

EX-PILOT ALLEGES CIVILIAN SLAYINGS

Tells Citizens Inquiry 33
Were Killed by a Major

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SPRINGFIELD, Mass., April 6—A former Army helicopter pilot charged today that an Army major killed 33 unarmed men, women and children as they ran across an open field in a 1967 incident in the Central Highlands of South Vietnam.

The pilot, former warrant officer David Bressemer, said he had not personally seen the shooting, but had heard the conversations relating to it on his aircraft radio. He said he had also helped "police" the bodies in the field.

"None of them were armed," he said. "In fact, one of the dead was a boy of about 10 who was still holding the halter of a cow."

Mr. Bressemer, now a student at the American International College here, made his charge at a hearing conducted by the National Committee for a Citizens Commission of Inquiry on United States War Crimes in Vietnam. The hearing was held at the Stonehaven Motor Inn.

Private Commission

The Commission of Inquiry was formed in New York last summer to travel around the country conducting hearings on alleged atrocities in Vietnam.

Among the members of the policy-making board of the commission are Noam Chomsky, professor of linguistics at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology; Ralph Schoenman, director, American foundation for Social Justice and former secretary to the late Bertrand Russell; Dick Gregory, the comedian; Melvin L. Wulf, director of the Legal Department, American Civil Liberties Union; Eric Seitz, executive secretary, National Lawyers Guild, and Andrew Stapp of the American Serviceman's Union.

Other hearings are scheduled to be held later this month in Toronto and Boston.

At today's hearing the former gunship pilot, who said he had served with Bravo Troop of the First Squadron, Ninth Regiment, First Air Cavalry Division (Air Mobile), said the incident occurred in late July or early August of 1967, just North of Ducpho.

After the shooting, he said, the major and his helicopter

crew were awarded Silver Stars for heroism and bravery under fire.

The co-pilot of the major's aircraft, he said, was later killed, although the major is still alive.

Tells of Sirens

Mr. Bressemer said he was discharged from the Army in April 1969 after spending 19 months in a hospital recovering from injuries received when a crashed helicopter exploded as he and other rescue workers were trying to extricate the crew.

He said that members of his unit in South Vietnam attached police sirens to the helicopters to frighten peasants into running. "They'd hover over a field where peasants were working," he recalled. "Then they would turn on a siren and when people ran in terror they were shot down."

Also speaking at the hearing was former Army Capt. Robert Bowie Johnson, a 1965 graduate of West Point, who served most of 1968 in South Vietnam, first as an adviser to a Vietnamese unit, then as a member of the 23d Mechanized Infantry Battalion of the 25th Infantry Division.

'Barbaric Policy'

Mr. Johnson, who now teaches English at a private school in Suburban Park, Md., said that individual soldiers in Vietnam should not be blamed for any atrocities they may have committed. "It's a barbaric policy we're dealing with rather than barbaric Americans," he said.

Mr. Johnson said the answer to the Vietnam war was not to pull out, but to spend another \$100-billion to repair the damage that an equal sum has already caused. He went on to say that more than half of his West Point graduating class had left the Army because of the Vietnam policy, but that the Defense Department would not make public the figures.

The third man to testify, former Pfc. Peter Fossill of the Marine Corps, said he had participated in an evacuation of some 200 men, women and children from a village in a free-fire zone north of Hue in early 1967.

"I saw at least two elderly people, a man and a woman, die on that forced march," he said. "Others just collapsed or slipped away in the dark."

Mr. Fossill, a rifleman in the Third Battalion, 26th Marine Regiment of the Third Marine Division, said that members of his unit brought back the ears of enemy soldiers so that a body count could be made. "We even had an earboard at headquarters," to prove our kills."