upon the implications of
the allegations. However, in the absence of more specific proof,
the Inquiry cannot conclude that in March and early April the Divi­
sion command element was aware of the nature and extent of the
events which had transpired at Son My.

In the section which follows, the actions of the principals
will be examined in light of the additional information received
from Vietnamese sources.

3. THE SUBSEQUENT REPORTS (THE ABSENCE OF FURTHER INVESTI­
GATION OR REVIEW) APRIL - MAY 1968

1. Introductory

Almost immediately following the events of 16 March 1968,
terror, reports, and VC propaganda relating to the operation be­
gan to move from the VC-controlled Son My Village area in Viet­
namese channels. While it appears that these did not come immedi­
ately to the attention of responsible US personnel, such informa­
tion did begin to reach some US military and possibly civilian
personnel at least by the early days of April 1968.

* See Inclosure 1 for graphic portrayal of knowledge possessed
by key individuals.
The surfacing of this information from Vietnamese sources in the first half of April resulted in further reports but virtually no additional investigation or review within the US chain of command, and a lost opportunity for the Americal command again to review what had transpired. In this section of the report these events are examined.

2. Reports Within Vietnamese Channels

In March 1968, since Son My Village and the surrounding area were VC-controlled, no Government of Vietnam (GVN) officials resided in the village or its hamlets. The Son My Village Chief, Do Dinh Luyen, and the Tu Cung Hamlet Chief, Do Tan Nhon, lived in exile at Son Tinh approximately 10 kilometers from Son My Village. Accordingly, information available to GVN officials regarding activities in the village was based primarily on information obtained from residents of the village who, from time to time, visited the market in Son Tinh. Through this means, and through VC propaganda, some information regarding the US operation in Son My Village on 16 March 1968 reached the appropriate officials and was reported through GVN channels.

a. Census Grievance Report

Based on information obtained from unspecified sources, a Census Grievance Cadreman of Son My Village submitted a written report to the Census Grievance Chief, Quang Ngai, on 18 March 1968, summarizing the results of the allied operation in Tu Cung Hamlet on 15 March 1968. This report indicated that:

(1) After a fierce battle with district VC and local guerrillas, the allies killed 320 people at subhamlets Thuan Yen and Binh Dong.
(2) Twenty-seven people were killed at My Lai.
(3) Eighty people, young and old, were killed at Co Luy hamlet.
(4) During the 3-day operation, a total of 427 civilians and guerrillas were killed.

While this report refers to an operation on "15 March," it apparently referred to the events of 16 March since no operations were conducted in that area on the preceding day. This is the earliest report submitted through GVN channels regarding the incident which the Inquiry found. The report contained no explanatory details. A copy of the report was provided to the Inquiry in early 1970 from the files of the Quang Ngai Census Grievance Committee, but there were no indications that it had been forwarded to Province Headquarters; hence it appears that no action was taken on it. The Census Grievance report, referred to later in this section, which is said to have contained different information was not located by the Inquiry.
b. Report of the Son My Village Chief

Mr. Do Dinh Luyen, Son My Village Chief, submitted a written report, dated 22 March 1968, to the Son Tinh District Chief providing the results of the 16 March 1968 allied operation at Tu Cung and Co Luy hamlets (My Lai (4) is a subhamlet of Tu Cung and My Khe (4) of Co Luy). The report specified that:

1. One US soldier was killed in action (KIA) and two wounded in action (WIA) at Thuan Yen subhamlet.
2. Forty-eight VC were KIA and 52 WIA.
3. 570 civilians were killed; 480 in Tu Cung and 90 in Co Luy.
4. Animals, property, and houses were 90 percent destroyed.

The Son Tinh District Chief stated to this Inquiry that his report had been submitted pursuant to his direction following the receipt of an earlier oral report from the Hamlet Chief and Village Chief. Mr. Luyen stated that his report to the District Chief had been based on hearsay information obtained from people who had talked with residents of Thuan Yen subhamlet [My Lai (4)]. Prior to the Inquiry's locating a copy of his report, in the District Chief's files, Mr. Luyen recalled that he had submitted only an oral report to the District Chief and he did not recall writing a letter. He tended to play down the substance of his report, stating that the people had reported that not more than 30 civilians were killed in Thuan Yen, and that hundreds of VC were killed. He further volunteered to the Inquiry that, according to the rumors which he had heard, deaths were the result of artillery, gunships, and small arms fire during the battle to enter the hamlet and the Americans had assembled the people and shot them. Luyen stated his belief that most of the information he had received was VC propaganda and thus he had not gotten particularly concerned about it.

The written report of Mr. Luyen dated 22 March 1968 which was fact passed in GVN channels contained substantially different allegations from those suggested by his statement to this Inquiry.

c. The Initial Report of the Son Tinh District Chief,
28 March 1968.

LT (now CPT) Tran Ngoc Tan, the Son Tinh District Chief, as a result of the report from the Son My Village Chief, submitted an initial report to the Quang Ngai Province Chief on 28 March 1968 indicating that US forces had conducted an operation at Tu Cung hamlet on "19 March 1968" (an apparent error) which resulted in injuries to a number of hamlet residents. It was reported that the US force entered the hamlet, one soldier was killed and others wounded by a VC boobytrap following which the VC opened
fire from their positions within the hamlet. The US forces re­sponded with intense firepower, including artillery and air, causing injury to hamlet residents with whom the VC force was intermingled. The report stated, additionally, that Tu Cung Ham­let, and other hamlets of Son My Village, had been under VC con­trol since 1964 and that the VC would possibly take advantage of the incident to undermine, through propaganda, the prestige of the Republic of Vietnam Armed Forces and the Government's pacification program.

In addition to submitting the report to the Province Chief, a copy was also forwarded to the S2 and S3 of Quang Ngai Sector. The Province Chief, LTC Ton That Khien, acknowledged receipt of this report in addition to having previously heard about the incident from the District Chief and through some rumors from the people. From the information which is available, indications are that the Province Chief took no specific action in response to this report, but he may have informed the Commanding Officer of the 2d ARVN Division.

d. The Second Report of the Son Tinh District Chief, 11 April 1968

Following up his initial report, the District Chief sub­mitted a subsequent report to the Province Chief dated 11 April 1968 providing more definite information regarding the incident of 16 March and including the allegation that a US Army unit had assembled and killed civilian residents of Son My Village. LT Tan stated that this report was based on additional information pro­vided by the Village Chief, including a list of residents killed. Although LT Tan stated that the list of civilians that had been killed would be found in the files of Son Tinh District, when the files were searched the list could not be located. The 11 April report specified that, after detonating a VC mine and receiving fire from Tu Cung, the US Army unit attacked the hamlet, assembled the people, and shot and killed more than 400 inhabitants. An additional 90 people were said to have been killed at Co Luy Ham­let. The District Chief added that he believed the US unit acted in anger and killed too many civilians in this case even though Son My had long been under VC control and allied forces frequently operated in the area without restriction. He stated that, if true, he considered this an act of insane violence and requested the Province Chief to intervene on behalf of the people.

This report of the District Chief was not based on any inves­tigation of the incident, but as already noted, on reports re­ceived by the Village Chief from residents of Son My who came out from the area to visit the market in Son Tinh and for other reasons. Since Son My was under VC control, no effort was made to corroborate the report at that particular time by an on-site inves­tigation, although the Hamlet Chief and Village Chief were purpo­tedly able to develop a list of residents who had been killed.
According to the distribution stated on LT Tan's 11 April report, copies of this report were forwarded to Headquarters, 2d ARVN Division, and MACV, Quang Ngai Sector [US Advisors] with a courtesy copy to the Major, US Advisor, Son Tinh District. While in Vietnam, the Inquiry was provided copies of this report from the files of both the Province Chief and the District Chief. However, neither a copy of the report nor any reference to it could be found in the files of the US Advisory Teams at Quang Ngai Province and Son Tinh District although exhaustive searches were made.

\[\text{e. Memorandum to the Commanding Officer of the 2d ARVN Division}\]

Based on the District Chief's 11 April report and VC propaganda which he had received, the G2, 2d ARVN Division, submitted a memorandum, dated 12 April 1968, to the CG, 2d ARVN Division, summarizing the allegations regarding the incident. A copy of the VC propaganda message, which is discussed in the following section of this chapter, describing the incident and a copy of the District Chief's report were attached to the memorandum. Upon receiving this information, COL Toan directed that Quang Ngai Sector investigate the incident. In a marginal note on the G2's memorandum, COL Toan stated: "Quang Ngai Sector review this investigation. If there is nothing to it, have the District rectify the report--If it is true, link-up with the Americal Division to have it stopped." Thereafter, on 15 April 1968, a message, signed by the Chief of Staff, directing the investigation in accordance with COL Toan's guidance, was dispatched to Quang Ngai Sector. COL Toan stated to this Inquiry that he recognized that the area was under VC control and that in fact it had not been possible to conduct an on-site investigation.

COL Toan subsequently discussed the incident with LTG Hoang Quan Lam, CG, I CTZ. This discussion appears to have been the only report during 1968 by either Quang Ngai Province or the 2d ARVN Division to a higher authority in the GVN chain of command.

\[\text{3. VC Propaganda}\]

During 1967 and 1968, it was a common technique of the VC to attempt to exploit actions in which they had suffered heavy losses by disseminating propaganda claiming that allied forces had killed many civilians, burned houses, destroyed property, and committed other such acts. This was done through a variety of means including public gatherings, broadcasts, and published leaflets or letters. Such propaganda was regularly monitored by US and Vietnamese intelligence teams, but its grossly exaggerated and drumbeat quality resulted in any purported specific information
it might contain being treated with considerable skepticism and more frequently than not, dismissed as pure fabrication.

It would appear that much of the VC propaganda issued concerning the Son My incident was dismissed in this fashion although some of it did contain an unusual number of specific charges. While the propaganda was in some respects an obvious distortion, it recited some of the events of that day with reasonable accuracy. In fact, this particular propaganda, especially when combined with other information available to US and Vietnamese command elements should have prompted follow-up action.

The following is a summary of the propaganda which this Inquiry found, which in varying degrees came to the attention of US and/or ARVN personnel in the Spring of 1968. This summary of propaganda is in addition to the rumors heard by village, district, and province officials which, for the most part, appear to have been dismissed by these officials as VC-initiated and to which their reaction was tempered by past experience with VC propaganda, a small concern for VC-controlled areas, and an obvious reluctance on the part of GVN officials to embarrass their US allies.

The Inquiry obtained in Vietnam a copy of a Quang Ngai National Liberation Front Committee notice which was dated 28 March 1968. This notice was entitled "Concerning the Crimes Committed by US Imperialists and Their Lackeys Who Killed More Than 500 Civilians of Tinh Khe Village (Son My), Son Tinh District." It specified that:

Xam Lang (Thuan Yen) Subhamlet of Tu Cung Hamlet and Xom Go Subhamlet of Co Luy were pounded by artillery for hours. After shelling, nine helicopters landed troops who besieged the two small hamlets. The US soldiers were like wild animals, charging violently into the hamlets, killing and destroying. They formed themselves into three groups: one group was in charge of killing civilians, one group burned huts, and the third group destroyed vegetation and trees and killed animals. Wherever they went, civilians were killed, houses and vegetation were destroyed and cows, buffalo, chicken, and ducks were also killed. They even killed old people and children; pregnant women were raped and killed. This was by far the most barbaric killing in human history.

The notice stated that 502 people were massacred at Tu Cung and Co Luy Hamlets, including 67 old people, 170 children, and 130 women. Although dated 28 March 1968, the copy of this notice which appears in the record was captured by the Americal Division on 11 December 1969 approximately 20 kilometers northwest of Son My Village. While there is no reliable evidence
one way or the other it is possible that a pre-dated notice was published in late 1969 in order to capitalize on the widespread publicity at that time concerning the Son My incident. The Inquiry found no indication that it in fact reached GVN or US hands at anytime prior to December 1969.

One item found by early April 1968 was a script for a proposed VC broadcast entitled "American Evil Appears." It is not clear how it was obtained. The script indicated that the proposed broadcast was to be used in coordination with VC leaflets with the title "Let American Enemy Pay This Bloody Debt." In addition to the general charges of murder, mistreatment of Vietnamese people, and the destruction of property by US forces, the script specifically highlighted the Son My incident. This was the item of VC propaganda that the G2 of the 2d ARVN Division brought to the attention of COL Toan. The script as provided to COL Toan stated, in part, in translation:

In the operation of 15 March 1968, in Son Tinh District the American enemies went crazy. They used machineguns and every other kind of weapon to kill 500 people who had empty hands, in Tinh Khe (Son My) Village (Son Tinh District, Quang Ngai Province). There were many pregnant women some of which were only a few days from childbirth. The Americans would shoot everybody they saw. They killed people and cows, burned houses. There were some families in which all members were killed.

The propaganda went on to encourage ARVN soldiers to use their guns against American personnel. Several later enemy propaganda broadcasts were made from Hanoi during the period April-June 1968 along the theme that allied forces were committing atrocious war crimes in South Vietnam by murdering innocent civilians, burning houses, abusing women, and destroying property. The Son My incident was cited as one specific example of such an atrocity in each of these broadcasts. Broadcasts are known to have been made on 16 April (2), 17 April, 23 April, and 2 June which provided generally the same description of the incident as the propaganda messages previously discussed.

An intelligence report which was received in April 1968 indicated that soldiers of the Viet Cong were wearing red arm bands on which was a slogan expressing determination to avenge the massacre or murder at Son My. A VC who subsequently returned to government control also indicated that arm bands with a slogan concerning the incident were worn at Binh Duc, an area in eastern Minh Son District. This same individual also reported that he had attended two propaganda lectures in Tu Cung concerning the incident.
On 16 July 1969, a propaganda message published in May 1968 and entitled "The American Aggressors Must Pay For Their Debts in Blood Against the People of Son My" was captured approximately 50 kilometers northwest of Son My. This message, as others, provided a summary of the events on 16 March plus a vivid description of the alleged atrocities against the residents of Son My. The message encouraged the people to hate the Americans and to seek revenge for the murder of their relatives.

From the foregoing, it is apparent that by mid-April 1968, reports and propaganda relating to Son My were circulating in Vietnamese channels which continued for at least several months thereafter. In the next section, the information received by US officials from these sources and the resulting actions are examined.

4. Information Received From Vietnamese Sources and Further US Action

a. The Problem of Contradictory Testimony

The Inquiry met with a welter of contraction, denials of knowledge, and vague recollections when examining what, when, and how information relating to the alleged incident passed from Vietnamese sources to US personnel. But with the aid of documents and information obtained from GVN authorities and the testimony of a few individuals who were in positions to observe portions of the events it has been possible to reconstruct in at least broad outline the information received and to determine those who had the knowledge and were principally responsible for the lack of any effective response in the chain of command.

b. Information Received and Actions Taken By the US Advisory Teams

LTC William D. Guinn was the Deputy Province Senior Advisor of Quang Ngai Province in March, April, and May 1968. He testified that in March 1968 he received a handwritten translation of a report that he was told had come through Census Grievance channels in Quang Ngai. He could not recall who specifically had given it to him. As LTC Guinn variously recalled the report in his testimony in 1969, it had stated that American forces had killed 1,000 or 1,500 or 2,000 in an operation in eastern Son Tinh District. When initially questioned about the report in May 1969, LTC Guinn, testified that "because of the seriousness of the allegation" he carried the report immediately to COL Henderson at his headquarters in Duc Pho so that COL Henderson "could start conducting an investigation on his own. He later testified that he had taken the report to COL Henderson just as soon as he could get a helicopter, but was unable to recall the exact date. When Guinn retold the story in his testimony in
December 1969 before this Inquiry, he added that the report, in addition to stating the large number of casualties resulting from the action of the US forces, had said that they had been killed "by bombing and artillery" and that there was "no indication in there that they had been killed by small arms or ground action."

LTC Guinn explained that in his opinion he had no duty to report the matter since no war crime was alleged, it being expressly stated that the casualties had resulted from bombing and artillery.

LTC Guinn further explained that he had not believed the report and had not considered that any atrocity had been committed. He also stated that he had told COL Henderson of the unreliability of its source, but that he, Guinn, had made no effort to check out the report. According to Guinn, COL Henderson stated that he would check out the report. Henderson flatly denied that he received any such report from Guinn, either orally or in writing, and stated that he believed that he had not even met Guinn up to that time.

In addition to these conflicts in testimony, Guinn's refusal upon being recalled as a witness to answer further questions left unresolved just what report he did receive in March 1968 and specifically how and from whom he received it. Guinn previously had told the Inquiry that he had maintained no file of such things as the Census Grievance report and that accordingly the only place a copy could possibly be found would be at the Census Grievance office. Thereafter, when this Inquiry obtained from the Census Grievance office in Quang Ngai a copy of the Census Grievance report of 18 March 1968 (exhibit M-31), Guinn, exercising his privilege, refused further to testify and accordingly, it was not possible to ascertain whether the 18 March Census Grievance report was in fact the one which he recalled having received.

His previous description of the document and its contents is not consistent with Exhibit M-31, hence there may have been another Census Grievance report.

LTC Guinn testified, on his first appearance before this Inquiry, that the report from Census Grievance was the only one of which he had heard covering the killing of Vietnamese civilians by Americans. However, in prior testimony given to the IG in May 1969, he had stated that LTC Khien, the Province Chief, had received the same information regarding the alleged killing of civilians by US forces and had forwarded it to the 2d ARVN division. He further stated his understanding that COL Toan, LTC Khien, and MG Koster all had conducted investigations to find out what had happened. As previously noted, when this Inquiry went to Vietnam it obtained copies of both the 22 March 1968 report from Mr. Luyen, the Son My Village Chief, to the Son Tinh District Chief (exhibit M-49) and the 11 April 1968 report from LT (now CPT) Tan, the Son Tinh District Chief, to
The evidence does not establish that either LTC Guinn or MAJ (now LTC) Gavin, the Son Tinh District Advisor, or any member of their advisory teams had any immediate knowledge of the village Chief's report at the time it was made. Nor does it appear that members of either advisory team say LT Tan's first report of 28 March 1968 to LTC Khien (exhibit M-5). Although Tan states that he discussed it with Gavin, Gavin denies this. However, despite the denials by Guinn and Gavin of knowledge of this Vietnamese complaint it is clear that LT Tan's 11 April 1968 letter, referring to the Village Chief's complaint, was provided to both their headquarters and was the subject of considerable discussion.

MAJ Hancock, the G3 advisor to the 2d ARVN Division, has traced to the District Advisory Team and presumably MAJ Gavin, the initial Vietnamese report concerning the Son My incident. He stated that LTC Guinn told him in late March or early April that Gavin had received from the Son Tinh District Chief a report of several hundred civilians having been killed by US forces. MAJ Hancock apparently fixed the time of this oral report as preceding the District Chief's 11 April letter.

Shortly after hearing through Guinn of this information received from the District Advisory team, MAJ Hancock recalled having seen the script for the propaganda broadcast (exhibit M-33) and talking about it with Guinn. He further stated that he later saw in an Advisory Team reading file at the 2d ARVN Division the memorandum from the G2 of the division to COL Toan on which COL Toan had noted his direction for sector to investigate.

MAJ Earle, the G2 advisor of the 2d ARVN Division, further corroborates LTC Guinn's knowledge and participation in the actions which ensued. He testified that LTC Guinn, in April 1968, spoke both of the District Chief's report and of the VC propaganda relating to the incident. Guinn also mentioned CPT Rodriguez, the Assistant Son Tinh District Advisor. Guinn further mentioned that he was having someone look into the matter and was seeking additional information. Guinn also stated that he was passing the information up through his channels.

CPT Rodriguez confirms that he received a request from the Province Advisory Team, during MAJ Gavin's temporary absence from Son Tinh between 10 and 16 April, to obtain information regarding the allegations contained in LT Tan's 11 April letter. Since Son My Village was in a VC-controlled area, an on-site investigation by CPT Rodriguez was not possible. He stated that, in response to this request, he limited his actions to discussing the matter with LT Tan and preparing a statement, dated 14 April 1968, in which he expressed the conclusion that LT Tan did not give the Village Chief's complaint much importance (exhibit M-30).
The attitude of LT Tan as thus reflected in the Rodriguez statement appears to contrast with the serious allegations in Tan's 11 April letter. During interrogation by the Inquiry in Vietnam, LT Tan stated that he had seen and agreed with Rodriguez's statement. He added that the substance and intent of his discussion with Rodriguez had not been that the information provided by the Village Chief was invalid or incorrect; rather, in view of the situation throughout Son Tinh District, which was under extreme pressure from the VC with outposts being attacked nightly, he considered a report alleging that some civilians had been killed in a VC-controlled area to be of less importance under the circumstances.

CPT Rodriguez testified that two copies of his 14 April statement were sent to the Province Advisor's office in Quang Nqai and one copy was placed in the files of the Son Tinh Advisory Team. When the Inquiry team was in Vietnam, the only copy of the 14 April statement which could be found was in the personal files of LTC Khien who made available files to the Inquiry and provided the copy entered in the record. The office files of the District, Province, and 2d ARVN Division Advisory teams were similarly bereft of any other paper relating to the 1968 reports.

CPT Rodriguez stated that following the forwarding of his 14 April statement to the Province Advisory office he could recall discussing the matter with no one other than MAJ Gavin, whom he briefed on the matter and showed a copy of his 14 April statement upon MAJ Gavin's return to Son Tinh on 16 April. LT Tan and LT Dawkins, the intelligence advisor at the District Headquarters, recalled talking to both CPT Rodriguez and MAJ Gavin about the incident, but MAJ Gavin, despite the fact that he was the addressee or a courtesy copy of Tan's 11 April letter and the contrary testimony noted above, claimed he was kept entirely in the dark regarding the reports on Son My and knew nothing of what CPT Rodriguez had done or of his discussion with LT Tan during Gavin's absence.

Although LTC Khien stated that he had talked with both Mr. James May, the Province Senior Advisor, and LTC Guinn, who was May's deputy, about the 11 April letter, Mr. May was apparently absent from Quang Nqai at the time the letter was received and he denied ever having heard of the letter or of the Rodriguez 14 April statement. No other evidence links Mr. May directly to the letter or the statement.

As to LTC Guinn, his refusal to answer any questions regarding the materials found by the Inquiry in RVN through the cooperation of the GVN authorities—including the Tan 11 April letter and the Rodriguez 14 April statement—has prevented the development of evidence as to the specific manner in which Rodriguez's 14 April statement was subsequently transmitted to COL Henderson at Pho. Moreover, when Guinn first testified before the Inquiry, he was shown the version of the 14 April statement found...
in the files of the S2 at the 11th Brigade (from which CPT Rodriguez's signature block had been eliminated) and he professed not having seen the statement before. Disassociating himself from the matter, Guinn before this Inquiry denied discussing the allegations regarding the incident with LTC Khien, COL Toan, MG Koster, BG Young or Mr. May, and he did not mention either MAJ Earle or MAJ Hancock. He insisted that his only discussion had been the one with COL Henderson when he brought the Census Grievance report to Duc Pho.

The surrounding circumstances and the testimony of various witnesses place LTC Guinn squarely in the central position at Quang Ngai both in handling Tan's 11 April letter--of which he was an addressee--and in arranging for the preparation and subsequent distribution of Rodriguez's 14 April statement concerning Tan's letter.

BG Young (like MAJ Earle) stated that Guinn expressly told him about the District Chief's report and COL Henderson confirmed that Guinn was present when he talked to LTC Khien regarding "this allegation against US troops." Similarly, MG Koster confirmed that he also talked with Guinn about the District Chief's report to the Province Chief when he had gone to Quang Ngai to speak with LTC Khien regarding these matters. Another apparently knowledgeable member of the advisory teams who has sought to disassociate himself from the events is COL Hutter, the US Senior Advisor to COL Toan. Both MG Koster and MAJ Hancock as well as COL Toan and MAJ Pho, place him at critical meetings in this time frame.

Whatever may have been the extent and detail of Guinn's report to the 11th Brigade and the Americal Division regarding these matters, or the knowledge of COL Hutter, there is no evidence that they ever brought these matters to the attention of their superiors within their respective chains of command, (DCORDS and DSA I CTZ) or took any steps to see that such matters were included in the monthly Advisory Team report or any other reports submitted by the 2d ARVN Division or Province Advisory Teams. (Ironically, the monthly province reports contained laudatory accounts concerning TF Barker.)

c. Information Received and Actions Taken by the 11th Brigade

As previously noted, MAJ McKnight, the S3 of the 11th Brigade, testified that by late March or early April 1968 COL Henderson's investigation concerning the Son My operation was completed and closed with the preparation of a letter to the CG Americal Division giving an explanation of this operation and of what had occurred. He further testified, however, that the matter was reopened in the first half of April because of the receipt of a VC propaganda leaflet alleging that US forces had
massacred 300-400 people in the 16 March operation. MAJ McKnight knew nothing of a report from Census Grievance channels, and the testimony of LTC Guinn and COL Henderson is in conflict as to whether the first report reaching the 11th Brigade from Vietnamese sources was delivered by Guinn. Nevertheless, it is clear that it was information from Vietnamese channels which prompted further action by COL Henderson.

LTC Blackledge confirms the receipt at the 11th Brigade of a report on such VC propaganda. He testified that he "seized" on the fact that this piece was of a different kind than the usual run of VC propaganda and brought it to COL Henderson's attention around the middle of April. He recalled receiving one or two later pieces of VC propaganda of similar import which he also showed to COL Henderson. COL Henderson acknowledged having been shown some such report around mid-April (which he thought had been obtained by the intelligence liaison officer to Quang Ngai Province) and stated that it had alleged that US forces had killed some 470 civilians on 16 March and on an earlier operation.

LTC Blackledge also recalled a further intelligence report which he received about the same time indicating that soldiers of the Viet Cong were wearing red arm bands on which was a slogan expressing determination to avenge the massacre or murder at Son My.

The evidence indicates that COL Henderson moved quickly to allay any suspicions raised by the VC propaganda and the reports emanating from Son Tinh District. He testified that he went "immediately" to see COL Toan and LTC Khien within 24 to 36 hours.

However, his description of the discussions which ensued is confused, contradictory, and belied by other testimony and the documentary record. MAJ Hancock, the S3 advisor to the 2d ARVN Division, was present when Henderson spoke to Toan, as apparently were MAJ McKnight, COL Hutter, and possibly MAJ Earle. He seemed to recall that the meeting took place after 12 April when the G2, 2d ARVN Division, sent his memorandum to COL Toan. MAJ Hancock stated further that COL Henderson, when asked by COL Toan about the allegations of the killing of civilians at Son My, assured COL Toan that the matter had been fully investigated by Henderson himself, that he had landed in the objective area and questioned the troops in the field about the alleged killing of civilians, and that he had been assured in talking with the men that there was nothing to the charges. Apparently no reference was made by Henderson to the earlier allegations in the Thompson Report which had led to Henderson's initial investigation. Hancock recalled that Toan seemed to accept the explanation and that he, Hancock, regarded the matter as closed and concluded that nothing wrong had happened. MAJ McKnight in his description of the meeting stated that while
COL Toan regarded the charges as a VC propaganda stunt, there was an ARVN investigation of the matter which was apparently in progress at the time of the meeting.

COL Henderson, in his account of the meeting with COL Toan, stated that he had told COL Toan that he was very disturbed by the allegations and asked whether he had any knowledge or information that Henderson did not have. COL Toan apparently told Henderson that he had received the District Chief's letter and the VC propaganda message a day or two earlier and that he had directed an investigation which was in progress. In his testimony Henderson said nothing about telling Toan of having made his own investigation in March, rather that he simply told Toan that he was very much interested in the matter and that he too "was trying to ferret out the truth." Henderson attributed the ARVN investigation to a directive from LTG Lam, CG I CTZ, and claimed that he offered to make available to COL Toan any number of troops to go into the area and help him secure it while the matter was looked into. COL Henderson further testified that COL Toan replied: "No. This is VC propaganda. There is no truth to this," and that when Henderson pressed him to accept the assistance, Toan replied that he had told LTC Khien, the Province Chief, to handle the investigation.

From MAJ Hancock's testimony it would appear that the meeting with Toan terminated on a note suggesting that the allegations were groundless and the matter was closed (or at least Hancock so regarded it), but apparently COL Henderson, still very much concerned, went directly to see LTC Khien.

COL Henderson's account of his visit to LTC Khien in his testimony before this Inquiry follows generally his description of his meeting with COL Toan but was at substantial variance with his testimony in May 1969 before the IG. In his May testimony he stated that the province advisors arranged the meeting and that he believed that this was the first time that he had met LTC Guinn. Since Guinn denied ever having such a meeting with Henderson and Henderson's testimony on the point is completely vague, it is left to conjecture what Guinn and Henderson actually said to each other regarding the allegations from the District Chief and the VC propaganda. It was just about this time that the Province Advisory Team was obtaining the statement prepared by CPT Rodriguez on 14 April which COL Henderson used in his later report to MG Koster. LTC Khien was also given a copy of the Rodriguez statement, presumably by LTC Guinn. It seems reasonable to assume that LTC Guinn provided Henderson a copy of the Rodriguez statement at this time or arrangements were made to provide a copy.

As to the meeting with LTC Khien, Henderson testified before this Inquiry that he expressed to him "my regret and how dis-
turbed I was over this thing, and that I wanted to get to the bottom of it, and if there was any truth to it I would make troops available to go with his RF/PF forces, or any other forces, into the area if he was going to conduct such an investigation. (At this point it should be noted that COL Henderson had available to him sufficient assets in terms of ground forces, airlift, and fire support to go into the area at any time, had he really desired to ascertain the facts.) COL Henderson made no mention in his testimony of what he might have told LTC Khien regarding his own investigation in March which he had already completed. Instead, he testified only about what Khien had said to him regarding the Village Chief's allegations. According to COL Henderson, LTC Khien described them as VC propaganda and explained his plan to conduct a counterpropaganda campaign. Henderson also stated that Khien showed him either the Village Chief's or the District Chief's letter which stated that the US forces had gathered up groups of civilians and killed a total of 470 in two operations. Henderson at one time acknowledged that he obtained a copy of some such letter from Khien, but he was not clear as to which one it was. LTC Khien purportedly stated to Henderson that he did not consider an investigation to be appropriate LTC Khien has no recollection of such a discussion with COL Henderson

In contrast to his testimony to this Inquiry, COL Henderson told the IG in May 1969 that the Province Chief, LTC Khien, requested Henderson to assist in his investigation: "He asked if I would send US forces into that area with his ARVN and Local Forces to get some truth out of this. I assured him that I would and told him that I would conduct the operation anytime that he was ready. Henderson went on to state that they conducted such an operation in July 1968 but that it was abortive. Nevertheless, LTC Khien told him afterwards "that from his investigation that he could find no truth to the allegations that US forces had killed some 400 civilians in this area."

Although Henderson acknowledged in his testimony before this Inquiry in December 1969 that he had obtained from Khien a copy of a letter containing the Village Chief's allegations on recall in February 1970, after the Inquiry had succeeded in obtaining copies of both the Village Chief's 22 March 1968 letter (exhibit M-49) and the District Chief's 11 April 1968 letter (exhibit M-34), COL Henderson denied that he had ever seen either of them.

COL Henderson testified to this Inquiry that it was immediately after his visit to COL Toan and LTC Khien in mid-April that he furnished to the Americal Division copies of the Vietnamese documents, with English translations, in which the allegations were contained. According to Henderson this "tripped" MG Koster's memory and led to a request, delivered to him by BG Young, that
Henderson should reduce his earlier oral report to writing so there would be "some back-up in the files here if anything further should develop on the matter." However, according to Henderson, BG Young made it clear that MG Koster did not want to re-open the matter or to conduct a formal investigation.

The testimony given by MG Koster tends to confirm COL Henderson's testimony in this respect. He indicated that the receipt in mid-April 1968 of VC propaganda, "plus something from the District Chief" reopened the subject of civilian casualties in the 16 March operation, but that it did not stimulate any fresh inquiry since COL Henderson had already completed his investigation and had reported upon it at least orally. Rather, the receipt of the VC propaganda led MG Koster to direct COL Henderson to commit his original report to writing. He stated he did not remember that his instructions to Henderson were in writing, but if they were he would say that either BG Young or COL Parson would have prepared the letter. Neither of them recalls having given nor having prepared any such instructions to COL Henderson nor having seen any written instructions in this regard. However, SGM Gerberding, from the S2 office of the 11th Brigade, seemed to recall at one time having seen such a directive from MG Koster in the file at Duc Pho. Although it is possible that such a letter was sent by MG Koster to COL Henderson, and might be anticipated had the matter in other respects been handled with greater formality, since SGM Gerberding is the only person who stated that he had seen such a document, this Inquiry cannot place much credence upon its existence.

In any event, it was at this time in the second half of April that COL Henderson prepared and submitted to MG Koster his so-called Report of Investigation dated 24 April 1968. COL Henderson confirmed that in accordance with the instructions he had received he conducted no additional interrogation and merely put down in letter form the information from his notebook which he had recorded at the time of his earlier investigation. "And with this I prepared what I termed a report of investigation which I acknowledge loud and clear is not a report of investigation." This so-called Report of Investigation was written in longhand by COL Henderson and when typed consisted of a two-page letter with two inclosures. Because of the importance of this so-called Report of Investigation to an evaluation of what took place, the letter is set forth in full. The letter read as follows:
1. (U) An investigation has been conducted of the allegations cited in Inclosure 1. The following are the results of this investigation.

2. (C) On the day in question, 16 March 1968, Co C 1st Bn 20th Inf and Co B 4th Bn 3d Inf as part of Task Force Barker, 11th Inf Bde, conducted a combat air assault in the vicinity of My Lai Hamlet (Son My Village) in eastern Son Tinh District. This area has long been an enemy strong hold, and Task Force Barker had met heavy enemy opposition in this area on 12 and 23 February 1968. All persons living in this area are considered to be VC or VC sympathizers by the District Chief. Artillery and gunship preparatory fires were placed on the landing zones used by the two companies. Upon landing and during their advance on the enemy positions, the attacking forces were supported by gunships from the 174th Avn Co and Co B, 23d Avn Bn. By 1500 hours all enemy resistance had ceased and the remaining enemy forces had withdrawn. The results of this operation were 128 VC soldiers KIA. During preparatory fires and the ground action by the attacking companies 20 noncombatants caught in the battle area were killed. US Forces suffered 2 KIA and 10 WIA by booby traps and 1 man slightly wounded in the foot by small arms fire. No US soldier was killed by sniper fire as was the alleged reason for killing the civilians. Interviews with LTC Frank A. Barker, TF Commander; MAJ Charles C. Calhoun, TF S3; CPT Ernest L. Medina, CO Co C, 1-20; and CPT Earl Michles, CO Co B, 4-3 revealed that at no time were any civilians gathered together and killed by US soldiers. The civilian habitants in the area began withdrawing to the southwest as soon as the operation began and within the first hour and a half
all visible civilians had cleared the area of operations.*

3. (C) The Son Tinh District Chief does not give the allegations any importance and he pointed out that the two hamlets where the incident is alleged to have happened are in an area controlled by the VC since 1964. COL Toan, Cmdr 2d Arvn Div reported that the making of such allegations against US Forces is a common technique of the VC propaganda machine. Inclosure 2 is a translation of an actual VC propaganda message targeted at the ARVN soldier and urging him to shoot Americans. This message was given to this headquarters by the CO, 2d ARVN Division o/a 17 April 1968 as a matter of information. It makes the same allegations as made by the Son My Village Chief in addition to other claims of atrocities by American soldiers.

4. (C) It is concluded that 20 non-combatants were inadvertently killed when caught in the area of preparatory fires and in the cross fires of the US and VC forces on 16 March 1968. It is further concluded that no civilians were gathered together and shot by US soldiers. The allegation that US forces shot and killed 450-500 civilians is obviously a Viet Cong propaganda move to discredit the United States in the eyes of the Vietnamese people in general and the ARVN soldier in particular.

5. (C) It is recommended that a counter-propaganda campaign be waged against the VC in eastern Son Tinh District.

2 Inc1 a/s

ORAN K. HENDERSON
COL, Infantry
Commanding

Although SGM Gerberding stated that four copies of this report were typed (COL Henderson put the number at three), the only copy of this report which was found was a carbon copy retained in a separate personal folder in the S2 office of the 11th Brigade by SGM Gerberding who was given it by LTC Blackledge, the Brigade S2, in April 1968. SGM Gerberding testified that he had been instructed by LTC Blackledge "to keep it confidential," to insure that it received no publicity and not too many people should hear or know about it. Found with the carbon copy

* It will be noted that there is no reference in this paragraph to any member of the 123d Aviation Bn or to WO1 Thompson's complaint.

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of the letter were carbon copies of the two documents which apparently were the inclosures to the letter. The first inclosure was a typed copy of the Rodriguez 14 April 1969 statement, but with the signature block entirely omitted. It read as follows:

Statement

14 April 1968

This statement is in reference to letter from the Son Tinh District Chief to the Quang Ngai Province Chief Subject: Allied Forces Gathered People of Son My Village for Killing, dated 11 April 1968.

The Son Tinh District Chief received a letter from the Village Chief of Son My Village containing the complaint of the killing of 450 civilians including children and women by American troops. The Village Chief alleged that an American unit operating in the area on 16 March 1968 gathered and killed these civilians with their own personal weapons. The incident took place in the hamlets of Tu-Cong and Co-Luy located in the eastern portion of Son Tinh District. According to the Village Chief the American unit gathered 400 civilians in Tu-Cong hamlet and killed them. Then moved to Co-Luy hamlet. At this location the unit gathered 90 more civilians and killed them.

The Son-My Village Chief feels that this action was taken in revenge for an American soldier killed by sniper fire in the village.

The letter was not given much importance by the District Chief but it was sent to the Quang Ngai Province Chief. Later the Son Tinh District Chief was called and directed by the 2d Division Commander, Col Toan, to investigate the incident and prepare a report. The District Chief proceeded to interview the Son-My Village Chief and got the same information that I have discussed above. The District Chief is not certain of the information received and he has to depend on the word of the Village Chief and other people living in the area.

The two hamlets where the incident is alleged to happen are in a VC controlled area since 1964.

There was nothing on this document itself which disclosed its authorship; and none of the witnesses interrogated by the inquiry, before a copy of the Rodriguez Statement was obtained from Vietnamese sources, disclosed from where it came. Those questioned included Henderson, McKnight, Blackledge, Guinn, and Convin. Most of them denied any knowledge as to the origin of the statement. At one point in his testimony, COL Henderson seems to suggest that he obtained the information for the statement (or
perhaps a copy of CPT Rodriguez' Statement) from MAJ Gavin at Son Tinh District. It also appears possible that he, COL Henderson, could have obtained it from LTC Guinn. Irrespective of how COL Henderson may have obtained the statement, the impression conveyed in his so-called Report of Investigation was that the statement was of Vietnamese origin and was actually a translation of a statement prepared by a Vietnamese official.

As previously noted, it was only when the Inquiry obtained from LTC Khien in Quang Ngai a signed copy of the Rodriguez 14 April statement that it was possible to establish the origin of this document which COL Henderson used in his so-called Report of Investigation as the basis for summarily dismissing the allegations in the Son Tinh District Chief's letter of 11 April 1968 regarding the gathering and killing by US forces of people in Son My Village. It appears that COL Henderson and those who participated with him in making this report of his investigative efforts tried to make it appear that the evaluation of the Village Chief's allegations came from Vietnamese and not American sources. Taken with the total absence in any US unit's files of a copy of either the Rodriguez statement or the 11 April letter, it strongly suggests a conscious effort to deceive.

The second inclosure found with the copy of COL Henderson's 24 April letter was an English translation of the script for a VC propaganda broadcast which COL Henderson identified as having been furnished to him on or about 17 April 1968 by COL Toan. This is the same script for a VC broadcast which was attached to the memorandum dated 12 April 1968 from the G2 of the 2d ARVN Division to COL Toan as described above. (See exhibit M-36.) The full text of this piece of VC propaganda is set forth as Inclosure 2 to this chapter.

It will be noted that COL Henderson in his 24 April report, on the basis of his earlier "investigation" of the incident summarily dismissed all of the new allegations as "obviously a Viet Cong propaganda move to discredit the United States in the eyes of the Vietnamese people in general and the ARVN soldier in particular." He, accordingly, recommended that a counterpropaganda campaign be waged against the VC in eastern Son Tinh District.

The evidence establishes that despite some testimony from MG Koster and COL Henderson to the contrary, to which reference is made in the following section, neither COL Henderson nor anyone in the 11th Brigade took any further action with respect to the investigating or reporting of the Son My operation of 16 March 1968, after the delivery of this so-called Report of Investigation to the Americal Division.
d. Information Received by the Americal Division and the Termination of all Investigation

No question was more difficult for this Inquiry to answer than precisely when and what information reached Americal Division headquarters from Vietnamese channels regarding the killing of civilians in the Son My operation. The testimony is confusing as to the time at which particular information reached various individuals and the extent of that information. There is some evidence that the seriousness of the allegations may have been muted by the time they came to the attention of the division command element. Nevertheless, the evidence is convincing that division headquarters was put firmly on notice by several indications that something most unusual had taken place in Son My Village on 16 March and therefore is responsible for the further suppression of crucial information regarding the incident.

Knowledge of the allegations of the Son My Village Chief as set forth in the District Chief's 11 April report and of the VC propaganda relating to the events in Son My came to division headquarters in at least three ways, although there remains a question as to when it reached division in each way. First, from LTC Guinn: as previously noted, BG Young stated that he received a report regarding the District Chief's letter which he passed to MG Koster; moreover, MG Koster himself met with LTC Guinn during this time frame. Second, from the 2d ARVN Division Commander and the Sector Commander: MG Koster briefly discussed the allegations with both COL Toan and LTC Khien. Finally, from COL Henderson and the 11th Brigade: the 24 April Report of Investigation is specific evidence of what was provided from this source. MG Koster was asked who had provided him the information regarding the VC propaganda, and that from the District Chief, before he ordered COL Henderson's 24 April report. He replied: "I'm kind of foggy. It could have come directly from the province, 2d ARVN Division, 11th Brigade, I'd say those were the most likely sources." In his testimony to the IG in May 1969 LTC Guinn, omitting reference to his own contacts with MG Koster, stated that he thought COL Toan had passed the information to MG Koster.

BG Young recalled having been told by Guinn of the village chief's allegations during one of Young's visits to the Quang Ngai Province headquarters. According to BG Young, Guinn told him that the Province Chief had received a letter from the Village Chief indicating that a number of civilians had been killed north and east of Quang Ngai City. He believed that Guinn mentioned the District Chief's 11 April report although he stated that he was not shown a copy of the letter. Guinn apparently indicated to Young that LTC Khien was going to investigate the matter. Although BG Young placed LTC Guinn's report in late May 1968, from all the surrounding circumstances it appears most unlikely that it was later than
mid-April. In view of BG Young's frequent visits to Province headquarters and contact with the Province Advisory team, it is quite possible that Guinn's report to Young was among the earliest of the reports to division on these allegations. Guinn's general denial of discussing the District Chief's report and his subsequent refusal to testify further prevented the Inquiry from determining more precisely the content and fixing the time and circumstances of this report to BG Young. Despite the tandem in which the District Chief's report and the VC propaganda repeatedly appear, BG Young insisted that he was not aware of the VC propaganda; yet various individuals specifically recalled seeing some of the VC propaganda relating to Son My in Division headquarters.

With respect to information obtained from LTC Guinn by division headquarters, it should also be noted that MG Koster in his testimony in February 1970 recalled discussing with Guinn the allegations of the local officials. To fix the time, he stated that the only time he recalled being in a conversation with Guinn was when Guinn accompanied him on a visit to LTC Khien at which the allegations were discussed. He had the impression that Guinn and Khien had done some checking on the matter prior to the time he talked to them. Subsequently, before this Inquiry when shown the 11 April letter from the District Chief to the Province Chief, MG Koster said that he did not recall seeing the letter and did not specifically remember any references to it by LTC Guinn, LTC Khien, or COL Toan. But when pressed on interrogation, his reply was equivocal, "I can't say that I've seen it. I don't know."

Regarding information furnished to MG Koster by the CO of the 2d ARVN Division and LTC Khien, the evidence indicates that some information regarding both the VC propaganda and the allegations in the District Chief's 11 April report was given to MG Koster by COL Toan. MG Koster acknowledged that he had a meeting with COL Toan in mid-April 1968 at the latter's headquarters in Quang Ngai. COL Toan remembered such a meeting with a general from the Americal Division sometime in the first half of April, and MAJ Pho, the ARVN G2 and the author of the 12 April memorandum to COL Toan, fixed the date as several days following his memorandum and indicated that MG Koster was accompanied by COL Hutter, the Senior Advisor of the 2d ARVN Division. Pho recalled being asked to bring his memorandum with its attachments into the meeting and MG Koster confirmed that the overall subject of discussion related, although he could not be specific, to the District Chief's letter and the VC propaganda. MG Koster recalled that COL Toan either had investigated or was investigating the allegations and Koster asked him to let them know if anything thereafter turned up.
MG Koster further stated that he told COL Toan that he had made a check of the Son My operation due to the helicopter pilot's report and had not been able to determine that there was any such thing taking place as had been alleged. Toan recalled speaking about the "rumor" with Koster so he could check out if anything had happened, but indicated that he did not give Koster a copy of either the VC propaganda or the District Chief's letter. This accorded with Koster's recollection that he learned of the allegations either from "seeing the propaganda leaflet or possibly the letter" before he visited Toan. MG Koster was unable to state who had earlier shown him this material. At another point in his testimony, he said that he met with Toan immediately following his visit with Guinn to Khien. But he seemed to recall that his visits to both Khien and Toan were stimulated by what he already had heard and seen.

While at times suggesting that his meetings with Toan and with Khien were in May rather than in April, at other times MG Koster indicated that they could have preceded COL Henderson's 24 April written report. This is consistent with his statement to the CID early in December 1969: "I had been informed of the allegations made by villagers. As I recall, although these appeared to be VC propaganda, they prompted my direction for a written report." Later, to this Inquiry, he stated that he directed COL Henderson to put his oral report in writing to rebut VC allegations of an atrocity.

Further indications that some of these documents reached Division headquarters is found in COL Parson's testimony. He stated that following the Thompson report: "I recall I dropped the incident in my mind because I don't recall hearing any more about it. Sometime later there was a document which I believe was on the same subject written by either the Province Chief or the 2d ARVN Division Commander. I recall the subject had to do with the killing or the unnecessary killing of civilians, possibly [by] artillery...." COL Parson stated that he believed he saw the document in MG Koster's office. Also in his statement to the CID on 14 January 1970 COL Parson stated "I saw a letter that had been written by a Vietnamese official about this incident. Here again, I am not sure what it said, and I am sure that I gave it to the Division Commanding General."

When recalled to testify, COL Parson was shown the District Chief's 11 April letter and asked if that was the document he had seen. Having before him both the District Chief's letter of 18 March and of 11 April, he stated, "I'm unable to say which of these two—I don't recall two, I recall one." From all the circumstances, it seems clear that if COL Parson saw either one of the District Chief's letters to the Province Chief it
necessarily would have been the 11 April report of which both LTC Guinn and MAJ Gavin were indicated as receiving copies; whereas, the 28 March letter did not indicate any US recipients.

SGM Gerberding lent some support for the fact that a copy of the District Chief's 11 April letter reached Division headquarters and MG Koster. As previously noted, he recalled that he had seen a personal letter from MG Koster to COL Henderson stating that the District Chief of Son Tinh had made a complaint to the Province Chief in Quang Ngai that during the operation in March by TF Barker some 450 civilians were killed by TF Barker. He stated that a letter in Vietnamese was attached, together with an English translation. In the letter, as Gerberding recalled it, MG Koster asked COL Henderson to answer the allegations made by the District Chief. As previously stated, the Inquiry was unable either to accept or to reject SGM Gerberding's recollection on this point. He was the custodian of the file copy of Henderson's 24 April Report of Investigation and undoubtedly was in a unique position to see what papers were at the brigade headquarters at that time. However, no other witness recalls any written directive with respect to the investigation and no copy of any such communication has been found.

As already noted, the third channel through which the information from the Vietnamese sources reached Americal Division headquarters was by way of COL Henderson and the 11th Brigade. COL Henderson clearly furnished some information, both as to the District Chief's 11 April report and the VC propaganda, with his 24 April so-called Report of Investigation; but the evidence already outlined, including the wording of the 24 April letter itself, strongly suggests that MG Koster was aware of these matters and, in fact, had requested that Henderson reduce to writing his earlier oral report because of the information that already had been received at division. However, by the 24 April letter it is conclusively established that the command element at division headquarters no later than the time of reading that report, with its inclosures, was expressly informed of the information coming from Vietnamese channels and on notice of what was being said: namely, that in each of the two hamlets where C/1-20 and B/4-3 operated on 16 March large numbers of civilians had been killed.

SGM Gerberding who prepared the letter from COL Henderson's handwritten draft recalled that the 24 April Report of Investigation was delivered to division by the daily courier in a double sealed envelope marked "Eyes of the CG only." On the other hand, COL Henderson testified at one time that he personally carried the "report" to Chu Lai and handed it to COL Parson, which Parson said was a possibility; but Henderson later stated that he believed he gave one report to the liaison
MG Koster recalled that he did not see the report until he returned from R & R on about 3 May. Although BG Young was the acting Division Commander during MG Koster's absence and the one to whom matters would normally be referred in the CG's absence, he testified that he did not see the 24 April report until he was shown a copy by this Inquiry on 13 December 1969. However, he did say that he was certain that Henderson had submitted a written report (but not as late as 24 April) and that he did not believe that Henderson submitted two written reports.

LTC Holladay testified that he was unofficially shown the 24 April Report by COL Parson and upon reading the paper made clear in an epithet his personal view that there had been a cover-up. COL Parson stated that he did not recall this incident, but added "I'm sure it happened, if he said so." As to the 24 April report itself, he said that he could not specifically recall having seen it but that he "might very well have seen it." Later, however, in response to a question he expressly based his answer upon the 24 April report, that he recalled "principally this paper [the 24 April report] here as refuting this as a war crime."

The view was universally expressed by the witnesses that the 24 April letter was a totally inadequate report for any investigation. It was entirely unresponsive to the allegations of WO1 Thompson (which MG Koster stated he had intended it to cover). The omission of any reference to either the Thompson Report or any personnel of the aviation unit indicates a design to delete from the record any reference to the fact that such a complaint had been made.

MG Koster and COL Henderson were so clear as to this inadequacy of the 24 April report when they reviewed it in 1969 that in conversations before they gave testimony they apparently concluded that there must have been a further investigation and later report. MG Koster stated that because the 24 April report was unsatisfactory, he directed BG Young or COL Parson, or possibly both, to have a formal investigation conducted as BG Young had recommended. BG Young, however, denied this. He stated: "...I cannot recall him directing me to pass these instructions to COL Henderson... I'm not aware that a formal investigation was conducted. I cannot recall a formal investigation being conducted." COL Parson also stated that he had no recollection of ever being informed that MG Koster desired that a formal investigation be conducted.

According to COL Henderson, BG Young told him in early May that MG Koster had directed that a formal investigation be conducted. Henderson went on to say that he also discussed
with BG Young the fact that he intended to appoint LTC Barker as the investigating officer and that BG Young concurred. Regarding his instructions to LTC Barker, Henderson stated: "The requirement was that he conduct a formal investigation of the 16 March incident. I believe I also told him that as far as I knew nothing new had developed. This was to have first priority and either at that time or a few days later I told him it was to be completed before he went on R & R on the 20th of May..."

Both Koster and Henderson testified that in May 1968 a formal report was prepared and submitted. Both contended that the report was approximately three pages in length and had attached to it the signed statements of 15 to 20 witnesses. The Inquiry expressly interrogated each individual who might have given such a signed statement and not one could recall ever having made such a statement. No trace of such a document has been found, and not only BG Young and COL Parson, but also other personnel of the Americal headquarters all testified that they had never seen or heard of such a report of investigation. The inescapable conclusion is that no such formal report of investigation ever existed.

From what we were able to ascertain MG Koster apparently accepted the 24 April report without any critical review of its content. The document had been requested in order to make a record of COL Henderson's investigative efforts in March—in MG Koster's words "To show what we had done in this case"—and it was assumed that this had been done. The reference in the inclosed 14 April statement to an 11 April letter of the Son Tinh District Chief brought forth no request to provide a copy of that letter, nor did the absence of any indication on that statement as to its origins evoke any questions. As MG Koster stated in his testimony before the Inquiry in February 1970 when shown the original Rodriguez statement: "I wondered whose statement that was. I have never really known."

It also is appropriate to note that when MG Koster returned from R & R in early May 1968 and the 24 April report probably came to his attention for the first time, he was almost immediately involved in a major operational problem relating to the relief and evacuation of Kham Duc which conceivably pushed to one side other matters requiring the CG's attention.

In all events, conditioned by what Henderson had reported to the command element regarding the results of his immediate investigative efforts in March and their acceptance of his oral report when the allegations of the Son My villagers and the VC propaganda reached division headquarters those who learned of them were
quick to dismiss them as bogus propaganda. In his testimony before this Inquiry MG Koster described his own reaction: "I just didn't feel that an incident like this was apt to have happened." Thus MG Koster assured both COL Toan and LTC Khien that the matter had already been investigated and found to be without substance. COL Henderson delivered a similar message to the GVN officials.

Against this background, MG Koster further stated in his testimony that he had not believed that a war crime had been alleged because the information came from a VC area; it did not correlate with the information from Henderson's investigation; the allegations concerned many more civilian casualties than the number of civilians reported to live in the area; and "the document I read" indicated that the District Chief did not give importance to the matter.

The combination of a natural predisposition to discount all charges from VC-controlled areas as baseless propaganda, a natural reticence on the part of GVN and ARVN officials to express forthrightly any criticism of US forces, the failure of US personnel to recognize the seriousness of the allegations as subtly passed to them, and an apparent deception on the part of the Brigade Commander all contributed to a completely negative command response to the additional allegations that came to division from the Vietnamese sources.

C. GVN/ARVN INVESTIGATIONS

Information regarding Quang Ngai Sector's efforts to investigate the Son My Village incident, as directed by COL Toan, is confusing. The Province Chief did initiate an operation on 11 June 1968, which continued until 13 June, which he stated had the purpose of going to Thuan Yen subhamlet for an on-site investigation of the incident. However, Thuan Yen was never reached supposedly because of the VC strength and fire from the subhamlet and because the operation was diverted to secure a helicopter (in which LTC Barker and CPT Michles were passengers) and an O-2 aircraft which had collided and crashed in the immediate vicinity.

Any suggestion that the operation was for the purpose of investigating the incident is negated almost totally by the testimony of MAJ William Ford who accompanied the operation. MAJ Ford stated that the RF Group, which he served as a Mobile Advisory Team (MAT) advisor, secured the right flank of the aircraft crash site and in doing so passed through, stopped in, and returned through Thuan Yen subhamlet. MAJ Ford talked with some of the remaining inhabitants, but stated that he had never received a request to check the earlier incident, nor did he believe that his RF counterpart had been so directed.
the purpose of the operation was not to investigate the Son My incident is further substantiated by the interrogation reports of the three prisoners captured during the operation. All questions posed to these prisoners were biographic in nature; no questions were asked concerning the incident.

In his efforts to reach Thuan Yen, either in June or during a later operation in August or September, the Province Chief stated that he did meet and interrogate approximately 20 residents of Thuan Yen about 2 kilometers west of the subhamlet. Mr. Burke, the then Province Senior Advisor, and LTC Green of the advisory team both confirm seeing the Province Chief talking to residents in this area in an operation in the late summer or fall of 1968. These people had no specific information regarding the events of 16 March but apparently reported that some residents had been killed. They indicated that when the Americans and the VC began to shoot, the people moved to their shelters or ran to other hamlets and thus they were unable to see how many people were killed. The following day they went to the hamlet and buried an unknown number of bodies, which they estimated to be about 100.

The Province Chief stated that he did not submit a formal after action report covering this operation or a report of investigation, since he had been unable to reach Thuan Yen.

Apparently there were no further efforts by the GVN to investigate the events of 16 March 1968 until 1969 when the incident was brought to public attention.