

# The Pentagon Assault

## Questions Remain, Who Used Tear Gas?

Elliot Blinder

1967

WASHINGTON, D.C.— (Liberation News Service) The Pentagon still clings to its original statements, attributing the use of tear gas at the Oct. 21 demonstration solely to demonstrators, despite eye-witness accounts to the contrary by the *Washington Post's* Paul Valentine, Jed Stout of UPI, and many individuals.

At a press conference the night of Oct. 21<sup>st</sup>, Pentagon officials were met with jeers when they told reporters—some of whom were still suffering from the effects of the gas—that no tear gas had been used at all.

Newsmen were later reassembled and told that tear gas had in fact been used, but by the demonstrators. The Pentagon claimed that some nine canisters had been taken from soldiers on guard duty, and that “no one on our side was authorized to use teargas; they cannot use it without permission; no soldiers or MPs reported using tear gas.”

At the scene, a member of the Pentagon guard told Liberation News Service that all soldiers and MPs were issued orders days in advance not to use gas. However, according to Valentine, who was in the crowd of demonstrators at the time, “on two occasions low-ranking MPs appeared to panic in the confusion and detonate without an order; I distinctly recall seeing MPs pull the circular things from their belt and drop them to the ground.”

In addition, Pentagon officials today denied that any tear gas tanks of any kind had been issued to soldiers or MPs at the demonstration and said that none were carried by soldiers or used.

According to the Pentagon guard, who asked to remain anonymous, “there were flame-throwers that they had on their backs; they weren’t filled with gasoline (for flame), they filled them with gas. They did use some of these tanks. I didn’t actually see that, but that’s what I heard.”

Reports from protestors cited several incidents of tear gas being thrown and sprayed by military personnel. “As we walked down the darkened road at 1:30 a.m.,” said Margaret Tucker, 21, a student at Boston University, “about 20 soldiers were standing on the side of the road and they AGAIN threw tear gas and laughed hysterically at the random protestors limping away in small groups.”

## Sidebar

How Many Protested?

by Bob Grove

From *New Left Notes* (UPS)

The Chief of Washington, D.C., police forces admitted on October 21 that his officers stationed at the south end of the Memorial Bridge had officially counted 318,000 marchers proceeding from the Lincoln Memorial to the Pentagon.

This admission was made to a number of reporters at a press conference in Washington. The reporters included members of United Press International (UPI) and Associated Press (AP).

Reporters had just been flown over the Pentagon, the North Parking Lot, the march route over Memorial. In their meeting with police officials later in the evening they expressed amazement at the official police crowd estimate of 55,000 since it was apparent that many more demonstrators and marchers were present.

The police chief at this point informed the reporters that police crowd control experts using counters had been stationed at the south end of Memorial Bridge and the machine counted 318,000 marchers as they passed by. The reporters were then asked to not report this real figure but instead to report the figure of 55,000, officially being released to the press by the police and military authorities.

All the reporters present pledged themselves to report the 55,000 figure. They were told by the police that if the figure of 318,000 were to be reported in the nation's press "the President would be in a very embarrassing position."

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