

Paper Radio

Indicted veterans deny plotting violence

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Scott Camil was 19 years old when he wrote his parents from Vietnam in November, 1966:

"I may not come home in April. I may extend another six months. It's hard to explain, but there is a job here that I know must be done. It is a dirty job, but it is better for me to do it than my brothers or children. A few times I thought my time was up, but I fought hard and was lucky. Some of my buddies aren't so lucky, and when one of them dies, a part of me dies with them. I can't see going home and leaving them here by themselves."

Scott Camil had already served nine months volunteer duty in the Marines in Vietnam, when he "re-upped" after writing that letter. A few months later, he was wounded and was discharged with the rank of sergeant.

He went home to Gainesville, Florida, and then enrolled at Miami Dade Junior College. One day he heard that students were accumulating pictures of American action in Vietnam. Well, Scott had taken plenty of pictures. Pictures of Americans injured; pictures of Vietnamese injured and dying. Pictures of his buddies killing "enemy." The peace-activist students who looked at them agreed that they were exceptional depictions of what they called "American war atrocities." At first Scott was angry — to him they depicted the determined success of the American war effort.

In January and February of last year Scott's pictures were displaced at a so-called war-crimes trial held in Detroit — "The Winter Soldier's Investigation," it was called. At that meeting he met other veterans of the war who were convinced that what they had done in Vietnam was a crime, and they convinced Scott that his pictures were evidence of war crimes.

Scott Camil, thus persuaded, helped form The Vietnam Veterans Against the War (VVAW), becoming the group's regional coordinator for Florida, Alabama, and Georgia.

And last week he was arrested. The FBI claims that he masterminded a group of plotters who "knew and intended" to "cause death and injuries" at the Republican National Convention in August.

The government's case was sensational. They claimed that Scott Camil conducted a "bomb school" in Gainesville, Florida, on May 27 and 28, attended by 23 VVAW leaders. At that "school," Scott allegedly taught fellow members how to "use and make incendiary devices" and how

to use "wrist-rocket slingshots."

Said the federal indictments: "It was part of the said conspiracy that the defendants and individual co-conspirators would organize numerous 'fire teams' to attack with automatic weapons, fire and incendiary devices police stations, police cars, and stores in Miami Beach, Florida, on various dates between August 21 and 24, 1972; that the defendants and the individual co-conspirators would fire the lead weights, 'fried' marbles, ball bearings, 'cherry' bombs, and smoke bombs at police in Miami Beach ... by means of wrist rocket slingshots and cross bows; that the defendants would disrupt communication systems in Miami Beach"

Five other members of the VVAW were also arrested on the charges, which were brought under the same law used against the Chicago Eight, which prohibits the crossing of state lines to provoke civil disorders.

Here in Los Angeles Sam Schorr, western regional coordinator for the VVAW, called the charges against his fellow members "insane."

In Gainesville, other members of the group claimed that Scott Camil in particular had always demanded non-violent action, even when such demands brought him into conflict with more radical anti-war activists. They remember that during the May Day demonstrations in Gainesville, Scott had curbed some sporadic window smashing and street fighting by protesters, telling them, "We're not out here to have a good time. Now, let's get our shit together so

people will know why we're here." Scott organized a candle-light march of Vietnam veterans that paraded through the streets of Gainesville on May Day.

The VVAW in Gainesville has issued a statement, which says in part: "In spite of his well natured actions to wake up America to what's going on in Vietnam, the government has been trying to fuck him over, the same way they do to anybody who speaks the truth about how the U.S. government just might be fucking up a lot of things."

The VVAW members claim that they have a recording of a statement made by Leamer, another regional coordinator for the VVAW, in which Leamer admits being an informer for the FBI and claims that the government was intent on breaking up the VVAW "by any means possible."

The recording, assertedly, will reveal Leamer proclaiming that the government intends to "shoot leaders of the New Left, including George McGovern." Leamer also allegedly says in the recording that before the Democratic Convention, the VVAW members "will be taken off the streets."

Leamer allegedly pleads for his fellows to understand that the FBI was paying for his rent, and had just bought him a new car. He was admitting to the group that he was an informer, he allegedly says on the tape, because he was concerned about them and felt, "You are all my brothers."

The VVAW claims that Leamer fabricated his charges against Scott

Camil and the others in order to increase the pay he had been receiving from the FBI for his services. They also claim that it was Leamer who had plotted violence at the convention, that he was in fact an "agent provocateur."

On Monday demonstrations were held in support of the jailed members of the VVAW in cities all over the country. The Los Angeles branch of that group did not participate in those demonstrations however. Sam Schorr notes that six local members are now in jail and fifteen others are about to begin serving time. He adds:

"It's all part of an attempt by the Federal Government to use grand juries to destroy our organization." (Lew Irwin may be heard daily on KDAY Radio News.)