

WITNESS PRESSED IN VETERANS CASE

Testimony Seems to Shift
on Cross-Examination

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GAINESVILLE, Fla., Aug. 22 —A Government witness gave damaging testimony today against eight persons accused of plotting to disrupt the 1972 Republican National Convention, but then seemed to reverse part of his testimony on cross-examination.

Aaron P. Simonton, a one-time fringe member of the Vietnam Veterans Against the War, testified for the prosecution that the alleged leader of the plot told him of plans to fire bomb a Federal building in Miami.

Mr. Simonton said that Scott Camil, defendant, had invited him to become a member of a "fire team" armed with "incendiary devices" and had outlined plans for the use of slingshots during the convention.

But, under cross-examination by the defense, Mr. Simonton testified that the veterans' plans were to "peacefully demonstrate" and that the slingshots were to be used for protection "only if the police started trouble."

Further testimony disclosed that soon after Mr. Simonton met with Mr. Camil, the police broke into Mr. Simonton's Miami-area home. The police told him they had found marijuana and an illegal sawed-off shotgun, Mr. Simonton said.

Discussion Alleged

No charges were filed however. "A few days later," Mr. Simonton testified, he moved from Miami.

Mr. Simonton appeared to be reluctant witness. He had written into the V.V.A.W. after reading of them in Playboy magazine, he said, and had received some literature and attended two meetings.

Under examination by the prosecutor, Jack Carrouth, Mr. Simonton said that Mr. Camil discussed the fire bombing plans at a meeting at the home of another defendant, Alton Foss, in Hialeah on June 14, 1972.

He said that Mr. Camil had displayed a map with the locations of Federal buildings marked and said that "fire teams" would throw "incendiary devices" at their windows in the event there was considerable unrest on the [Miami] Beach.

He said he agreed to participate, adding that when he said he had little knowledge of fire bombs, Mr. Camil replied: "That will be taken care of."

Demonstration Cited

Mr. Simonton said that Mr. Camil demonstrated a wrist rocket slingshot by firing lead fishing weights at the side of the house and ballbearings through a piece of Masonite.

He said that Mr. Camil told him that veterans demonstrating in Miami would be armed with the slingshots and that they would be fired at police vehicles "from the windows of hotel rooms on either side of Collins Avenue" and from "the fringes of the crowd" to "protect the medics who are assisting people."

But, under cross-examination by a defense attorney, Larry Turner, Mr. Simonton said that Mr. Camil told him that "violence wasn't to be initiated on his part."

He said that Mr. Camil told him that if the police or others were to "interfere with our medics or other people it would simply not be permitted."

When Mr. Turner asked Mr. Simonton if Mr. Camil had expressed fears of a repetition of the 1968 Democratic National Convention, "where the police attacked demonstrators," the witness replied:

"Yes, but we would be prepared for it."

When Mr. Turner asked if he had sought out the Federal Bureau of Investigation to report on the meeting, Mr. Simonton said, "They came to me."

Mr. Turner then brought out that Mr. Simonton had gone to the police to report that his house had been broken into and had been told that he had been found in possession of the sawed-off shotgun and marijuana.

Advised by the Police

On his redirect examination, Mr. Carrouth, the prosecutor, elicited more information about the incident.

The break-in occurred "just after I talked to Scott Camil" Mr. Simonton said. The police told him "they had been involved in it" he said.

"They suggested I not get excited about it or they would press charges. I did not get excited about it" Mr. Simonton said.