

Armed Doves Move

Fifth Estate Collective

1970

Editors' Note: The following is taken from the Ft. Bliss "Gigline," the GI anti-war paper at that base. Its address is Box 31094, Summit Hts. Sta, El Paso, TX 79931.

Ft. Bliss, Tex.—General William Westmoreland expected to visit Ft. Bliss to perform a ritualistic inspection of the base, make a few speeches, and accept the plaudits of local citizens.

There was one item, however, that was not on his schedule. That was the greeting afforded him by approximately 100 citizens, about 80 of whom were GIs.

GIFP (GIs for Peace) planned and executed a peaceful, legal picketing of his appearance before the local chapter of the Association of the United States Army, January 15.

They marched before the Hilton Inn carrying signs stating "We Protest Stockade Brutality," "Peace is Patriotic," and "GIFP Welcomes General Westmoreland."

Although General Westmoreland carefully refrained from commenting on GIs for Peace during his tour, he was forced to, at least by his actions, acknowledge their presence that evening, as he had to forsake his planned entrance to the Hilton Inn to avoid the demonstrators.

It was reported that he watched the demonstration from the entrance of the building.

Originally, GIs for Peace had attempted to set up a private meeting with General Westmoreland to discuss their views on the war in Vietnam and civil liberties for soldiers. As it became obvious that the General would not consent to such a meeting, the GIs decided to make their demonstration of concern public.

The concern of the Ft. Bliss command was obvious when they issued a statement to be read to all Ft. Bliss personnel on the morning of January 15.

The statement warned against "off-post demonstrations when their activity constitutes a breach of law and order." It went on to quote the infamous AR 600-50 which warns against action which might affect "the confidence of the public in the integrity of the Government."

Despite this obvious attempt at suppression of political activity, approximately 80 GIs came to the Hilton Inn to inform General Westmoreland of their concern.

"We feel that this might be one of the most important events in the history of GIs for Peace and possibly the entire GI movement. We have proved that as long as it is done legally, GIs can participate in political demonstrations, even when the subject of their demonstration happens to be their own commander.

"We hope that other soldiers will hear of our activity, realize that they have little to fear if they become involved, and will then join us in our quest for peace."

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