

# Four More Presidio GIs Convicted

Guardian (New York)

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SAN FRANCISCO—Four more GIs have been found guilty of mutiny and sentenced to prison terms. The March 27 verdict at Ft. Lewis, Wash., where the court-martials are being held to avoid large-scale protest demonstrations, came after nearly two weeks of testimony.

Convicted were Privates Edward Yost, William Hayes, Ricky Dodd and Harold Swanson. Yost was sentenced to nine months in prison; Hayes got two years, Dodd six years and Swanson three years. They also received dishonorable discharges. Appeals are pending.

Defense attorneys had thought to have lesser charges filed against the men, basing their contention on the fact that the sentence of another Presidio soldier convicted of mutiny earlier in the same case had been slashed from 15 to two years. Military authorities refused the request however, despite reported pressure from the office of Secretary of the Army Stanley Resor.

Sixth Army Commanding General Stanley Larsen had charges against a fifth Presidio soldier, Michael Murphy, withdrawn because he has serum hepatitis, a disease usually caused by infection from a contaminated hypodermic needle. Murphy, however, may be charged with mutiny at a later date.

The five men are among 27 GIs who staged a peaceful sit-down last October at the Presidio stockade here to protest inhuman conditions and the killing of a fellow prisoner. So far eight of the 27 have been convicted of mutiny.

There had been some hope that Yost might be acquitted on grounds that his hearing was impaired by a bomb blast in Vietnam and therefore he could not have heard, over the chanting and singing of the other protesting GIs, an order to disperse read by the stockade commander.

The court-martials of the 14 GIs who have yet to be tried are expected to begin April 7. They were originally scheduled for the Presidio, but Larsen ordered them moved to Ft. Ord, near Monterey. Terence Hallinan, attorney for the 14 men, strongly opposes the transfer and said he will ask for a change of venue back to San Francisco.

Hallinan said that he plans to have other prisoners testify at the court-martials, as well as several mothers of the accused men and Mrs. Ginger Bunch, the mother of Richard Bunch, whose killing last October touched off the Presidio protest.

The gist of the defense, Hallinan indicated, will be that the accused soldiers were driven by an "irresistible impulse," stemming from atrocious stockade conditions and the killing of Bunch, to commit their protest action, and that they had not planned to override military authority (the definition of mutiny).

Meanwhile, at the Presidio tension and harassment have increased. A spokesman for the National Committee for the 27 described what is happening.

"The Presidio stockade is uptight about rumors of a full-blown investigation. Everything that doesn't work is being fixed and everything that doesn't move is being painted, sometimes twice...Of course, all the work is being done by the prisoners, except for the cleaning and polishing of the shotguns...Major Lucas, 'permanent adviser' to Captain Lamont (stockade commander), acts as though the Presidio 27 could somehow become gung-ho killers after the 'mutiny' scene blows over. A super-militarism has been imposed over the run-of-the-mill sadism that continues to exist.

“...The daily schedule has been changed so that prisoners now have only one ‘free’ hour during the entire day. The one sane outlet, the stockade library, is virtually unused now because there isn’t any time to read...”

Persons wishing to contribute to the defense of the Presidio 27 can mail checks to National Committee for the 27, 330 Ellis St., Room 413, San Francisco, California 94102.

—reprinted from the Guardian (New York)

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