

James May

U.S. Army Specialist E5

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"I was a personnel sergeant when I went over. I ended up being assigned out of the personnel records section at Chu Lai. When I got in country the first 30 days I compiled records for the Calley report, the My Lai massacre. I had to go make sure all the depositions were in the right order, working with the JAG section. I went out to the area around the village of My Lai and I had to make sure every evening when we got back that everything was compiled in case Calley came to trial. My job was to oversee that the text was put together and given to the CID section. Calley was with my unit – the Americal Division.

I was subpoenaed and had to go back and testify at Calley's trial at Fort Benning, Georgia. I was called in one day and was there about 20 minutes. They asked me 10 or 15 questions. I told them I didn't think Calley should be the fall guy. It should have been Captain Medina. He told Calley to go ahead with the search and destroy mission and everybody else from Calley on down was just following orders. Calley was the lowest ranking officer and he was going to get convicted...

My opinion is that they went to My Lai on a search and destroy mission if they came under contact. There was a general flying over the day they went in who decided to change the mission. Captain Medina decided the mission was going to stay the same. He ordered that if the unit comes under any hostile fire then it would be a search and destroy. And that's what a search and destroy was – you go in there and round up insurgents and kill them.

They did come under some fire; they didn't know from exactly where. They did find a couple of tunnels. It's one of those tough situations in war. I guess when it got to the women and children getting killed is where a lot of groups get angry nowadays. They don't give the soldier the benefit of what they're going over there for. They're over there to defend this country besides themselves. Everybody would like to go over and win a war without firing a shot but that's not how it happens.