

Army Says Some G.I.'s Balked Briefly at Patrol

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SAIGON, South Vietnam, Oct. 11—A United States Army spokesman said today that several American soldiers defying an allied fire base near the Cambodian border northwest of here balked for a time on Saturday night at going out on patrol.

The soldiers, who were to have been part of a 12-man patrol of the First Cavalry Division, (Airmobile), "expressed a desire not to go," the spokesman said, when they were ordered to take up an ambush position. [According to the Associated Press, five soldiers were involved in the incident.]

But when the order was repeated, they prepared to move out from the installation, Fire Base Pace. The installation has been under fire from North Vietnamese gunners since the beginning of the month and lies close to what is estimated to be a concentration of three North Vietnamese divisions.

The order, however, was withdrawn, the spokesman said, when it was "learned that a South Vietnamese unit had already occupied the position they were headed for."

Inspection Team Flies In

The spokesman said that no further action was taken at the time. But today, a team of officers from the inspectorate general of the First Cavalry Division flew to the base to investigate the incident.

Officers of the division said they did not know whether any charges would be preferred against the soldiers. [Their commander said that the men had redeemed themselves by going out on patrol the next morning, The Associated Press reported.]

In the incident last Saturday, the soldiers reportedly did not want to leave the base because, they said, according to official Government policy they should be assigned only to "defensive" missions.

The first reports of the incident were made by a freelance journalist, Richard Boyle,

Where It Happened

The men involved were members of a company assigned to the defense of American and South Vietnamese artillery units based at Pace, which is about 80 miles northwest of Saigon just across the border from the Cambodian city of Krck, where the South Vietnamese have several base camps.

Fire Base Pace provides artillery support for South Vietnamese troops across the border.

The first reported refusal of American troops to go into combat in the Vietnam war occurred in the Americal Division in August, 1969. An infantry company refused to go yet another time up a mountain held by the North Vietnamese near the Ashau Valley in

northern South Vietnam. The Americal Division is now being withdrawn from the country and in the area around Saigon only the Third Brigade of the First Cavalry Division performs combat missions.

Last March, 53 men in two Americal platoons that had been temporarily assigned to the First Brigade, Fifth Infantry Division (Mechanized) to support the South Vietnamese invasion of Laos, refused to go back into combat to secure a damaged helicopter and their commanding officer's armored vehicle.

The division commander, Brig. Gen. John G. Hill Jr., did not press charges against the men because they later went back into the field.

An Army spokesman here described Saturday's incident as follows:

"At dusk on Oct. 9 they were getting ready to go on a 12-man patrol, and when they got the order some expressed a desire not to go. The infantry company commander repeated the order and the men prepared to move out when they learned that a South Vietnamese unit had already occupied the position they were headed for. At that point the order was withdrawn and no further action was taken."

Kennedy Asks Inquiry

WASHINGTON, Oct. 11 (AP)—Senator Edward M. Kennedy, Democrat of Massachusetts, called today for an immediate investigation of refusal of several American soldiers to go on a patrol in South Vietnam. "Any refusal by American soldiers to engage in combat is a cause of extremely serious concern," Senator Kennedy said.