

“Stop the Coral Sea!”

Reprint

anon.

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ALAMEDA, Calif.—With a Navy band blaring “Anchors Aweigh,” the USS Coral Sea sailed out of the Golden Gate for Vietnam Nov. 12 despite a mass petition drive by anti-war sailors, an offer of sanctuary to deserters from the Berkeley, Calif. City Council and a threat of mass disruption from civilian picketers.

Also, three officers aboard the Coral Sea handed in their resignation requests in protest against the Indochina war.

A “Stop the Coral Sea” demonstration in which demonstrators in cars were supposed to cause a traffic jam in front of the east gate of the Alameda Naval Station was thwarted by Navy police. They waved the surprised demonstrators into the base, over a circuitous route, and out another gate.

Another disruption, in which protesters were to leave junked cars in a highway tunnel connecting Alameda with Oakland, appeared at first to have slowed traffic in the tunnel, but it later turned out a government vehicle which had broken down was the cause.

Seventeen persons were arrested in the demonstrations, most for stopping their cars and getting out during their brisk trip through the base.

Several persons were injured by cars as they stood on the highway approaching the naval base, including one woman who had her leg broken when struck by a vehicle driven by a Navy officer. About 1,000 demonstrators in all took part.

The Berkeley City Council offered its facilities for asylum for military deserters and draft resisters, touching off denunciations from other Berkeley and Alameda County officials. The council in a 6 to 1 vote approved a resolution “to provide a facility for sanctuary” for “any person who is unwilling to participate in military action.”

The resolution was considered to be unprecedented for a city governing body in the United States.

Edward E. Kallgren, regarded as a moderate on the council, said the action was not defying the “supremacy of the US government or its legitimate powers.”

“We want to dramatize our opposition to this war and our belief that the war has a direct adverse effect on all the cities of the country.”

Also, 10 Bay Area churches offered their facilities as sanctuary for military deserters, specifically mentioning that their facilities would be open for men from the navy carrier.

“Anti-war Sentiment Runs High”

The city resolution warned city employees against aiding “any investigation, public or clandestine, of the sanctuary” or joining in the arrest of any military dissenter. The councilmen said city policemen were included in the ban.

The 63,000-ton Coral Sea, the attack carrier which carried out the first air strike against North Vietnam in 1965, left for its sixth tour of Vietnamese waters.

The campaign to keep the ship from sailing was begun several months ago by sailors aboard the carrier calling themselves Save Our Ship (SOS).

The men, with civilian support, collected over 1,000 signatures on a petition asking that the ship not return to Vietnam despite the effort of the ship’s captain to stop the effort. The aircraft carrier commander, Capt. William Harris, destroyed one petition, with 300 signatures on it, and sent three sailors to the brig and transferred 12 men off the ship in an attempt to stop the drive.

SOS received support not only from enlisted men, but from officers as well. In a statement of resignation from the Navy, three officers, Lt. James Laniu, James R. Meyer and Ensign Frank H. Philips said, “We do not wish to be a part of the continuing insanity of the Vietnam War.”

It is anticipated that all three officers will be discharged from the Navy immediately, but official confirmation rests with the Secretary of the Navy in Washington.

The three also stated that “Anti-war sentiment runs high aboard the Coral Sea, not only among the enlisted men, but among the ship’s officers as well.”

They speculated that most persons with anti-war feelings, especially officers, were silent on the issue, perhaps for fear of reprisal by command. They emphasized, however, that “SOS is not the only group aboard who would like to see the Coral Sea stay out of the war.”

Since it seems that the civilian antiwar movement, as it is presently constituted, is not capable of ending the war, that task may have to fall to those most effected by it—the GIs themselves. This is not without precedent in American history. When World War II ended in 1945 a mass GI movement was built around the theme of “Bring the Troops Home” and saw marches of tens of thousands in such wide flung areas as Manila and Paris.

Word reaching this paper says that antiwar organizing is going on in every carrier in the Pacific with the most immediate target being to prevent the USS Ranger from sailing in January.

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