

# War Veterans at Inquiry Feel 'Atrocities' Are Result of Policy

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WASHINGTON, Dec. 3—A spokesman for the 40 antiwar veterans who have testified at an unofficial inquiry into United States war policies said today that they had tried to show that "war crimes" by American forces in South Vietnam were not "aberrant isolated acts."

They are "the logical consequences of our war policies," Robert Bowie Johnson Jr. said.

The veterans, he said, felt that the military is using Fir Lieut. William S. Calley Jr. as a scapegoat and that the court-martial of the officer for his alleged part in the death of civilians at My Lai in March 1968, must be stopped.

Mr. Johnson spoke here during the last day of the three-day inquiry, held at the Dupor Plaza Hotel under the sponsorship of antiwar groups among such figures as Dr. Benjamin Spock, Jane Fonda and David Dellinger.

## Private Investigation Urged

He said that only private citizens could be trusted to investigate the nation's war policies without making scapegoats of other Vietnam veterans.

Today's testimony was milder than that in the two previous days, when the discharged veterans told of Vietnamese civilians being tortured or pushed from helicopters.

The half-dozen speakers today recounted their constant use of artillery, helicopter gunships and jet strikes against minor targets. They told of harassment and racial disparagement of Vietnamese civilians. And they explained why they had chosen the inquiry to speak out rather than acting through military channels when they were in the service.

Steven Hassett of Utica, N.Y., said that in May, 1967, his unit of the First Cavalry Division (Airmobile) "moved through a populated area with a wall of fire and we leveled this area."

He said that the area was not a free-fire zone but that his unit "went through there so fast we didn't even have time to check the hootches [huts]" before burning them or blowing them up.

He and other veterans told of having slapped or beaten civilians. Gail Graham of Jamestown, N. Y., said it was common for soldiers to try to rip clothing from female civilians.

The Pentagon has refused to comment specifically on the charges made at the hearings. A spokesman did say, "It is United States policy to adhere to the rules of warfare which ban attacks on noncombattants."

The Defense Department has insisted that alleged war crimes are the exception to military practice and are investigated when reported through military channels.

But Michael Uhl of Babylon, L.I., said he did not trust the Pentagon to investigate senior officers. He and others at the hearings stated that field-grade officers had been aware of atrocities and had witnessed them or taken part. They also said that it was dangerous to speak out about such matters while on active duty.

Mr. Hassett said he had been sent on a one-man mission into enemy territory after questioning an officer's judgment and had returned early to find his unit moving on without him.