**Defense Witnesses:**

**Statement of Lieutenant William Calley - Defendant**

I am Lt. William Calley. I was born and raised in Miami, Florida. After dropping out of junior college, I travelled to several different states working as a busboy, dishwasher, and freight train conductor. I didn’t especially like these jobs and was looking for other opportunities when I got a notice I was to be drafted into the Army. That didn’t bother me too much. My father was a WWII veteran whom I admired. In fact, I had tried to enlist in the Army two years earlier and was rejected because I was tone-deaf. Now that the Army needed more soldiers in Vietnam, I guess they had reduced their standards and now accepted people like me. Instead of waiting for my paperwork to be processed, I voluntarily enlisted.

I began my Army career as a clerk and shortly afterwards was unexpectedly selected to go to Officer Candidate School. Although officer training was difficult for me, at graduation I was promoted to second lieutenant and placed in charge of a platoon in “Charlie Company” of the 20th Battalion. After a short stateside training period, our unit was sent to Vietnam and stationed near an area designated a Free Fire Zone. We were assigned to protect local villagers and keep the area safe. I reported to Captain Ernest Medina. He seemed a good leader, and I wanted to earn his respect.

I led my men on at least 10 “search and destroy missions” in the three months prior to My Lai. Most had never seen combat or faced the Viet Cong whose chief tactics were hit and run attacks to destroy our morale, night ambushes, and “booby traps”. Fighting was especially difficult, because the Viet Cong often operated out of sympathetic villages and dressed like the local population.

In the weeks prior to My Lai, over half my men were killed or wounded and our attitude toward the Vietnamese had soured. We were told by more experienced soldiers we should fear old men, women, and children alike. Not only were women better shots, but children were considered equally dangerous since they seemed so innocent when they approached to attack. You just never knew what to expect, and many of us came to believe that by killing children there would soon be fewer enemies to kill our troops.

On the night before My Lai, Captain Medina spoke at a funeral of a man from our company. He told us “we’ve got to be more aggressive, because we can’t afford to take on any more casualties.” In a mission briefing after the funeral, he reported that Army Intelligence had reported Viet Cong were living in My Lai and that we had been ordered to completely destroy the village. I was instructed to lead the attack with two platoons and that Medina would block any retreat with the rest of the Company. I remember Captain Medina telling us to “make sure there was no one left alive in My Lai.” He also told us that My Lai had twice as many guerillas as we had men, they were well armed, and we could expect heavy fire.

On the morning of the attack, helicopters landed us just outside the village and when in formation, I ordered our men forward. Firing began immediately, the first shot coming from the village. Following my orders, all village huts were blown up and anything moving shot. I felt this was okay since we knew My Lai was in a Free Fire Zone and all innocent civilians should have already left the village by then. At one point, we herded a large number of villagers together, and I radioed Captain Medina for instructions. He demanded to know what was delaying our attack. When I told him about the villagers, he told me that we did not have time to deal with prisoners and to “get in the goddamn position. And don’t worry about the casualties.”

I was sure these people were responsible for the killing many men in our platoon, and if not “neutralized,” we’d have to fight them again and again. Being in the middle of a firefight, we just didn’t have time to think about whether what we were ordered to do was legal without endangering our men and our mission. For all I knew, many of these villagers had guns or grenades under their clothes, but in the middle of a firefight, we had no time to check that out. So based on Captain Medina’s orders, I ordered these people shot.

To me, I was in a no-win situation. I had been ordered to kill Viet Cong in a Free Fire Zone. Worse still, based on our prior missions we knew were fighting an enemy who did not obey any “rules of war.” And Captain Medina had made it clear that we were seriously outnumbered and it was necessary to be aggressive if we were to avoid further casualties. We had no time to deal with prisoners particularly since we’d been ordered to “make sure there was no one left alive.”

In my opinion, the only reason I am on trial is that when word of the large number of civilian deaths leaked to the public, the Army had to cover up its role in the attack. It needed a scapegoat, and I was chosen even though I was only doing what I had been ordered to do.

**Statement of Captain Ernest Medina - Defendant**

I am the son of Mexican American parents and after my mother died, was raised by my grandparents in Colorado. I always wanted to serve my country and when I was 15 lied about my age and joined the National Guard. When I turned 18, I enlisted in the regular U.S. Army.

I spent the first 8 years of my service as an enlisted man and turned down several chances to become an officer since I felt I did not have enough education to be an officer. I decided, however, to take college courses at night and finally accepted a chance to go to Officer Candidate School. I graduated at the top of my class and two years ago was promoted to Captain. I feel I am well-respected by my seniors and the men serving under me. In February 1968, I rescued several wounded men from a minefield and was awarded a Silver Star.

In March of that year, I commanded “Charlie Company” in Quang Ngai Province, Vietnam, which the Army had declared a Free Fire Zone. My Company was divided into three platoons, including one commanded by Lt. William Calley. I can honestly say I was never very impressed by the Lieutenant. Despite these misgivings, it was my responsibility to make sure he ran his company properly and followed orders.

My Company had been involved in multiple “Search and Destroy” missions during the three months before My Lai, our mission, to eliminate any Viet Cong guerrillas in the area. During the day, these guerillas lived in local villages and dressed like local civilians. At night they engaged in ambushes, set booby traps and otherwise tried to kill my troops. During this period, we lost nearly half our men, to snipers and booby traps. We seldom saw who we were fighting and morale was low. And we knew that women and children were helping these guerillas.

On March 15th, Battalion Headquarters advised me that Army Intelligence had reported that upwards of 250 armed Viet Cong were using My Lai as a base of operation, outnumbering our troops 2 to 1. I was ordered to destroy the village and drive the Viet Cong out the next morning. That night, we attended a funeral service for one of the most popular men in our company. Immediately after, I met with Lt. Calley and my other platoon leaders to plan the My Lai attack. I told them about the Army Intelligence report and also advised them that by the time we arrived in the village all civilians would be gone. I then ordered Lt. Calley to lead two platoons to attack the village, while I would take charge of the third platoon to prevent any escapes. I told them “to destroy the village, burn the hooches, kill the livestock, close the wells, and destroy the food crop.” I am sure I told the men that if a woman or child was trying to kill them, they could shoot back, but otherwise they should not be harmed.

When we began our attack the following morning, it seemed to me that the area was “cold.” I just didn’t see the level of return fire expected from 250 armed guerillas. When I reported this to my commanding officers, they indicated we were indeed under fire and the attack should continue. Although their information seemed incorrect, it was all I had to go on. I proceeded as ordered and told my men that the area was “hot” and heavy fire should be expected.

During the attack, I stayed on the My Lai perimeter so I could monitor what my three platoons were doing. I did not enter the village while the attack was underway. After the attack, Calley reported that over 550 Vietnamese had been killed. The third platoon which I was leading killed 28 guerillas trying to flee My Lai and captured ten men of military age. None of our men were killed. Twelve days later, I sent a report to Headquarters describing the body count and the village’s destruction. When the report was later forwarded to General Westmoreland, commander of U.S. forces in Vietnam, he congratulated our Company for outstanding action.

Months later, I was surprised when photographs were published and newspapers began referring to the attack as the “My Lai Massacre.” Despite these deaths, I certainly wasn’t responsible for the killing these unarmed civilians. I knew that was contrary to Military Law. And I never ordered Lt. Calley to kill unarmed civilians or prisoners. Based on my own training at Officer Training School, I had every reason to believe he also knew that it was a crime to do that. However, I also understand that in the heat of battle it is difficult to distinguish between enemies and innocents and such deaths unfortunately often occur in devastating firefights of this type, particularly in Free Fire Zones.

**STATEMENT OF PLATOON SERGEANT, DEFENDANT**

I am Army Sergeant \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_. I grew up listening to my father and grandfather’s stories about their service in the two World Wars. They and their men were my heroes, and I had wanted to make the military my career ever since. I joined the Army when I graduated high school and have served nine years, the last three in Vietnam. I know my job as sergeant is critical to the Army’s mission since it allows me to teach young men new to combat how to perform under intense stress. These men are like sons to me, and I will do what it takes to protect every one of them.

When I got to Vietnam, I was assigned to a 36 man platoon in Charlie Company of the 20th Battalion commanded by Lieutenant Calley. We were stationed near a Free Fire Zone which included My Lai. During the three months prior to the My Lai attack, I was part of ten “Search and Destroy” missions to root out the Viet Cong and saw almost half of my platoon killed or wounded. These were often confusing and always dangerous assignments. We fought people dressed like local villagers, not soldiers. During the day, they were farmers, at night guerrillas. The week before My Lai, three of my men were killed by sniper fire and booby traps, which I’m pretty sure were set by women and children. I was in two patrols shot at from the direction of My Lai.

Shortly after a funeral for one of our men on March 15th, Captain Medina, our Company commander, told Lt. Calley and me that we had been ordered to take part in an attack the next day to rout out any guerillas hiding in My Lai. We all were pretty sure that some of these people were responsible for the deaths of our men, and we needed to show them we were the stronger force. I heard the Captain tell Lt. Calley to “clean out the village” and be geared up for a big fight.

The next morning, we were flown to My Lai. When in position, Lt. Calley gave us the order to advance. Firing began almost immediately. I’m pretty sure someone from the village fired first, and since we were in a Free Fire Zone, my men fired at anything that moved. The noise was intense. Huts were set on fire, and when villagers came out and pretended to surrender, they were shot. Remember, this was a Free Fire Zone and based on previous combat missions, we knew the Viet Cong often hid weapons such as grenades under their clothing. The battle had gone on for about 20 minutes when a radio message was received ordering us to stop firing.

Before that order was given, I saw about 50 villagers standing in a drainage ditch shot at point-blank range by several of our men and Lt. Calley, who then ordered my squad to shoot another group. My job was to follow orders, not to assess right or wrong on the battlefield in the middle of a fire fight in a Free Fire Zone. If you don’t instantly obey orders like this, it can mean the difference between life and death and mission success. I did as ordered.

I believe all my men were good soldiers and in these circumstances, their actions were justified. We were following orders, and these people had been killing our men and preventing us from following up on our mission to protect local village. People back in the States just don’t understand what we soldiers must learn from experience if they are to survive and do their job. Terrible things happen in the heat of battle, but you can’t blame us grunts for doing what we’re told. We have to look out for each other. If someone should be punished for My Lai, it should be the senior officers who ordered the attack, not grunts following orders in the heat of battle.

**STATEMENT OF ARMY COLONEL \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_**

**WITNESS FOR THE DEFENSE**

At the time of the My Lai incident, I was a Colonel in command of the 20th Battalion in Quang Ngai Province. The province was a stronghold of Viet Cong guerillas, who we knew were supporting North Vietnam’s invasion of South Vietnam. Our mission, set by President Lyndon Johnson, was to stop the Communists from taking over South Vietnam and putting neighboring countries at similar risk.

Because of intense Viet Cong activity in the area, the Province had been declared a “Free Fire Zone.” As a result of that designation, all civilians had been instructed to leave the province and those who remained were advised they would be assumed to be supporting the Viet Cong and considered hostile. In other words, our troops were effectively instructed not to trust any villagers in the area, particularly in villages which permitted the VC to operate from their villages. Villagers who were friendly during the day, became deadly enemies at night. Over half the casualties in my command came from mines and booby traps set by old men and women, even by children, along roads and jungle trails. Most of the soldiers in my command were draftees, who had had only eleven weeks of training before being shipped to Vietnam. They knew little about the war and had only a basic understanding of “rules of war” governing the treatment of prisoners.

In early March 1968, I received a report from Army Intelligence that a Viet Cong Battalion was operating out of My Lai. In response, on March 15th I ordered Captain Ernest Medina, the well-respected commander of Charlie Company, to force the Viet Cong into the open, which other companies under my command would then attack. To avoid unnecessary casualties, the operation was scheduled for the morning of the 16th when women and children typically were at work in the fields. I didn’t really know Lt. Calley or other platoon leaders very well.

On the day of the attack, I was in a helicopter about 1000 feet above My Lai, listening to the radio communications between soldiers on the ground. I heard what was happening described as a “blood bath” and radioed that “I don’t want any unnecessary killing down there.” After a similar disturbing report from an Army helicopter pilot, I ordered all combat to stop.

After the operation, I asked Captain Medina and my other commanders for a “body count” of guerillas killed at My Lai. Unlike other wars, where captured territory was the standard for the Army to determine mission success, in Vietnam the standard was the number of enemy killed and wounded. A low body count was known to reflect badly on any command. I received reports that more than 550 Communists had been killed and the village destroyed. I considered the mission a success. I believe the actions in My Lai were fully justified in the circumstances of an active fire fight in a Free Fire Zone. I commend my men for their bravery and thoroughness and their follow through on my orders.

Six months after the battle, photographs of the My Lai dead were published in *Life Magazine.* Knowing little about real combat, the American public was not unexpectedly shocked at what seemed the killing of innocent civilians and demands were made for an Army investigation. Because of the publicity, I resigned from the Army and returned to civilian life.

As Commander of the 20th Battalion, I believed the only way to defeat these guerillas was to flush out and kill as many as possible, and then to destroy the villages that hid and fed them. I once said, “You’ve got to dry up the sea the guerrillas swim in. And the best way to do that is to blast the hell out of the villages.” I never understood why the My Lai deaths were considered war crimes, when tens of thousands of similar deaths from U.S. Air Force bombing of Vietnamese villages were not. The only difference at My Lai was that my men did the killing at close range.

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**Prosecution Witnesses:**

U.S. ARMY HELICOPTER PILOT STATEMENT- WITNESS FOR THE PROSECUTIION

I am Sergeant \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ and was attached as a helicopter pilot to the 20th Battalion in Quang Ngai Province. I was responsible for flying reconnaissance over combat zones to spot enemy movements and call in armed aircraft to intercept any I identified. When the attack on My Lai occurred, I had been in Vietnam for six months and had flown over 100 combat missions.

On the morning of March 16, 1968, I was ordered to conduct reconnaissance over the village of My Lai to support a “Search and Destroy” mission by Charlie Company. My orders were to spot any Viet Cong guerillas that Army Intelligence had advised were hiding in the village.

When the attack began, I saw twenty or so armed guerillas fleeing the village. Several minutes later, I saw Lieutenant Calley and his men herd a large number of men, women and children toward a ditch in the middle of the village. I don’t remember seeing any young men of “fighting age” in the group, though it is possible there were some. None seemed armed. I then saw Lt. Calley and several soldiers begin shooting these villagers at close range, a kind of assembly line for killing.

Something about this was clearly wrong, and I felt it was my responsibility to do something about it. I landed my helicopter between our soldiers and the Vietnamese prisoners. I told Lt. Calley that I had ordered my gunner to fire on anyone who interfered with these villagers and radioed the Battalion commanders to tell them what was happening. I believe my message led to an order to cease the attack.

Later that day I was asked what happened. I said: “I’m not going to point the finger, because it was very hard to tell who the bad guys were.” I had seen enough combat to know that things like this happened in fire fights in Free Fire Zones. I also knew that in the prior three months, Charlie Company had lost nearly half its troops. While I felt what I saw was wrong, I understood how our soldiers felt and how difficult it was to tell who the innocents were. I may have done the same thing if I had been down there.

U.S. ARMY PHOTOGRAPHER STATEMENT- WITNESS FOR THE PROSECUTION

I am \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_. I served as a photographer stationed with the 20th Battalion in Quang Ngai Province. On March 16, 1968, I was ordered to accompany Charlie Company, commanded by Lt. Calley, and photograph a “Search and Destroy” mission in My Lai, a village located in a nearby Free Fire Zone.

Before moving out, Captain Medina told us that Army Intelligence had reported that Viet Cong guerrillas were using My Lai as a base of operation, and that Charlie Company’s mission was to wipe out these guerrillas and destroy the village. During the operation, I took photographs of our troops killing men, women, and children. In one instance, I photographed a large number of seemingly unarmed villagers herded into an irrigation ditch and shot by Lt. Calley and several other soldiers. I saw others throw grenades into village huts and shoot anyone that came out. There were bodies everywhere and it seemed only a few villagers were able to escape. When the attack ended, I could identify only about 15 armed men out of those killed.

On the day of the attack, I was carrying three cameras. One belonged to the Army; the others were my own. I gave the film from my Army camera to Battalion Headquarters and kept film from my cameras as personal property. Later, I sold my photographs to a free-lance journalist, who published them in a *Life Magazine* article. I understand that those photographs outraged the American public, and a subsequent Army investigation resulted in several officers and soldiers being charged with murder.

I understand that before the attack, Charlie Company had been in combat for over 90 days and lost nearly half its men. I also understand how difficult it is for soldiers under strict orders and after experiencing losses like that, to evaluate the legality of their actions during a firefight in a Free Fire Zone. I believe, however, that at least some of these defendants are guilty and must be held accountable.

MY LAI VILLAGER STATEMENT- WITNESS FOR THE PROSECUTION

I am 30 years old and was born in the village of My Lai. I and my children have lived in this village all our lives as have my mother and father and our ancestors far back in time. Several years ago some fighting men from other villages began to come through our village every few months. They said they were the Viet Cong. We had no idea who these men were or what they were doing. They took some of our food and forced us to let them live in our village. They talked some of our villagers into joining in their fight against bad people from the capital of our country and foreigners from outside our country.

My family and I did not know these Viet Cong fighters or any people from our capital or from outside our country. We had heard good and bad things about these fighters and mostly bad things about the foreigners. Some of our people joined the Viet Cong, but my family did not trust them and did not have anything to do with them.

One day in the spring as we were planting our crops, some foreign soldiers came running into our village shooting their guns and burning our huts. They were yelling at us and seemed to be telling us to do things. But we didn’t understand their language. Some people ran away. Others were afraid to move at all. I was planting near the edge of the jungle, and I ran quickly to hide behind the trees and vines.

From my hiding place I heard a lot of gunshots and screaming and smelled smoke. I heard big machines come down from the sky and land in my village. I saw some people from my village being herded into a big drainage ditch like animals. After a long time, everything was quiet. After more time, one of the foreign soldiers found me in my hiding place. He took me to the center of my village. There were dead bodies everywhere and many in the ditch. I found that all my family was dead and our food and huts burned.

I looked around at the foreign soldiers. These must be the “bad people” the Viet Cong had warned us about. We should have listened. I hope one day these “bad people” are punished for having destroyed my village and almost everyone in it.

**Statement of Private ­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­--­­­­­-------------**

**Witness for the Prosecution**

I am Private --------------------and served in a Charlie Company platoon commanded by Lt. William Calley, 20th Battalion in March 1968. I was drafted after I completed high school and after three months of stateside training, was shipped to Vietnam as a replacement for a soldier killed in a previous attack. Draftees like me who did the on ground fighting were known as “grunts.”

I never wanted to be in this war. I hadn’t paid much attention to Vietnam news when I was in high school and saw no good reason for the war. I just wanted to stay home, get a good job, and raise a family. I had a girlfriend who worried that I would be killed or wounded. My main goal was to return home safely. Fortunately I did.

I was part of ten “Search and Destroy” missions, including My Lai, where my platoon was ordered to destroy the bases and supplies being used by Viet Cong guerrillas. It was awful duty. I saw my best friend lose a leg after stepping on a booby trap and another killed by a sniper’s bullet. I seldom saw any guerillas since they fought mostly from ambush in “hit-and-run” night attacks. The frightening thing was that the Viet Cong were almost impossible to identify. They dressed like local villagers, who often joined in their operations. We were told by soldiers with more combat experience than us that even children helped the VC by planting booby traps and mines. When My Lai went down, I had been in combat for three months and saw nearly half my platoon killed or wounded. I soon learned to hate the Viet Cong and the villagers who supported them.

The night before My Lai, I attended a funeral for a grunt in our Company who had just been killed. I remember Captain Medina, our Company commander, telling us we needed to be more aggressive if we were to make sure we had no more casualties. His speech was very emotional, and I remember that it made me and my buddies hate the Viet Cong more than ever.

I was with Lt. Calley on the morning of the attack. I have to say I wasn’t very impressed with the Lieutenant and wished he could have been as inspiring as Captain Medina. We got the sense that his only goal was to do little more than “kiss up” to the Captain.

Some guys in my platoon told me that Captain Medina said that “the village is to be destroyed, along with its inhabitants.” Just before the attack, Lt. Calley confirmed that. He also told us that the village was full of Viet Cong and we should expect heavy fire and we were to “clean out the village” and destroy the village huts. If any villagers survived, they were to be shot, including women and children, who we knew often helped the Viet Cong. You have to remember, we were in a Free Fire Zone, and we had been told that any persons in this area were enemies.

With all the noise and confusion, it was hard to know if anyone was shooting back. But we had orders which we needed to follow if we were to survive and accomplish our mission. I remember seeing an old man shot even though he didn’t seem a threat. I also saw many women, old men, and children herded into a drainage ditch in the center of My Lai. I thought they were going to be held as prisoners, but instead Lt. Calley ordered my squad to shoot them. I fired 4 clips and saw Lt. Calley and our Sergeant empty their rifles into the prisoners.

As far as I was concerned, we did what we were ordered to do and what we had to do in a Free Fire Zone. We had been told that the village was full of enemy soldiers, and that any villagers still in My Lai would kill us if they got the chance. So you did what you were supposed to do as a soldier who wanted to get home: follow orders and stay alive.