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SFChronicle  
**Hero's Cure  
 For Wartime  
 Atrocities**

**New York**

Lieutenant Colonel Anthony B. Herbert, the Army's most decorated enlisted man in the Korean War, said yesterday U.S. servicemen in Vietnam would stop committing atrocities in Vietnam "if we'd hang a couple of senior commanders."

Herbert, who was given a battalion command in Vietnam in 1969 but transferred home 58 days later when he accused his superior officers of covering up atrocities, said in an interview in Life magazine the principal reason for the atrocities was a failure of command responsibility.

"It's easy to get soldiers to do what's right. You just have to tell them," he said.

When he arrived in Vietnam in February, 1969, Herbert said, he found his men were getting rest and recuperation leaves for kills. "I changed that. I gave them R&R for live prisoners. They're worth information," he said.

**PRISONERS**

In his first engagement with the enemy, Herbert said, he captured two Viet Cong who had been trying to flee. "A sergeant came running up and tried to bayonet the people I captured. I grabbed him and threw him down," the colonel said.

Herbert said he talked to other officers about the torture that went on in his battalion and they all told him, "That's the way it is. You can't rock the boat. You can't antagonize the big dragons."

The colonel, a 23-year veteran of the Army who won his commission in 1956, said the problem was ambition.

"The commanders are out to get a war record. It's called 'getting your ticket punched'. And the battalion commanders aren't held accountable. They don't feel responsible. They take the job as a stepping-stone. The only time they are held responsible," Herbert said.

"This stuff would stop if we'd hang a couple of senior commanders," he said. "If it's no longer condoned, then it will cease. If you don't tell a soldier what's right, then he thinks whatever is condoned is what you want, and that's what he does. It's not brave to be cruel."

**TRAINING**

Herbert said training also was at fault. "We overpreach about women and kidsfighting. The majority of the civilians don't shoot at us. Some are forced by the enemy to be involved. But we condition our people to the idea that everyone is a — enemy by this kind of talk."

At the same time, he said, "we condition our recruits to be losers. We try to scare them, telling them the Viet Cong lives in darkness, painting him as some kind of superman when he's a stumblebum just like we are."

Herbert, assigned to the Staff College in Ft. Leavenworth, Kan., after Vietnam, was transferred again to Ft. McPherson, Ga., before he could begin attending classes and is still there.

*United Press*