

An Odd Plea by Anti-War Vets

Gainesville, Fla.

Six members of the Vietnam Veterans Against the War pleaded innocent yesterday to charges of conspiring to bomb and shoot up the Republican National Convention, but told a judge they were guilty of war crimes in Indochina.

U.S. District Court Judge David L. Middlebrooks set their trial date for October 10 in Gainesville and allowed the defendants to remain free under \$25,000 bond each.

Middlebrooks accepted innocent pleas in the conspiracy charges, and brushed off the fatigues-wearing veterans' confessions of guilt in committing atrocities in Vietnam.

"Let the record show each of the defendants pleaded not guilty . . . I can't believe these people would stand up and plead guilty to the murder of innocent people, so I'm going to ignore that," Middlebrooks said during the arraignment.

The arraignment was held a day after the close of the three-day Republican National Convention, during which an estimated 1000 VVAW members joined other demonstrators.

The indictment of the six was returned a month ago by a federal grand jury that met in Tallahassee, Fla. Another four VVAW members are being held in that city on contempt charges for refusing to cooperate with the jury.

The six VVAW members arraigned were Scott Camil, 26, of Miami; Donald P. Perdue, 23, Hallandale, Fla.; Alton C. Foss, 25, Miami; William J. Patterson, 24, El Paso, Tex.; Peter Mahoney, 23, New York City and John W. Kniffen, 23, Austin, Tex.

About 200 anti-war protestors, most of them VVAW members, joined the "Gainesville Six" in a march from the University of Florida campus to the federal courthouse almost a mile away. Fifty were allowed inside.

Outside the courthouse later, the six described as "phony" the charges in the indictment that they plotted to use automatic weapons, heavy-duty slingshots and incendiary devices to disrupt the GOP convention and the Miami Beach communications system.

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