

6 Held for Trial on Charge Of Plot to Disrupt G.O.P.

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GAINSVILLE, Fla., Aug. 24.—Six members of the Vietnam Veterans Against the War pleaded not guilty today to charges of conspiring to disrupt the Republican National Convention.

Federal District Judge David L. Middlebrooks set their trial to begin Oct. 10 and denied a defense motion to reduce bond for the defendants.

About 200 members of the organization, waiting in the rain outside the Federal Building here, cheered and raised clenched fists as the defendants and their attorneys departed after the arraignment.

The group then marched for about a mile through the center of town to protest what they say is an attempt to discredit the antiwar organization through abuse of the power of indictment.

The six were indicted July 13 by a Federal grand jury meeting in Tallahassee, Fla. The indictments charged them with conspiring at a May 27 meeting there "to organize numerous fire teams to attack with automatic weapons fire and incendiary devices police stations, police cars and stores in Miami Beach."

Predawn Arrival

It is also charged that the alleged conspirators "would fire lead weights, fried marbles [marbles heated so they will shatter on impact], ball bearings, cherry bombs, and smoke bombs by means of wrist rocket slingshots and crossbows," and that they planned to "disrupt communications systems in Miami Beach."

The defendants are Scott Camil, 26 years old, of Gainesville; John W. Kniffin, 32, of Austin, Tex.; William J. Patterson, 24, of El Paso; Peter P. Mahoney, 23, of New Orleans; Alton C. Foss, 25, of Miami, and Donald P. Purdue, 23, of Hollywood, Fla.

Members of the organization began arriving at their campsite before dawn. Most were able to get no more than two hours sleep after driving from Miami, where they had been participating in the protest at the Republican National Convention.

On Monday the Gainesville

City Commission approved the use of a campsite just north of town near the municipal airport. The veterans have permission to use the site until noon tomorrow.

Security at the courthouse today was so tight that the defendants could not get into the courtroom until their attorneys vouched for them. Federal marshals set up a metal detector at the entrance to the courthouse elevators.

When Judge Middlebrooks entered the courtroom the defendants and some spectators refused to rise.

"Mr. Marshall, I saw several people who didn't rise," the judge said. "Anyone who did not rise, remove him from the courtroom, by force if necessary."

Laughter Is Provoked

When the marshal walked to the defense table and asked the defendants to follow him out of the room, Judge Middlebrooks added, "Other than the defendants."

Another marshal pointed out five young women who had not risen. They were escorted out of the courtroom.

"There will be respect shown for the United States of America," Judge Middlebrooks declared.

As William H. Stafford, United States Attorney for the Northern District of Florida, read the indictment, spectators laughed at the part about attacking police stations with slingshots.

Judge Middlebrook asked each defendant his plea. Each plead guilty to committing war crimes in Indochina but not guilty to the charges in the indictments.

Cam Cunningham of Austin was the only one of the four defense attorneys to speak. The other defense attorneys are Nancy Stearns and Doris Peterson, both of New York City, and Judy Petersen, of Gainesville.

Some members of the veterans group plan to go tomorrow to Tallahassee, where four members are being held in jail on contempt charges for refusing to answer questions before the grand jury.