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Army Major Killed in 'Fragging'

N.Y. Times Service

Saigon

One United States major was killed and another wounded Friday after an argument between several black enlisted men and the two officers, both white.

Yesterday, 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.

SHOOTING

The Army said that the shooting had occurred at the Quang Tri base camp of the First Brigade, Fifth Infantry Division (mechanized). Quang Tri is South Vietnam's northernmost province.

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

Highly reliable sources, who asked that the two officers' names be withheld, provided the following account of what happened:

The two officers, were returning to their quarters after checking the armored troop carriers belonging to their unit, at 12:30 a.m., Friday.

"They were walking by when they heard this loud music blasting out of one of the enlisted men's hooches" (huts), the sources said, "and they went into tell the guys to knock it off because it was so late."

MUSIC

Inside, five black enlisted men sat listening to the loud music, and they turned down the music as the officers requested.

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

"They started to argue," the sources continued, "and one of the enlisted men

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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," the sources said, suggesting that the two enlisted men had been thrown out. However, the sources would not confirm this.

SHOTS

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

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

The sources said they did not know if any arrests have been made, nor who fired the shots. Neither of the two officers was armed, they said,

and no other gunfire occurred except for the shots that felled them.

PISTOL

The sources said that initial reports indicate that the weapon used was a .25 caliber automatic pistol, which is not used or issued by the U.S. Army.

Army officers maintain officially that such incidents are not common enough to warrant special measures, although privately such attacks are acknowledged to be a growing problem in Vietnam.

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 Vietnam command 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 have been 42 "serious incidents" against officers and sergeants which resulted in at least nine deaths last year.