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Viet Vets

Toss Away

War Medals

SF Examiner News Services

WASHINGTON — Hundreds of angry and dissenting Vietnam Veterans Against the War lined up on the steps of the U.S. Capitol today and tossed away their Bronze Stars, Combat Infantry Badges, and other "symbols of shame" they were awarded in the Indochina conflict.

One by one, veterans walked to a wire barricade erected at the foot of the steps of the Capitol, announced their name and with anti-war shouts tossed them as far as possible up the steps leading to the Capitol.

Many shouted obscenities as they threw the shiny medals and ribbons, which covered the steps.

At the Justice Depart-

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ment's request, the Pentagon put an undisclosed number of federal troops on "increased alert" on the eve of a mass march down Pennsylvania Avenue tomorrow and a rally at the foot of Capitol Hill. Thousands of protesters began arriving by bus, plane and car.

The rally organizers, the National Peace Action Coalition, predicted a turnout of perhaps a quarter million persons, rivaling the size of the huge peace protest of Nov 15, 1919.

District of Columbia Police Chief Jerry Wilson, however, said his 5100-man force was preparing for far fewer, about 100,000 demonstrators.

730 Discard Medals

In all, 730 veterans and their supporters discarded their medals.

A crowd estimated by police to number at least 3500 veterans and their supporters cheered them on with shouts of "Right on."



RETURNED TO THE GOVERNMENT—WITHOUT THANKS
Pile of litter consists of medals, citations and notes turned in by veterans

—UPI Photo

The first veteran to dispose of his ribbons and medals was Phillip Lavoie, of North Dighton, Mass. Lavoie, wearing olive green Army fatigues, walked with the aid of two crutches as a result of wounds suffered in Vietnam.

Mrs. Anna M. Pine, of Trenton, N.J., whose son was killed as a member of the 1st Air Cavalry Division Jan. 2, 1968, turned in a Bronze Star.

Among those discarding their medals was Alex Munsell of New York City, a World War I veteran from Ft. Devens, Mass.

Another was Paul Withers who discarded nine Purple Hearts, a Distinguished Service Cross, a Silver Star, and a Bronze Star he said he earned while serving with a Special Forces unit in Vietnam.

One of the few officers in the group was Capt. Robert Heins, 31, a former Army dentist.

Over the Fence

At the last minute, the planners of the demonstration changed tactics and decided to scatter the medals over steps beyond the fence that had been erected by Capitol authorities as a security measure in advance of a big peace rally tomorrow.

The veterans had originally planned to place the medals in a "body bag" similar to the ones used to remove war dead from Vietnam battle areas.

In contrast to a subdued candlelight procession past the White House last night, the demonstrators appeared tense and angry as they turned in their awards.

A demonstrator typically would march to a microphone set up on the steps, call out his name and say, "I

Ron Dellums Throws His Medals Back

WASHINGTON — (UPI) — Rep. Ronald V. Dellums (D - Berkeley) joined the line of protesting Vietnam war veterans today and at one point threw in a handful of medals, saying:

"I used to be in the U.S. Marine Corps. They can have them back."

He was the only Congressman to appear during the two-hour demonstration.

am returning these medals because the war is bulls---."

'Body Counts'

The ceremony began with one man reading a group statement.

"We are the veterans who rose to the challenge of the nation, donned their uniforms," he said. "We are returning to Washington to tell our story — a story of Vietnamese people whose nation was torn by an Army not concerned with human lives but with body counts."

He added, "We now strip ourselves of these medals. We cast them away as symbols of shame and dehumanity."

At the White House, Press Secretary Ronald Ziegler said President Nixon is "very much aware" of the presence of the protesters and the point of view that they are expressing.

He said it was Nixon's view that the veterans had "conducted themselves in a peaceful way" during their protest.

Reverses Supreme Court

U.S. District Judge George Hart Jr. yesterday reversed an order forbidding the veterans from camping on the Mall. The injunction against camping had been upheld by the Supreme Court only 24 hours earlier.

Assistant Attorney General

L. Patrick Gray said the new ruling was sought because "these men are men who have served their country honorably."

Charges Dropped

The government meanwhile dropped disorderly conduct charges against 102 demonstrators arrested yesterday during a rally outside the Supreme Court building. Superior Court Judge William Stewart dismissed charges against four others. The four remaining defendants had elected to forfeit \$10 collateral each.

Nixon will not be in Washington during tomorrow's march. He plans to spend the weekend at Camp David, his mountain retreat in the Maryland mountains.

Senate Hearings

Veterans were testifying at Senate ad hoc hearings today on alleged war crimes and atrocities against civilians in Vietnam.

The activity is scheduled to continue through the weekend with a religious service at the National Cathedral and a mass march at the Capitol, which organizers predicted would draw "hundreds of thousands."

The Justice Department gave permission today to another anti-war group, headed by Chicago Seven defendant Rennie Davis, to locate a camp south of the Lincoln Memorial for the next two weeks.

The National Peace Action Coalition, sponsoring the Saturday demonstration, remained aloof from the Davis group, which begins its activities Sunday.