

Bravo Co. Won't Go

Vietnam Mutiny

Fifth Estate Collective

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KHESANH, South Vietnam—53 men of Bravo Troop, 1st Squadron, 1st Cavalry, Americal Division refused orders to move into a battle zone near the Laotian border March 20 to retrieve abandoned equipment.

One of the men in the two platoons, which refused to obey the command, said he did not follow orders because “the reason given wasn’t a very good one... I didn’t see any sense in risking any more lives.”

The military equipment the platoons were ordered to secure included a deserted and damaged helicopter, a personnel carrier and the Commanding Officer’s vehicle.

The headquarters of the American Serviceman’s Union (ASU) in New York City announced full support of the 53 men and said “it will continue to support all acts of resistance in the military.” The 15,000 member ASU is a revolutionary GI union with affiliates across the world including Vietnam.

ASU Chairman Andy Stapp said, “We intend to continue the fight to organize the rightful anger of GIs and rally the support of civilians to defend GIs when they resist this illegal and immoral war.”

A commanding officer, Brig. Gen. John G. Hill, said that there were no plans for disciplinary actions against the 53 men. A similar incident occurred in the Americal Division in August 1969 when an infantry company refused to go forward after five days of heavy casualties on a mountain held by the North Vietnamese. At that time, too, no action was taken against the men involved.

The military brass are in a jam as increasing numbers of rank and file GIs are refusing to play out the John Wayne strategies of the Pentagon.

This incident of mutiny came just as Saigon troops began to flee for their lives out of Laos and run to their rear bases in South Vietnam. Defeat was in the air and apparently the men of Bravo Company were not going to risk their lives for a small portion of the equipment destroyed by the North Vietnamese troops.

This is the major problem that Nixon and the Generals face—as the GIs begin to realize that the U.S. has lost the war in Indochina, there will be increasing numbers of men who refuse to lose their lives in a meaningless war. For the first time in history during a war situation, the U.S. government is faced with the prospect of the refusal, on a mass scale, of its Army to fight.

It is the fighting men of Indochina, supported by the American people at home, who can put an end to the slaughter in Indochina once and for all.

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