

CONFIDENTIAL ARMY INVESTIGATION INTO LOOTING IN SNUOL, CAMBODIA

Pages 3-5:

Report of Inquiry into the Extent of Damage and the Veracity of News Accounts of Looting by U.S. Troops in Snuol, Cambodia, June 11, 1970

Pages 7-9:

Decision Paper: Report of Inquiry into the Extent of Damage and the Veracity of News Accounts of Looting by U.S. Troops in Snuol, Cambodia, June 20, 1970

**Report of Inquiry into the Extent of
Damage and the Veracity of News
Accounts of Looting by U.S. Troops
in Snuol, Cambodia, June 11, 1970**

**CONFIDENTIAL ARMY INVESTIGATION
INTO THE LOOTING IN SNUOL, CAMBODIA**

CONFIDENTIAL

DISPOSITION FORM

For use of this form, see AF 340-15; the proponent agency is The Adjutant General's Office.

REFERENCE OR OFFICE SYMBOL

AVHIG

SUBJECT

Report of Inquiry into the Extent of Damage and the Veracity of News Accounts of Looting by US Troops in Snuol, Cambodia

TO DCS (PSA)

FROM IG

DATE 11 JUN 1970 CMT 1
LTC Brockington/dw/LBN 4488

CoFS
IG
IN TURN

Info 18
[Signature]

1. (C) PURPOSE: To inform the Chief of Staff of the results of an inquiry into the extent of damage suffered by the village of Snuol, Cambodia and the veracity of news accounts alleging looting by US troops in that village.

2. (C) BACKGROUND: a. On 5 May 1970, the Deputy Chief of Staff, IIFV, directed the IG of that command to conduct an inquiry to determine the extent of damage in the village of Snuol, Cambodia and the disposition of certain French and Cambodian civilians. On 8 May 1970 the inquiry was expanded to include alleged looting of the village by US troops (BLUE TAB A).

b. The inquiry was conducted during the period 6 - 23 May 1970 and a copy of the report was forwarded to this headquarters for information on 6 June 1970 (RED TAB A).

c. On 2 June 1970, DA (TIG), informed MACV that local news media were alleging that US troops had looted the town of Snuol and that Congressional interest had resulted in a query to the SECDEF for information about the alleged incident. DA (TIG) requested information be provided by electrical transmission as soon as possible (RED TAB B).

d. On 6 June 1970, MACV IG provided DA (TIG) with a general summary of the findings of the IIFV inquiry concerning alleged looting in Snuol, Cambodia (RED TAB C).

3. (C) DISCUSSION: a. The inquiry was concerned with facts and circumstances associated with combat operations in and around Snuol, Cambodia, on or about 5 May 1970 and concluded that:

(1) Most of the damage to the village was caused by aerial high explosive and napalm bombs from an airstrike directed on the village to assist in the reduction of hostile forces firing on the 2d Squadron, 11th Armored Cavalry Regiment. Some of the damage was caused by direct fire of tank weapons and small arms and some of the buildings on the southern outskirts of the town had been destroyed prior to the arrival of US forces.

(2) Combat occurred in Snuol because:

(a) NVA/VC forces planned, prepared, and executed a defense of the village and its vicinity.

(b) The Commander, 2d Squadron, 11th ACR, although instructed by BG Shoemaker (ADC, 1st Cavalry Division) not to allow minor resistance to force damage in Snuol,

DOWNGRADED AT 3 YEAR INTERVALS
DECLASSIFIED AFTER 12 YEARS

CONFIDENTIAL

DIG

SUBJECT: Report of Inquiry into the Extent of Damage and the Veracity of News Accounts of Looting by US Troops in Snuol, Cambodia

felt that the main emphasis of his orders was to cut the routes into and out of Snuol within a limited period of time (48 hours). The squadron commander anticipated an enemy ambush on the major avenue of approach to the village (Route 7) and, therefore, approached the built up area from the south, about 1500 meters east of Route 7. He had planned to bypass the village on the west side, however, enemy action blocked this maneuver and he moved directly on the town in an attempt to eliminate enemy forces entrenched there.

(3) About 50% of the structures in Snuol were destroyed or damaged. The damage was mainly around the market place on the north, east, and south. In addition, eleven bodies presumed to be civilians, were found.

(4) The entrance into, and the destruction of a portion of, the village of Snuol was not necessary to the accomplishment of the mission assigned to the 2d Squadron, 11th ACR.

(5) Very few noncombatants were present in Snuol at the time of the action.

(6) The news accounts concerning looting by US troops in Snuol were exaggerated. Soft drinks and a motor scooter were taken, and a back hoe (small tractor) used by NVA/VC was still in the hands of the 2d Squadron, 11th ACR. The motor scooter has been returned to Snuol. Pilferage of other items was attempted but was stopped by junior leaders. Allegations of looting of beer, mirrors, suitcases, shoes, clocks, flashlight batteries, thermos coolers, and "wads" of Cambodian currency were not substantiated. No evidence of burning of sheds after cessation of combat nor of forceful entry of buildings was found.

b. The report of inquiry recommended that:

(1) The Commanding Officer, 11th Armored Cavalry Regiment, be directed to determine the rightful owner of the back hoe and accomplish its return.

(2) The report of inquiry be approved and the inquiry closed.

(3) Information copies of this inquiry be furnished CG, USARV, CG, 1st Cavalry Division, and CO, 11th Armored Cavalry Regiment.

c. The testimony of the Commanding Officer, 2d Squadron, 11th ACR, (RED TAB A - RED MARKER) established that certain French civilians were located and evacuated.

d. The report of inquiry did not recommend disciplinary action against any person or persons.

CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

7HIG

SUBJECT: Report of Inquiry into the Extent of Damage and the Veracity of News Accounts of Looting by US Troops in Snuol, Cambodia

4. RECOMMENDATIONS: It is recommended that:

a. That the Chief of Staff note the above and the Report of Inquiry at RED TAB A.

b. That the Report of Inquiry be provided the USARV G3 and G5 for information and any action deemed appropriate.

c. After review by the USARV G3 and G5 the report be returned to this office for file.

LIST OF TABS

RED TAB A - Report of Inquiry
RED TAB B - Message to MACV from
DA (TIG)
RED TAB C - Message to DA (TIG)
from MACV IG



WILLIAM T. VAN ATTEN
Colonel, IG
Inspector General

**Decision Paper: Report of Inquiry
into the Extent of Damage and the
Veracity of News Accounts of
Looting by U.S. Troops in Snuol,
Cambodia, June 20, 1970**

**CONFIDENTIAL ARMY INVESTIGATION
INTO THE LOOTING IN SNUOL, CAMBODIA**

DISPOSITION FORM

CONFIDENTIAL

For use of this form, see AR 340-15; the proponent agency is The Adjutant General's Office.

REFERENCE OR OFFICE SYMBOL
AVDAJA

SUBJECT
Report of Inquiry Concerning Snuol, Cambodia

TO CofS concur nonconcur
CG approved disapproved
FROM Staff Judge Advocate DATE 20 June 1970 CMT 1
CPT Linebarger/cm/...

1. This is a decision paper.
2. PROBLEM: To determine any further action required on the Report of Investigation concerning Snuol, Cambodia.
3. FACTS BEARING ON THE PROBLEM:
 - a. On 5 May 1970, the 2d Squadron, 11th Armored Cavalry Regiment, had the mission of securing the city of Snuol, Cambodia. During combat operations in and around Snuol, approximately half of the village was destroyed and there were reports of looting and pillage by American soldiers.
 - b. There exists inconsistency as to the exact mission of the 2d Squadron concerning Snuol. Colonel Starry and Lieutenant Colonel Brookshire both state that the mission was to secure routes in and out of Snuol. LTC Brookshire refers to a decision between himself and COL Starry about going into Snuol. COL Starry states that he and LTC Brookshire decided that it was best to bypass the village. LTC Brookshire nevertheless went into the village for tactical reasons.
 - c. Most of the witnesses questioned stated that they received fire from the village and in order to protect themselves, it was necessary to fire upon the village and call in aerial strikes against Snuol.
 - d. Aerial photographs and eye witness reports substantiate the fact that Snuol was being used by NVA/VC elements as a defensive position. Bunkers, anti-aircraft weapons, field fortifications and trenches were all noted in photographs and by those in the air above Snuol. Additionally, the statement by an NVA captive shows that the NVA were to protect Snuol and to set up defensive positions.
 - e. Reports of looting and pillage are confirmed by statements in the file. A motorbike, cases of soft drinks, sunglasses, and razor blades are among the items mentioned as being taken. The evidence, however, does not support the reports that massive looting of items such as Cambodian currency, shoes, and suitcases took place. It is evident that scattered attempts to loot were made. However, through fast and efficient action by officers and noncommissioned officers, the attempts were thwarted and items were returned. There is no evidence of a general rampage through undestroyed shops or senseless destruction of buildings in Snuol. There is raised the further possibility that if any unlawful taking occurred, it was done by civilian reporters in their wandering about the village.

4. DISCUSSION:
 - a. MACV Directive 20-4 and the Law of Land Warfare (FM 27-10) both list those things that are war crimes and breaches of the Geneva Conventions. Among them are the prohibition against destruction of undefended population centers that do not have strategic military importance and the pillage of a town or place, even when taken by assault.

CONFIDENTIAL

DA FORM 2496

REPLACES DD FORM 94, EXISTING SUPPLIES OF WHICH WILL BE ISSUED AND USED UNTIL FEB 68 UNLESS SOONER EXHAUSTED.

GPO: 1969 - 343-784/5

BY: [Signature] NARA Date

CONFIDENTIAL

AVDAJA

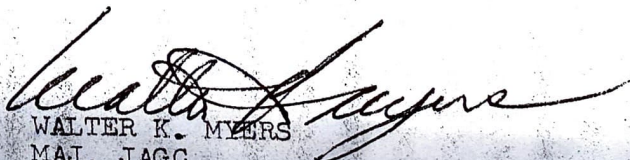
SUBJECT: Report of Inquiry Concerning Snuel, 20 June 1970

b. The Investigating Officer concluded that most of the damage to Snuel was caused by aerial bombardment. Aerial attacks were reported to have been reported that enemy forces were using the village to attack American forces. Additional damage was caused by American ground forces in their attempt to protect themselves and to advance toward their intended target. The evidence supports the findings of the Investigating Officer that NVA/VC elements were in Snuel and that the village was fired upon for that purpose alone. There was no violation of the rules of engagement or the Geneva Conventions.

c. The Investigating Officer concluded that reports of looting were exaggerated. This does not take away from the fact that looting did occur on a small scale. Small items such as soft drinks appear to be the extent of the looting. A motorbike was taken but returned. A back-hoe was taken but this can be considered to be an authorized article of confiscation since it has a military value. The taking of soft drinks that the evidence shows were taken is in contravention to MACV Directive 20-4. Reports of additional looting are not substantiated. The evidence does show that American troops did attempt to loot some shops but were turned back by higher authorities. It does appear that there was very little success in these looting attempts.

5. RECOMMENDATIONS:

- a. That this Report of Investigation be accepted.
- b. That Skytroopers of the 1st Cavalry Division (Airmobile) be given specific information on proper behavior in such situations as this through such channels as Troop Information topics, The First Team Academy instruction, etc..
- c. That this investigation be maintained on file at the Office of the Division IG.


WALTER K. MYERS
MAJ, JAGC
Acting Staff Judge Advocate

Approved
George W Casey
Maj Gen USA
30 June 1970

CONFIDENTIAL

Regraded UNCLASSIFIED when separated
from classified inclosures

1. UNIT: 2d Squadron, 11th Armored Cavalry Regiment
2. LOCATION: Snoul, Cambodia
3. DATE: 5 May 1970. ROI conducted 6-23 May 1970
4. ALLEGATION/PURPOSE: This inquiry was concerned with the facts and circumstances associated with combat operations in and around Snoul, Cambodia on or about 5 May 1970; to include, an inquiry as to how and why damage to this village came about, in view of orders to avoid the village, an inquiry to ascertain the extent of damage within Snoul, and an inquiry into the veracity and accuracy of the news accounts of looting by troops in Snoul.
5. SOURCE: News accounts appearing in "The Vietnamese Guardian" on 8 May 1970 and "Time Magazine" on 18 May 1970.
6. FINDINGS:
 - a. Most of the damage to the village was caused by aerial high explosive and napalm bombs.
 - b. Combat occurred in Snoul because:
 - (1) NVA/VC forces planned, prepared and executed a defense of the village and its vicinity.
 - (2) The CO 11th ACR felt the main emphasis of his orders was to cut the routes into and out of Snoul within a short period of time.
 - c. About 50% of the structures in Snoul were destroyed or damaged.
 - d. The entrance to and destruction of a portion of the village was unnecessary to the accomplishment of the mission.
 - e. Very few non-combatants were present in Snoul at the time of the action.
 - f. News accounts concerning lootings by US troops in Snoul are exaggerated. Soft drinks and a motorscooter were taken, and a back-hoe used by the NVA/VC is in the hands of the 2d Squadron, 11th ACR. The motor scooter has been returned. Pilferage of other items was attempted but was observed and stopped by junior leaders. Additional allegations of looting and burnings were not substantiated.
7. IG ACTION: Received ROI from II Field Force and forwarded to C/S, DCG, G3 and G5 for information.
8. UNIT ACTION: Unknown.
9. ADDITIONAL ACTION: Unknown.
10. FOLLOW-UP: Unknown.

CONFIDENTIAL

DOWNGRADED AT 5 YEAR INTERVALS
DECLASSIFIED AFTER 12 YEARS
EOD DIR 8200.10