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Reluctant Judge Frees

Protesters

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Claiming that Supreme Court Justice William O. Douglas deliberately "thwarted" federal law, United States District Judge David L. Middlebrooks ordered the release without bond yesterday of four Vietnam Veterans Against the War (VVAW) whom he had jailed for contempt.

Supporters of the four VVAW members, who had refused to testify at a federal grand jury hearing on an alleged plot to disrupt the Republican convention, at first gasped and then broke into scattered laughter as Middlebrooks cast his eyes down at his desk top and resigned himself to releasing the men.

They had been in the Leon county jail for nearly a month.

Middlebrooks said Douglas, "who is not the justice in this circuit," overruled five "distinguished jurists" of the United States Court of Appeals for the Fifth Circuit and fellow "distinguished Justice William Powell in