

Balking Pilot Is Out--

'Positive' He's Right

New York

"I am more positive than ever that what I did was right," Captain Michael J. Heck said yesterday after his discharge from the Air Force for refusing to fly further bombing missions over North Vietnam.

"I should have made my decision sooner. I feel guilty about that," Heck said at a news conference in the office of the American Civil Liberties Union.

The 30-year-old officer, of Chula Vista, was discharged Thursday "under other than honorable conditions" at Barksdale Air Force Base near Shreveport.

'Harsh'

He had expected the discharge process to take four days, but it took less than two hours, he said. He called the type of discharge "unduly harsh."

"It was the worst they could give," he said, and will deprive him of some veterans' benefits.

"I'm not out to destroy this country. I love this country. I want to make it more decent to live in," he said.

Heck had flown more than 130 missions as a B-52 pilot before he told his commanding officer at U-Tapao Air Force base in Thailand December 28 that he would no longer bomb North Vietnam.

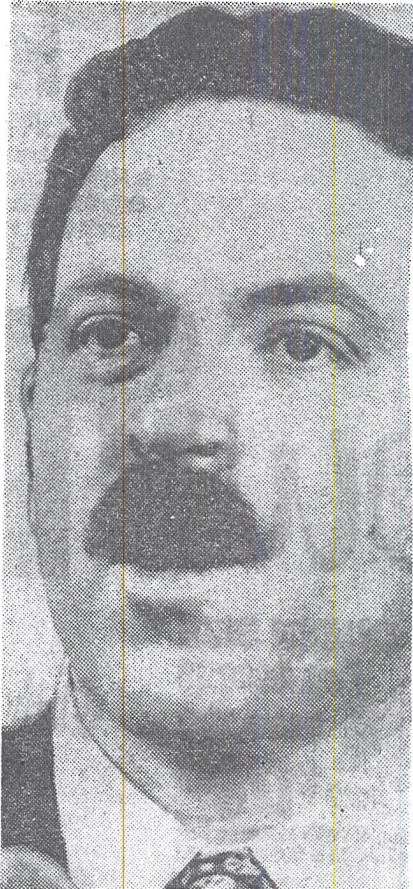
He said the idea had been brewing in his mind a long time.

"I, like a lot of people, just went along with something I didn't believe in. It was not my place to make policy, I kept thinking. And people seemed pleased with my performance over there, which displeased me because I didn't like what I was doing."

Conscientious

He said the problem came to a "conscientious crisis" when heavy bombing of North Vietnam resumed in December.

"When that happened, I was in a state of moral shock. It was like



^{AP Wirephoto}
CAPTAIN MICHAEL HECK
He wished he'd stopped earlier

walking around in a nightmare," he said.

"The opinion, the feeling I came to, was that war was the greater evil, that it creates more harm . . . I found the war was not justified."

One of Heck's lawyers, Marvin Karpatkin, said the type of discharge would be appealed, either in federal court or through the Board of Correction of Military Records.

Heck said he intends to study theater at the University of South Carolina. He said he expects to counsel young people about conscientious objector problems.

"And I'm going to let my hair grow," he said.