

From Miami News to Tom Brad

3 Acquitted In Protest By Prayer

By Timothy S. Robinson
Washington Post Staff Writer

GAINESVILLE, Fla., Aug. 13—A government witness in the case of eight antiwar protesters charged with conspiracy to riot at the Republican National Convention said today the defendants discussed other acts of violence with him, including disruption of Emmy award ceremonies in New York and throwing bags of blood at a U.S. official—"I believe it was Melvin Laird"—on the Dick Cavett television show.

Charles Henry Becker III, who said he was a former member of the Vietnam Veterans Against the War, said also that defendant Scott Camil told him he "enjoyed killing . . . (and) intended to kill those who sent him to Vietnam . . . (because the war) had dirtied his soul."

Becker's testimony came after government informer William W. Lemmer, outwardly undaunted by four days of defense attempts to discredit his testimony, was excused from the witness stand at least temporarily.

And for at least the fourth time, an element of the trial of the eight members of Vietnam Veterans Against the War has thought that its phones were tapped and asked the judge to have telephone company officials check the lines.

Today, the telephone "sweep" was revealed on the lines of jurors, five of whom had claimed their phones "had been acting strangely." Earlier, the prosecution, the defense and the press had asked for similar sweeps after various incidents concerning possible overhearings.

Becker, who is now an undercover security agent for a New Orleans store, said he heard various defendants discuss the acts of violence

at various times.

He said one of the defendants, Peter Mahoney, said of the unspecified "disruption" of the Emmy ceremonies: "In order to end the bigger violence in Vietnam, we would have to cause violence in the U.S."

At a meeting in Gainesville, during which the defendants allegedly discussed plans for violence at the Republican convention and demonstrated arms including wrist-braced slingshots and crossbows, Becker was shown a loaded M-1 carbine and told, "If I wanted one, I could get them from Camil in Florida," he said.

Becker also corroborated earlier testimony by Lemmer that Camil had discussed "fire teams" and a Florida farm at which the fire teams would be trained.

U.S. District Judge Winston Arnow refused to allow Assistant U.S. Attorney Jack Carrouth to introduce a slingshot into evidence during re-direct testimony of Lemmer today, saying that he would have attempted to offer it when he first questioned Lemmer.

Lemmer said today that a controversial "confession" that he gave to VVAW members in Arkansas concerning his role as an FBI informer was given under duress. He said that he gave the 17-hour tape-recorded interview to Martin Jordan and Don Donner because Donner "showed me a .45-caliber automatic."

The defense has indicated it intends to use part of that "confession" to prove that Lemmer gave different stories to different persons.

Lemmer testified earlier today that he was the first person to bring up a plan at the Gainesville meeting to equip 300 VVAW members with face shields, baseball chest protectors bearing a lightning bolt insignia, and 8-foot staffs that would be deployed at the Republican convention.

However, the informer testified that he was merely passing the plan on from the New York VVAW office.

Lemmer listened carefully to each of the defense questions and would often answer "No, I did not make that statement" if any minor detail was omitted or added to their recounting of his earlier testimony.

He said defendant Camil had not given him a specific number of persons that he expected to be members of the "fire teams" that the defendant said he would use in Miami. Instead, he said Camil showed him an index box of file cards.

"And these persons (armed with crossbows and slingshots) would go up against the thousands of troops that were assigned to Miami" for security at the Republican convention? Turner asked. Prosecutors' objections to the question were upheld by Arnow.