

Major Arguing With G.I.'s Shot to Death in Vietnam

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SAIGON, South Vietnam, Jan. 10—One United States Army major was killed and another wounded Friday following an argument between several black enlisted men and the two officers, both white.

Today, the United States command would say only that one major had been killed and a second wounded. But informed sources in the field confirmed that the shooting was another in a growing number of incidents in which enlisted men have attacked their leaders because of hostilities caused by racial problems, attitudes toward the Vietnam war and what seems to be an increasing antagonism toward unpopular officers and sergeants as the war winds down.

The Army said that the shooting had occurred at the Quangtri base camp of the First Brigade, Fifth Mechanized Division. Quangtri is South Vietnam's northernmost province.

Details were withheld pending the completion of an investigation and the notification of the victim's next of kin.

Account of Incident

Highly reliable sources in the field, who asked that the two officers' names be withheld, provided the following account:

The two officers were returning to their quarters at about 12:30 A.M. Friday after checking their unit's armored troop carriers.

"They were walking by when they heard this loud music blasting out of one of the enlisted men's hooches," a source related, "and they went in to tell the guys to knock it off because it was so late."

Inside the hut, five black enlisted men sat listening to the music, which they turned down as the officers had requested.

Then the officers noticed that two of the soldiers were not from the unit assigned to the hut, and they told them to leave.

"They started to argue," the source continued, "and one of the enlisted men turned the stereo music up full blast again."

One of the officers yanked the music system's plug out of

the wall socket, and ordered the two soldiers out of the hut. They left, and one of the officers stood in the doorway "to keep them from coming back in," suggesting that the two enlisted men had been thrown out. However, the source would not confirm this.

"So one of the majors was standing in the door and the next thing he knew he was on the ground wounded," the source said, "and there was another flash, and the second major went down."

The wounded major in the door crawled to a nearby first-aid station for help. When the military police arrived at the scene of the shooting they found the second officer dead on the ground near the hut.

The source said he did not know if any arrests had been made, nor whether the shots had come from the three men in the hut or from the two outside. Neither of the two officers was armed, the source said, and there was no gunfire other than the shots that felled them.

The source said that initial reports indicated that the weapon used was a .25-caliber automatic, which is not issued by the Army.

A Growing Problem

Army officers say officially that such incidents as the shooting in Quangtri are not common enough to warrant special measures, although such attacks on authority are privately acknowledged to be a growing problem in South Vietnam. Some young soldiers resist orders to risk their lives and resent the attitudes of the "lifers"—career officers and noncommissioned officers—who are impatient with a lack of discipline.

The incidents are called "fraggings," a term derived from the fragmentation grenade—the weapon most often used in such attempts on the lives of Army leaders because it destroys all evidence with its explosion.

The United States command in Vietnam says it does not have statistics on the number of fraggings, but informed sources disclosed recently that in the 101st Airborne Division near Hue, there were 42 "serious incidents" against officers and sergeants that resulted in at least nine deaths last year.