

Army Weighs Court Martial

PLEI DJERENG (Vietnam) — (AP) — The Army said today it is considering court-martial proceedings against five American soldiers who refused to make a combat assault into Cambodia.

The five GIs are members of the Third Battalion, Eighth Infantry, Fourth Division, an outfit that encountered heavy resistance as it was flown into a Cambodian landing zone surrounded by well camouflaged enemy positions two days ago.

Stayed Firm

Five helicopters were downed by enemy fire, a company commander was killed on the ground and four soldiers were wounded. Other troop-carrying copters were forced back by the intense fire.

The five men balked as they were about to board copters for an assault into the same landing zone the next day.

Senior officers were unable to convince the men to change their minds.

"You know how it is," one officer said later. "It gets

time to go into action, and some kids get scared, and suddenly you have a bunch of guys who claim they are conscientious objectors."

A Fourth Division spokesman, Capt. Barnard F. Mallett, refused to identify the five men until completion of an Article 32 investigation, the military equivalent of a grand jury proceeding.

No Interview

The Army prevented an Associated Press correspondent from interviewing the men today, although one of them had sent word he wanted to "tell his story to the world."

"You have no business in here, and I don't want you talking to my men," a battalion staff officer said after the men were located digging trenches and stringing barbed wire at the battalion's rear headquarters at Plei Djereng, an allied camp in the Central Highlands near the Cambodian border.

One of the men looked up from his work, grinned and flashed the "V" for peace sign with two fingers as the

correspondent was escorted out of the camp.

Mallett was summoned, and after a lengthy huddle with Maj. Gen. Glenn D. Walker, commander of the 4th Division, and other high-ranking officers, said the men could not be interviewed because they are under investigation.

Few Days

"Letting them talk would be like throwing them to the wolves," he said. "Anything they say could be used against them. We are not going to violate their civic rights."

Mallett said it may be a few days before the men are formally charged.

"We're in a combat situation," he said. "The company commander is forward in the field, and we don't have our legal support on the line."

He refused to speculate on what charges, if any, might be brought against the men.

It was learned that at least one more member of the battalion had refused to go into Cambodia.

"We're working on him,

though," one officer said. "He may yet change his mind."

This is the first case of sustained refusal so far reported in the Cambodian operation.

Sixteen men in a task force from the U.S. 25th Infantry Division refused to move out but changed their minds two days later and went on the assault, two of them after being threatened with court-martials for mutiny.