

7 Antiwar Ex-GIs Face Trial

By Lucinda L. Franks
United Press International

Peter J. Mahoney was a first lieutenant who joined up for Vietnam because he feared his country was losing the war. William J. Patterson won 10 medals for bravery. Alton Foss came home dragging a leg shattered by a bullet.

This week, the U.S. government will put the three veterans, along with five others who turned against the war, on trial in Gainesville, Fla., for conspiracy to disrupt the 1972 Republican National Convention.

The "Gainesville Eight"—seven members of Vietnam Veterans Against the War (VVAW) and one sympathizer—are charged with holding meetings in which they allegedly plotted to mount an assault on the August, 1972, Convention in Miami Beach using cherry bombs, slingshots, and crossbows.

They are Mahoney, 23, New York City; Patterson, 24, Austin, Tex.; Foss, 25, Hialeah, Fla.; Scott Camil, 26, Gainesville, Fla.; John Kniffen, 25, Austin; Stanley K. Michelsen, 23, Gainesville; and Donald P. Purdue, 23, Hollywood, Fla., all members of the VVAW. The supporter is John Briggs, 20, of Gainesville.

The VVAW claims that its members were framed, that their indictments were linked with political espionage in the Watergate affair, and that they were infiltrated by agents connected to the Committee to Re-elect the President (CRP).

Mahoney, a tall, soft-spoken veteran of 24, gave up ideas of going into the priesthood five years ago. Instead, he quit college and joined the Army after the 1968 Tet offensive so he could go to Vietnam and help America win the war.



JUDGE WINSTON ARNOW
... to hear conspiracy case

"I thought we were losing over there and I wanted to try to do my part," he said. "When I came home, I couldn't sleep. That's why I joined VVAW, that's why all of us joined. It was something to give us strength and support through the long days of thinking about all those people we killed for no reason."

All of the Gainesville defendants were decorated during their tours. Patterson won his 10 medals for his exploits as a helicopter gunner, including the purple heart and the distinguished flying cross.

Foss, a hospital corpsman attached to a Marine division, was wounded in an ambush in Danang. After three operations, he has lost almost total use of his left leg and receives disability payments. He also came home from Vietnam with a drug habit.

The Gainesville trial, which opens Tuesday, could take on some of the dramatic dimensions of the "Chicago Seven" trial in which a group of radicals were tried for their part in the disturbances at the 1968

Democratic National Convention. The VVAW plans demonstrations and rallies which will feature folk singer Pete Seeger, new left writer Tom Hayden, and Anthony Russo, a co-defendant in the Pentagon Papers trial.

In turn, the judge, Winston Arnow, appears determined to prevent the kind of publicized uproar and circus-like atmosphere which pervaded the courtroom of Judge Julius Hoffman, who at one point ordered a Chicago defendant bound and gagged.

During pre-trial hearings, Arnow took the unusual step of ordering that no sketches could be made of the court proceedings even from memory, but the ruling was overturned by an appeals court. He has also imposed a gag rule on the defendants and their lawyers, under which they will be held in contempt of court if they discuss the case with newsmen.

The defense has tried to force prosecutor Guy Goodwin, a special attorney in the Justice Department's Internal Securities Division, to disclose the extent of any illegal bugging and other espionage activities carried out against the VVAW.

Goodwin at first denied there was any surveillance of the defendants, but recently, after a former police informer gave testimony disputing him, he admitted that an informer had taped a conversation with one defendant.

The prosecution's case appears to rest largely on the testimony of informers who posed as VVAW members and sat in on the meetings where convention violence allegedly was planned.

One informer for the Miami police, Pablo Fernandes, tried to sell machine guns to the VVAW be-

fore the convention, but the veterans refused the offer. The Miami police, who confirmed that Fernandes was in their hire, said they were "hoping for the overt act necessary to produce a charge of conspiracy."

Fernandes has said he was also working at the time for Bernard Barker, convicted Watergate burglar, and had been a member of a team led by Barker to disrupt anti-administration demonstrations at the funeral of the late FBI chief J. Edgar Hoover in Washington last year.

As evidence of the government's concern about them, the VVAW cites the testimony of Watergate conspirator James McCord, who told the Senate committee investigating the affair that the break-in took place partly because CRP wanted to establish links between the "violence-oriented" VVAW and the Democratic Party.