

CHARLES ROBB'S COMPANY ACCUSED OF ATROCITIES;

LYNDA BIRD'S HUSBAND DENIES ORDER TO KILL, BURN

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BY JACK ANDERSON

SENATOR CHARLES PERCY, R-ILL., HAS ASKED THE PENTAGON TO INVESTIGATE CHARGES THAT MARINE MAJOR CHARLES ROBB'S COMPANY COMMITTED VIETNAM ATROCITIES. THE CHARGES AGAINST LYNDA BIRD JOHNSON'S MARINE HUSBAND HAVE BEEN MADE BY A YOUNG ILLINOIS NEWSMAN WHO SPENT FOUR DAYS WITH ROBB'S COMBAT COMPANY.

ROBB, REACHED AT A MARINE 12TH DISTRICT MEETING IN LAS VEGAS, SAID: "I WOULD BE NAIVE TO SAY THAT NO INNOCENT CIVILIAN WAS EVER KILLED BY SOMEONE UNDER MY COMMAND." HE DENIED ANY KNOWLEDGE OF IT OR ANY ORDERS BY HIS LIEUTENANTS AND SERGEANTS TO KILL OR OTHERWISE HARM CIVILIANS.

THE ALLEGATIONS WERE MADE IN A LETTER TO PERCY BY ANTHONY R. MARTIN-TRIGONA, 24, OF URBANA, ILL., WHO VISITED THEN CAPT. ROBB'S COMBAT COMPANY NEAR DANANG IN AUGUST, 1968.

THIS COLUMN, AFTER A TWO-HOUR INTERVIEW WITH THE UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS LAW SCHOOL GRADUATE, OBTAINED AN AFFIDAVIT SAYING HE WAS TOLD OF THE ATROCITIES BY FOUR MEN IN ROBB'S COMPANY DURING A TALK IN THEIR "HOOTCH."

"ONE INDIVIDUAL INDICATED THAT ON A RECENT OPERATION IN ARIZONA TERRITORY (MARINE AREA OF OPERATIONS (INIT CAPS)) HE RECEIVED THE INSTRUCTIONS 'IF IT MOVES, KILL IT; IF IT DOESN'T, BURN IT.'

"SUBSEQUENTLY THE MEN PRESENT IN THE HOOTCH...RECOUNTED INDIVIDUAL EXPERIENCES DURING THE OPERATION WHICH INCLUDED THE KILLING OF NUMEROUS CIVILIANS IN THE VILLAGES THROUGH WHICH THE OPERATION PASSED AND THAT ONE OF THE MEN PRESENT TOLD EXPLICITLY OF KILLING A PREGNANT WOMAN."

MARTIN-TRIGONA STRESSED THAT THE MEN DID NOT SAY ROBB GAVE THE ORDER TO "KILL" AND "BURN," BUT SAID HE COULD NOT REMEMBER WHO WAS IDENTIFIED AS THE MARINE WHO DID. ROBB DENIES IT WAS SAID.

MARTIN-TRIGONA, NOW A STOCK BROKER AND REAL ESTATE MAN, SWORE THE FOUR MEN TOLD HIM "THAT THEIR FRIENDS HAD BEEN KILLED IN ACTIONS PRECEDING THE ARIZONA INCIDENT. ONE YOUNG MARINE SAID HE PLANNED TO EXTEND FOR SIX MONTHS SO THAT HE COULD AVENGE THE LOSS OF A GOOD FRIEND.

(MORE)

"THE MEN THEN WENT ON TO RELATE HOW THEY HAD BEEN UPSET ABOUT CASUALTIES IN OTHER OPERATIONS, MOSTLY MINES AND BOOBY TRAPS, AND HOW THEY HAD GONE AHEAD AND KILLED IN REPRISAL.

"THE MARINES CONSIDERED ANYONE IN THE ARIZONA AREA AS A VIET CONG SYMPATHIZER OR VIET CONG."

THE CHARGES AGAINST ROBB'S MEN COME AT A TIME WHEN THE ARMY, THE CONGRESS AND THE PRESS ARE INVESTIGATING REPORTS THAT AMERICAN SOLDIERS MASSACRED HUNDREDS OF CIVILIANS IN A VIETNAM HAMLET NICKNAMED PINKVILLE.

MARTIN-TRIGONA STRESSED IN HIS AFFIDAVIT THAT ROBB'S MEN SPOKE OF HIM AS A GOOD OFFICER AND A COMPETENT COMMANDER.

HE SAID, IN AN INTERVIEW, THAT HE HAD TAPED NOTES MADE THE DAY AFTER HOOTCH TALK. THE TAPE INCLUDED THE QUOTE: "IF IT MOVES, KILL IT; IF IT DOESN'T, BURN IT." THE PINKVILLE INCIDENT JARRED HIS MEMORY AND HE WENT BACK AND REPLAYED THE TAPE. MARTIN-TRIGONA SAID HE BELIEVES THAT HE HAS PICTURES OF ONE OR MORE OF THE FOUR MEN AMONG SOME 2,000 HE TOOK WHILE IN VIETNAM DURING PERIODS OF MORE THAN A MONTH IN TWO CONSECUTIVE YEARS.

ROBB, WHO SERVED IN VIETNAM FROM MARCH, 1968, TO APRIL, 1969, CONFIRMED THAT MARTIN-TRIGONA VISITED HIS COMPANY. ROBB OFFERED TO TRY TO HELP IDENTIFY THE FOUR MEN IF HE CAN.

REACHED AT THE STARDUST HOTEL IN LAS VEGAS, SITE OF THE MARINE CONFERENCE, ROBB SPOKE EARNESTLY AND FRANKLY;

"NO SUCH ORDER WAS EVER GIVEN. I WAS NEVER AWARE OF ANY CIVILIAN CASUALTIES EVER INFLICTED BY MY OWN TROOPS. I KNOW OF NO SINGLE CASE. I HAD CONFIDENCE IN MY PLATOON LEADERS AND SERGEANTS."

ROBB TICKED OFF THE NAMES OF THE MEN WHO SERVED UNDER HIM AS PLATOON LIEUTENANTS AND SERGEANTS, PAUSING TO SAY WHO WAS DEAD AND WHO STILL LIVED TO VERIFY HIS STORY.

"ONE OF THEM DIED ALMOST IN MY ARMS," HE SAID. "MANY TIMES WE TOOK CASUALTIES OURSELVES IN ORDER TO RESTRICT CASUALTIES AMONG CIVILIANS." BUT HE POINTED OUT THAT THERE WERE GENERALLY 200 MEN SERVING IN HIS COMPANY, AND REPEATED, "I AM NOT SO NAIVE AS TO THINK THAT SOMETHING MAY NOT HAVE OCCURRED."

ROBB SAID HE WOULD COOPERATE TO THE FULLEST EXTENT TO INVESTIGATE THE CHARGES. HE IS NOW SERVING IN THE WASHINGTON AREA. HIS WIFE, LYNDA, IS EXPECTING THEIR SECOND CHILD.

END JACK ANDERSON SPECIAL)

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