

Viet Trial Of Officer Recessed

NHA TRANG (Vietnam) — (UPI) — A military judge today recessed the court martial of a 24 year old paratrooper lieutenant accused of shooting a Viet Cong prisoner in combat.

The adjournment was called so the officer's father in Texas can be flown to Vietnam.

The move climaxed the opening hearing in the court martial of 1st Lt. Frank B. Bonvillian II, of La Porte, Tex. He is charged with the premeditated murder of an "oriental male human being whose name is unknown by shooting him with a rifle."

The military charge sheets classify the alleged crime as "non capital." This means if Bonvillian is convicted he will automatically receive a life sentence, although the charge itself could be changed by the court at the end of the trial.

The delay was ordered by the judge, Lt. Col. Kenneth A. Howard, 46, of Atlanta, so Frank Bonvillian Sr. could be flown to the war zone at government expense to testify for his son. The trial will resume March 2.

The postponement came after a defense motion calling for all charges to be dropped was turned down. The judge also denied a defense request that the press be barred from the courtroom during the initial session.

Bonvillian's attorney, Capt. Elliott H. Vernon, 27, of Union, N.J., said his client is alleged to have killed a Viet Cong while on patrol about 10 miles northwest of landing zone English and 310 miles northeast of Saigon last Aug.

"They engaged an unknown number of V.C. and he killed several of them," Vernon said. "The question before the court is whether one or several was in fact killed during the so-called hors d'combat or subsequently."

He said the action erupted in a free fire zone, an area where everyone is considered an enemy, and that the lieutenant was initially recommended for a silver star for his role in the fighting.