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# Why Bomber Pilot Balked

New York

The conscience of Captain Donald E. Dawson gave him increasing trouble as he took his giant B-52 bomber repeatedly over the Cambodian jungles, a press conference was told yesterday.

As the bombs fell towards targets he could not see, doing damage he would never exactly know about, Dawson, who loved flying and enjoyed Air Force life, started to worry.

The 26-year-old pilot, from Danbury, Conn., who flew a total of 90 missions over Cambodia and received an Air Medal for service, told newsmen why he refused to fly a mission — an action for which he is now threatened with court-martial.

Dawson said he was first influenced by an intelligence report that a mass grave site for more than 600 people had been discovered, presumed to be the result of a B-52 strike. He was troubled by another report that an air strike had hit a Cambodian wedding party.

Then, in spare moments between missions, the young pilot began reading the now-famous book, "August 1914," by the Russian novelist Alexander Solzhenitsyn.

Dawson said "Solzhenitsyn" vividly portrays both the effect of German artillery attacks, which I easily transferred to the effects of a B-52 strike, and the overall futility of war."

Eventually, after writing to a congressman about his beliefs in the immorality of bombing Cambodia, "I realized that I could no longer participate in the killing of human beings, that to act as I was acting and to claim the moral convictions I was claiming was the highest form of hypocrisy."

On June 19 he advised his commanding officers at Uta-pao Air Force Base in Thailand that he had reached the conviction he was a conscientious objector, though he had not yet formally sub-



UPI Telephoto  
CAPTAIN DAWSON  
A matter of conscience

mitted an application for discharge on these grounds

At yesterday's press conference at the American Civil Liberties Union headquarters here, an ACLU lawyer said that on June 21 Dawson was ordered to fly another combat mission. He refused. He submitted his conscientious objectors application the next day. He now faces charges of wilful disobedience of an order — maximum penalty five years jail with hard labor.

The lawyer, ACLU general counsel Marvin M. Karpatkin, said: "The order was clearly in violation of Captain Dawson's conscience, yet it was issued precisely at the time that he was completing the preparation of his conscientious objector papers, with the full knowledge of his commanding officers. Under those circumstances that order was illegal and charges never should have been preferred."

Dawson is one of four air force officers who, together with Democrat representative Elizabeth Holtzman, have brought a suit for an injunction to stop the Cambodian bombing on the ground that it lacked congressional approval.

Reuters