
Reply to Hancock Anti-War Letter

The skipper of the attack aircraft carrier Hancock berthed in Alameda said yesterday that 19 junior officers who sent him a petition protesting the war in Vietnam "were within their rights."

And, added Navy Captain T. L. Johnson, he contemplated taking no disciplinary action against the 19, who emphasized in their document of protest that they were in no way attacking the Navy.

The extraordinary letter, signed by half of the non-aviation junior officers, was delivered to the commanding officer late Thursday.

EFFECTS

It protested "the prolongation of the Vietnam war and its effects upon our country and the country of the Vietnamese people."

The document, couched in the most respectful terms, also called for what amounted to a round-table discussion of the war, with an op-

portunity to hear from all factions aboard ship.

While such a discussion seemed rather unlikely, the skipper—who commands some 3000 officers and men—indicated that the unprecedented document would have little effect upon the careers of those young officers who endorsed it.

OPINION

"They're all entitled to their own opinion and they all do their jobs," said Johnson.

Two men who signed the document hold top-secret security clearances. They are both lieutenants junior grade: Allen P. Cox, the ship's public affairs officer, and William D. West, the carrier's aviation fuels officer.

Captain Johnson said he did not believe their security clearances would be affected by their action, nor did he believe their superiors in Washington, D.C., would take disciplinary action against the 19.
