An Army of the Willing: Fayette’Nam, Soldier Dissent, and the Untold Story of the All-Volunteer Force

by

Scovill Wannamaker Currin Jr.

Department of History
Duke University

Date: ______________________

Approved:

___________________________
Nancy MacLean, Supervisor

___________________________
Adriane Lentz-Smith

___________________________
Dirk Bonker

___________________________
Sarah Deutsch

Dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in the Department of History in the Graduate School of Duke University

2015
ABSTRACT

An Army of the Willing: Fayette’Nam, Soldier Dissent, and the Untold Story of the All-Volunteer Force

by

Scovill Wannamaker Currin Jr.

Department of History
Duke University

Date: _________________________
Approved:

___________________________
Nancy MacLean, Supervisor

___________________________
Adriane Lentz-Smith

___________________________
Dirk Bonker

___________________________
Sarah Deutsch

An abstract of a dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in the Department of History in the Graduate School of Duke University

2015
Abstract

Using Fort Bragg and Fayetteville, North Carolina, as a local case study, this dissertation examines the GI dissent movement during the Vietnam War and its profound impact on the ending of the draft and the establishment of the All-Volunteer Force in 1973. I demonstrate that the US military consciously and methodically shifted from a conscripted force to the All-Volunteer Force as a safeguard to ensure that dissent in the ranks never arose again as it had during the Vietnam War. This story speaks to profound questions regarding state power that are essential to making sense of our recent history. What becomes of government and military legitimacy when the soldier refuses to sanction or participate in the brutality of warfare? And perhaps more importantly, what happens to the foreign policy of a major power when soldiers no longer protest, and thereby hold in check, questionable military interventions? My dissertation strives to answer those questions by reintroducing the dissenting soldier into the narrative of the All-Volunteer Force.
Contents

Abstract ........................................................................................................................................iv

Acknowledgements ....................................................................................................................vi

Introduction. “If My Soldiers Began to Think, Not One Would Remain in the Ranks”: G.I. Dissent and the All-Volunteer Force .................................................................................. 1

Chapter One. “Our Voice is Our Weapon”: The Emergence of GI Dissent, 1965-1968 .... 33

Chapter Two. “A Volunteer Army can be a Better Army”: The Rise of the All-Volunteer Force, 1968-1969 ........................................................................................................... 88


Chapter Four. “They Can Have my Body for a Year, but They Can’t Have my Mind”: The End of a War, the Draft, and G.I. Dissent, 1971-1975 ...................................................... 216

Conclusion. “This Prison Only Needs One Thing...Prisoners”: The Success of the All-Volunteer Force .................................................................................................................. 306

References ................................................................................................................................ 312

Biography ................................................................................................................................... 322
Acknowledgements

First and foremost, I want to thank my wonderful family, for without them, I am nothing. I chose to write from home, usually when Tessa and Luke were at school or asleep, so I could spend as much time with them as possible. It was a great decision. Being married to a prospective PhD student is strenuous during the good days and a brutal nightmare on the bad, so to Lisa, thank you for holding our family together the past three years. I love you all more than you can imagine. Or as Luke would say, “I love you to Tatooine and back.”

I have been blessed with the most generous, patient, and helpful dissertation committee on the planet. It was Nancy MacLean who recommended that I read Richard Moser’s *The New Winter Soldiers*, a history of the G.I. dissent during the Vietnam War. I was immediately captivated and instantly saw how these rebellious soldiers personified interests that had developed over my years of military service. Since that fateful day, she has done the heavy lifting of guiding me through this project with an energy and enthusiasm that is unparalleled. Adriane Lentz-Smith, Dirk Bonker, and Sarah Deutsch took me under their wing and taught me to examine historical events and contingencies in new and profound ways. My first year essay proposals all read like current-day public policy projects, certainly worthy of Pentagon study groups, but woefully
inadequate for historical scholarship. If I’m worthy enough to call myself a historian, it is because of them. They say it takes a village, and I wouldn’t trade mine for anything.

At the end of the day, writing a dissertation is a lonely experience, ultimately just you, your writing tool of choice, and your thoughts. But I’ve been so fortunate to have a group of colleagues to help beat back that isolation. To my original cohort, the 701 Warriors, I thank you for being patient with the new guy who seemed completely baffled by Foucault, Gramsci, and Agamben. To Alisha, Brad, Mandy, Tom, Jess, Josh, Anna, Claire, Anna, Janice, Stephanie, Joe, and Ajay, I’m honored to call you my “biological cohort.” I wish you all the best!

They say that a traumatic, shared experience forges camaraderie like nothing else. To my dear friends Meggan, Will, Tiffany, Yuridia, and David, you wonderful band of brothers and sisters who slugged through prelim season with me, I will forever treasure your friendship. Those cohort dinners became the greatest way to beat back the frustration and despair of that long season. So what if folks passed us evil looks, or even asked to move tables; we had earned the right to be as loud as we wanted! You all are going to be huge successes, but as talented as you are professionally, you’re even better friends.

And finally I would like to publicly thank the brave soldiers who stared prison, dishonorable discharges, threats of reduced pay and poor assignments, and brutal intimidation square in the face and said, “No, I won’t fight. I won’t support a war I don’t
believe in, a war that was misguided from the very beginning." All wars, no matter how foolishly they are entered or carelessly fought, produce heroes. Those that fought back against military and political leaders who seemed to think nothing of needlessly spilling their blood are also heroes of the Vietnam War, and they deserve to be recognized as such. Today’s military members could learn a great deal from them.
Introduction. “If My Soldiers Began to Think, Not One Would Remain in the Ranks”: G.I. Dissent and the All-Volunteer Force

In 1949, the US Secretary of Defense announced the creation of Armed Forces Day, a commemoration designed as an “educational program for civilians” in which the US military would demonstrate its state-of-the-art equipment to the civilian population they were tasked to defend. On Armed Forces Day in 1970, with the war in Vietnam raging 8,000 miles away, the residents of Fayetteville, North Carolina, were in no mood to be educated. After marching through the downtown streets, 3,000 civilian antiwar protestors, including actress Jane Fonda, rallied in Fayetteville’s Rowan Park. By 1970, large protests against the war in Vietnam were not uncommon, but the rally in Fayetteville was unique. Approximately fifty Fort Bragg soldiers, intent on ending a war they no longer believed in, planned and led this rally. The servicemen, who in the spring of 1969 had formed their own antiwar organization, G.I.s United Against the War in Vietnam, used their underground newspaper to encourage their fellow soldiers to participate in the rally: “While the brass shows off its weapons, medals, and misadventures, you can act as America’s conscience…the closed mouth, closed mind

2 For a history of Armed Forces Day, see the Department of Defense website, http://www.defense.gov/afd/history.aspx. The quote “educational program for civilians” is from this website.
image of GI Joe must be shattered.” The rebellious soldiers were successful. Renaming the celebration “Armed Farces Day,” 1,000 active duty soldiers joined the antiwar protestors in the streets of Fayetteville, a striking number considering that Fort Bragg leadership had restricted most soldiers to their barracks during the rally. Private John Vail called for a GI strike while Jane Fonda urged soldiers to stay in the army and resist from within. Similar rallies occurred across the country, but the one in Fayetteville was the largest; so large in fact, that military officials cancelled the planned Armed Forces Day event on post.4

Even though Bragg leadership had cancelled its open house, Fonda and the other rally leaders were insistent on demonstrating on the military post. As the downtown protest ended, the actress encouraged the crowd to join her at Fort Bragg to distribute leaflets and encourage G.I.s to speak out. A long caravan of sports cars, trucks, and motorcycles snaked its way along the ten miles between downtown and the base. As Fonda stood outside the US Army Training Center handing out literature, an army major approached her and asked, “I take it you are familiar with the Army regulations about leaflets?” Fonda quickly replied that she was, but considered the rule

---

unconstitutional. The troops on post did not seem to care if the protest or leaflets were legal or not. One soldier told a reporter, “This is fun, I feel like I’m around friends again.” Several soldiers driving jeeps and trucks past the demonstrators held up the peace symbol, while another complained that senior leaders had threatened G.I.s with legal punishment if they were caught talking to one of the protestors. Despite the brass’s intimidation tactics, a large number of Bragg soldiers were obviously ready to oppose the Vietnam War from inside the ranks.

In March of 2005, a strikingly similar rally took place in Fayetteville. On the second anniversary of the invasion of Iraq, a war that increasingly drew comparisons to the quagmire in Vietnam, 3,000 peace activists and their families rallied in Fayetteville at the same Rowan Park where activists had converged thirty-five years earlier. It was the largest rally of over 800 such protests in the United States that day. Organizers carefully placed over a hundred cardboard coffins, each draped with an American flag, throughout the park. In Fayetteville, where eighty service personnel with ties to the region or its military post had been killed in action since 2002, the imagery was sobering. By March of 2005, over 10,000 soldiers from Fort Bragg were serving in Iraq and Afghanistan. “It was important to come here because there is hardly a single family in Fayetteville that does not have some connection to the military,” said Lou Plummer, a

---

local antiwar activist. Many of the speakers, perhaps remembering the number of soldiers that took to the streets in 1970, directed their comments toward active servicemen and women. "There is nothing more important today than building links and giving aid and comfort to the members of the armed forces," said Thomas Barton, a union organizer from New York. A “rebellion in the armed forces of the United States will stop the war," he told the crowd." The rally was the largest protest in Fayetteville since the 1970 Armed Forces Day protest of Vietnam. There was one noticeable difference, however, between the two demonstrations: Despite the pleas from civilian protest organizers, active military personnel were conspicuously absent in 2005.

In the years following the invasion of Iraq, it was clear that many soldiers had become as disenchanted with the US intervention in the Middle East as their G.I. predecessors had with the war in Vietnam. A 2006 Zogby poll showed that 29 percent of US troops in Iraq favored immediate withdrawal; 72 percent called for withdrawal within a year. Seven active Army soldiers published an editorial in the New York Times in which they accused the United States of pursuing “incompatible policies to absurd ends without recognizing the incongruities” in Iraq. Unlike their Vietnam-era

---

9 See for example, Matthew Gutmann and Catherine Lutz, Breaking Ranks: Iraq Veterans Speak Out Against the War (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2010).
counterparts, however, these soldiers ended their message with a call to duty: “We need not talk about morale. As committed soldiers, we will see this mission through.”

Despite widespread angst inside the ranks during the war in Iraq, troops never mounted a movement remotely comparable to the GI movement during the Vietnam years. By 2006, even though over one million Americans had served in Iraq and Afghanistan, the Iraq Veterans Against the War could only claim around 250 members. When there was dissent or desertion, it was at the individual level and isolated. What had become of soldiers’ collective and public protest of a war they no longer believed in? This dissertation helps answer that question.

Using Fort Bragg and Fayetteville, North Carolina, as a local case study, my dissertation examines the GI dissent movement during the Vietnam War and its profound impact on the ending of the draft and establishment of the All-Volunteer Force in 1973. I propose that the US military, and particularly the Army, the service that relied so heavily on conscripts and faced the most intense revolt inside the ranks, consciously and methodically shifted from a conscripted force to the All-Volunteer Force as a safeguard to ensure that dissent never arose again in the ranks as it had during the Vietnam War. This story speaks to profound questions regarding state power that are

---

11 Three weeks later, Omar Mora and Yance Gray made good on their promise when their cargo truck overturned in Baghdad, killing both men. Mora was 28 and Gray was 26; both men were married and had young daughters. Buddhika Jayamaha, Wesley D. Smith, Jeremy Roebuck, Omar Mora, Edward Sandmeier, Yance T. Gray, and Jeremy A. Murphy, “The War as We Saw It,” New York Times, 19 August 2007.

essential to making sense of our recent history. What becomes of state and military legitimacy when the soldier refuses to sanction or participate in the brutality of warfare? And perhaps more importantly, what happens to the foreign policy of a major power when soldiers no longer protest, and thereby hold in check, questionable military interventions? My dissertation strives to answer those questions by reintroducing the dissenting soldier into the narrative of the All-Volunteer Force.

The move from a conscripted force to volunteers was one of the most dramatic shifts in the history of the US Armed Forces.13 Two and a half weeks before the 1968 presidential election, Richard Nixon went live on CBS’s national radio network with a call to end the draft.14 In March of 1969, only months after assuming the presidency, Nixon announced the creation of the President’s Commission on an All-Volunteer Armed Force, eventually known as the Gates Commission, which was tasked to “develop a comprehensive plan for ending conscription and moving toward an all-volunteer force.”15 In February 1970, nearly a year after forming, the committee

13 Cortright, Soldiers in Revolt, 173.
14 Richard Nixon, “The All-Volunteer Armed Force,” address on CBS radio network, October 17, 1968. Nixon was clear that his intent to end the draft remained contingent on ending US involvement in Vietnam: “I have looked into this question carefully. And this is my belief: once our involvement in the Vietnam War is behind us, we move toward an all-volunteer armed force. This means, that just as soon as our reduced manpower requirements in Vietnam will permit us to do so, we should stop the draft and put our Selective Service structure on stand-by.” Nixon was not the first to propose an end to the draft. The Wednesday Group, a group of congressional Republicans, had called for the end of the draft in 1967. The significance of Nixon’s address rested on promised executive branch commitment to ending the draft.
15 The Commission became known as the Gates Commission after its chair, Thomas Gates, a former Secretary of Defense for Eisenhower. The committee consisted of fifteen members; they represented the military, higher education, industry, and the civil rights community. Jeanne Nobel, the only woman on the
forwarded its report to President Nixon, unanimously recommending the move to all-volunteer force and proposing an end to the draft on July 1, 1971, the day after existing draft legislation expired. In April 1970, Nixon sent the report to Congress, endorsing the findings of the committee with one major exception: time. With a plan underway to secretly expand the Vietnam War into Cambodia, the President still desperately needed the healthy flow of soldiers that the draft provided.

With the president’s endorsement of the Gates Commission Report, the end of the draft was imminent. Almost a year later, in January of 1971, President Nixon sent his second message to Congress on ending the draft. “I am even more strongly convinced of the rightness of these proposals,” Nixon proclaimed, requesting an additional $1.5 billion in funds to make military service more attractive to young Americans. Both the Nixon administration and senior military leaders would have preferred to end the draft immediately, but with an active shooting war still ongoing in Vietnam, the President believed that ending the draft too suddenly would “seriously weaken our military forces and impair our ability to forestall threats to peace.” In the end, the White House requested a two-year extension and the end of college deferments. With the committee, was a professor at New York University and Vice-President of the National Council of Negro Women. The committee also boasted three prominent economists, Milton Friedman, Alan Greenspan, and W. Allen Wallis. See The Report of The President’s Commission on an All-Volunteer Armed Force (Washington DC: US Government Printing Office, February 1970).
“opportunity to take historic action” at hand, the President implored Congress that ending of the draft would “demonstrate our continuing commitment to the principle of ensuring for the individual the greatest possible measure of freedom.” After a summer of debate, the House voted 297-108 in August to extend the draft by two years, and the Senate followed suit a month later by a vote of 55-30. One week later, President Nixon signed the Draft Extension and Military Pay Bill, declaring that he was “most hopeful that this is the last time a President signs an extension of draft induction authority.”

The United States would draft its last man, Dwight Elliot Stone, in December 1972. The day after Mr. Elliot began his obligated service on June 30, 1973, the all-volunteer force became a reality.

Although American citizen-soldiers have periodically rebelled against military hierarchy, it was during the Vietnam War that soldier rebellion reached crisis levels. The

---

17 Statement of President Richard Nixon Upon Signing H.R. 6531, Draft Extension and Military Pay Bill, Into Law, September 28, 1971. The new law also nearly doubled a new recruit’s pay from $255 a month to $450 per month. AVA/CMH.
first known instance of GI dissent took place in 1965 when Lieutenant Henry Howe of Fort Bliss participated in a small civilian peace demonstration in downtown El Paso. The first public refusal of orders to Vietnam came on June 30, 1966 when Privates James Johnson, Dennis Mora, and David Samas – the so called “Fort Hood Three” – announced they would not participate in an immoral war. Army doctor Howard Levy’s 1966 refusal to train Green Beret medics at Fort Jackson, South Carolina, on the grounds that Special Forces’ units were responsible for war crimes in Vietnam, put GI dissent on the front page of national newspapers. After Peter Arnett chronicled the combat refusal of the 196th Light Infantry’s Brigade’s Alpha Company in the Songchang Valley in South Vietnam on the front page of the New York Times in August 1969, the nation and the US Army could no longer ignore the revolt inside the ranks.

Between 1968 and 1973, the US Army began to disintegrate in the face of high desertion rates, combat refusals, fragging (assassination) of officers, and soldier protests at military posts across the United States. In 1971, a former Marine Colonel, Robert

---

19 The US Army court-martialed Lt. Henry Howe and sentenced him to two years hard labor at Fort Leavenworth, Kansas. Dennis Mora, a member of the “Fort Hood Three,” appealed his case all the way to the Supreme Court, where it was denied review. A military court sentenced Dr. Levy to three years at Leavenworth where he served twenty-six months of his sentence. As David Cortright argues, the heavy sentences metered out by the US Army were a “harsh portent of the military’s reaction to internal dissent.” See Cortright, Soldiers in Revolt, 52-54 and Moser, The New Winter Soldiers, 69-70 for details on the early stages of GI dissent. For other examples of early dissent, see Michael Biddy, “Fragging the Chains of Command: GI Resistance Poetry and Mutilation,” Journal of American Culture 16, no. 3 (Fall 1993): 29. For the most thorough treatment of the Fort Hood Three, see Fred Halstead, Out Now: A Participant’s Account of the Movement in the U.S. against the Vietnam War (New York: Pathfinder Press, 1991), 174-186.

20 Horst Fass and Peter Arnett, “Told to Move Again on 6th Deadly Day, Company A Refuses,” New York Times, August 26, 1969. Fass and Arnett won the Pulitzer Prize for their story while the US Army relieved Lieutenant Shurtz, the Company Commander, of command. The mission in question had no military value – the men were trying to recover 7 deceased soldiers from a helicopter crash site.
Heinl, argued that “by every conceivable indicator, our army that now remains in Vietnam is in a state approaching collapse, with individual units avoiding or having refused combat, murdering their officers and non-commissioned officers, drug-ridden, and dispirited where not near mutinous.” A 1971 Pentagon survey found that more than half of all soldiers had refused orders, sabotaged equipment, or actively protested the war. From 1966 to 1971, the Army desertion rate increased nearly 400 percent, from 14.9 incidents per thousand to 73.6 per thousand. Across the United States, at nearly every military installation, dissenting GIs began producing underground newspapers, founding over 250 publications that criticized the war effort and the military’s efforts to stem dissent in the ranks. By the early 1970s, the U.S armed forces, particularly the US Army, had ceased to function as an effective fighting force, a decline directly attributable to the revolt in the ranks.

Why exactly, besides its sheer length, was the war in Vietnam so contentious among active soldiers? All too often, Vietnam-era dissent is associated with the antiwar

22 Italics my own. Howard Olson and R. William Rae, Determination of the Potential for Dissidents in the U.S. Army (McLean, VA: Research Analysis Corporation, 1971). The commissioning of this report itself is evidence of the military’s concern over soldier dissent.
23 Cortright, Soldiers in Revolt, 10.
movement in the United States and perceived lack of support from the home front. This theory, however, reduces soldiers’ agency by denigrating their capacity to think and act of their own volition. Others have responded that GI dissent sprung from the discovery, once on the ground in Vietnam, of how false and hypocritical the official justifications of the war were. Similarly, some historians have argued that the absence of a viable explanation for American involvement bred dissent and disobedience.27

Taking another tack, several historians have pointed out the growing animosity between career officers and the new draftees, as conscripted soldiers derisively referred to the long-term volunteers as ‘lifers’ while career soldiers resented the disrespectful, antiwar newcomers.28 As with most historical contingencies, the movement in the ranks drew on a combination of these factors.

Either way, this project argues that any explanation of the construction of the All-Volunteer Force must begin with a thorough accounting of the impact of this soldier dissent. Though manpower concerns were a reality for an army in the midst of a war, I

---

25 As an example, see Kindsvatter, *American Soldiers*. Kindsvatter argues that American soldiers, once immersed in combat, leaned heavily on a “direct dependency relationship” amongst fellow soldiers. American soldiers were also sustained by a “latent ideology” that motivated their efforts beyond mere survival. For Kindsvatter, this latent ideology was directly tied to support from the home front, and combat motivation accordingly fell apart, even if the buddy relationships didn’t, during the latter stages of the Vietnam War. See pp. 125-126, 136-141, and 145-154.


demonstrate that the revolt inside the ranks directly spurred the end of conscription. Historians have labeled the voluntary army as “a tale of progress and achievement” after decades of wars fought with volunteers.29 This dissertation questions that conventional wisdom by suggesting that the establishment of the All-Volunteer Force was motivated less by a desire to end an unfair draft or to improve the quality of the force than by a determination to ensure that unwilling conscripts no longer revolted inside the ranks. What if, instead of seeking to advance freedom and consent, the US political and military leadership aimed to remove a vital safeguard in stemming military adventurism?

The US Army concluded after years of escalating dissent, just as the Gates Commission argued, that the “problems raised by the forced military service of those who are unwilling or unable to adjust to military life will be largely overcome by voluntary recruiting.”30

---

29 The quote “tale of progress and achievement” is from Beth Bailey, America’s Army, 260. She argues, “The history of the all-volunteer army is, in very many ways, a tale of progress and achievement.” To be fair, Bailey also highlights that “in a democratic nation, there is something lost when individual liberty is valued over all and the rights and benefits of citizenship become less closely linked to its duties and obligations.” See p. 260 as well. But Bailey is clearly not alone in her claim that the volunteer force has been a success. William Bowman, Roger Little, and G. Thomas Sicilia argue that the “the All-Volunteer Force has enjoyed numerous successes and overcome numerous problems since its inception in 1973,” and that “debate has subsided in light of the high-quality recruit the military services have been able to attract since 1981.” See William Bowman, Roger Little, and G. Thomas Sicilia, eds., The All-Volunteer Force After a Decade (New York: Pergamon-Brassey’s, 1986), ix. In the forward to Griffith’s The U.S. Army’s Transition to the All-Volunteer Force, the army’s Chief of Military History writes of the “success of the volunteer force in peace and war since its inception.” Griffith himself claims that the transition to an all-volunteer force was “both an orderly and successful process.” See Griffith, The U.S. Army’s Transition to the All-Volunteer Force, 1968-1974, v, vii. Bernard Rostker claims that the All-Volunteer Force has become “a force of professionals sustained in peacetime, tested in battle, and respected throughout the world.” Rostker, I Want You!, iii.

But which problems, exactly? How would the “unwilling” be weeded out? These are questions this dissertation strives to answer. President Nixon’s Gates Commission argued quite clearly that voluntary service would remove the threat of internal resistance:

The draft creates unnecessary problems for the military. Selection by lottery compels some to serve who have neither a talent nor a taste for military life…these men present morale and disciplinary problems which otherwise would not arise. Some spend much of their military service in confinement, because it is so difficult for them to adjust to military service. Dissent within the military presents particularly ticklish problems for the armed forces of a free nation.  

In 1971, after interviewing Brigadier General Robert Gard, a Pentagon specialist in disciplinary problems, and Major General John Bennett, the commander of the Army’s Fourth Infantry Division, a New York Times reporter concluded that the Army had launched its volunteer army programs to “increase the number of true volunteers in its ranks and thus eliminate many of its troubles” since the “troublemakers are primarily draftees.”

Most historians have either ignored dissenting soldiers’ role in ending the draft or simply ranked GI rebellion behind a host of other causes. Robert Griffith, in his institutional study of the US Army and the creation of the volunteer force, recognized the significant role of soldier dissent, but he devoted little attention to the issue and

31 Ibid, 32.
concentrated primarily on the army’s concern over its public image, the rising tide of soldiers’ alcohol and drug abuse, professional misconduct, and racial unrest inside the ranks. Bernard Rostker, when detailing why the US transitioned to volunteers, placed “discipline problems among draftees” a distant fifth behind the tradition of voluntary military service in America, the inequality of the draft, the unpopularity of the Vietnam War, and the waning sense of obligation among young people to serve in the military.

Even David Cortright, whose *Soldiers in Revolt* has long been the gold standard in the field, argued that political and social pressures from outside the ranks, rather than soldier rebellion, was the primary cause of the move to volunteers.33

Griffith, Rostker, and Cortright all highlight important factors that contributed to the creation of a volunteer force. Alcohol and drug abuse, racial unrest, the inequality of the draft, and the tradition of volunteer service in America, among other factors, surely played a role in the creation of the volunteer force. But this project illustrates that GI dissent, more than any other factor, was the most pressing reason for the abandonment of the draft. And despite the occasional nod to dissenting soldiers, the historiographical mainstream has yet to adequately reckon with their impact on the creation of the All-Volunteer Force.

---

In fact, rather than focusing on dissenting soldiers, most historians have preferred to highlight civilian activists’ disdain for the war in Vietnam and protest of the draft as the primary catalysts for the advent of the All-Volunteer Force. For example, Michael Foley ordains civilian draft resisters as “the antiwar movement’s equivalent to the civil right movement’s Freedom Riders and lunch-counter sit-in participants,” granting them an almost sacred place in the story of conscientious dissent. Foley sets his study in Boston, Massachusetts, which featured the largest and best-organized draft resistance in the country. Boston was unique for another reason in that the vast majority of Boston draft resisters – as high as 80 percent per Foley – enjoyed deferments, mostly due to the high student population in the area. Foley effectively combats the misleading perception of draft resisters as “selfish, cowardly, and traitorous,” but he also privileges the dignified public rejection of the draft by the educated middle class. George Flynn, in a work that traces the changes in the draft from 1940 through 1973, argues similarly that it was the civilian antiwar movement that convinced President Nixon that the draft was no longer politically tenable. Soldier protest is conspicuously absent in these recent accounts of the draft’s demise.34

In addition to ignoring dissenting soldiers’ role in ending the draft, most historians have maintained that the army opposed ending the draft and “had to be

dragged reluctantly into the All-Volunteer Force era.” Beth Bailey, in her otherwise thorough treatment of the construction of the All-Volunteer Force, argues that “nearly everyone with power in or over the military opposed” President Nixon’s initial proposal to end the draft. The “last issue that the military establishment wanted to deal with, as it struggled through the final years of the US war in Vietnam,” she writes, “was the end of the draft.” Relying on select public pronouncements from Army officials, Bailey seems to have ignored the secretive 1971 Pentagon survey found that more than half of all soldiers had refused orders, sabotaged equipment, or actively protested the war. Either way, dissenting soldiers hardly warrant a mention in her otherwise groundbreaking work.

---


This dissertation shows that the Army did not drag its feet or attempt to sabotage the volunteer force. In actuality, the opposite was true; the volunteer force became a lifeline for a service nearly brought to its knees by dissenting soldiers. By the summer of 1968, draftees made up half of the US Army; in some combat units, the number of conscripts exceeded two-thirds. Moreover, over half of those that volunteered for the service in the Army had only done so over fear of being drafted. Soldiers often volunteered to maintain some control over their destiny. Volunteers were often able to pick their branch of service and specific job; draftees overwhelmingly ended up in combat units. So, in effect, over seventy-five percent of the US Army was either drafted or had joined in fear of being drafted. As the war dragged on, these inductees grew increasingly disenchanted with the US mission in Vietnam.

My dissertation also offers an original approach, a local case study, which better illustrates the connection between G.I. dissent and the advent of the All-Volunteer Force. In the current literature, Vietnam-era dissent and the volunteer army that followed it have remained a national narrative with local dynamics ignored. Not only was Fort

---


Bragg the largest Army post in the US, but it also formed the epicenter of stateside soldier dissent and disobedience. Nowhere was stateside soldier dissent and disobedience more vocal than Fayetteville and Fort Bragg. During the height of the G.I. movement, thousands of soldiers participated in demonstrations in the small southern town. In contrast to the national-level focus in the current historiography, which gives an aerial view that cannot explain causation, this focus on Fort Bragg reveals the precise linkages between soldier dissent and the advent of the All-Volunteer Force.

In a project that focuses on G.I. dissent as a key category of analysis, establishing a definition of the concept up front is vital. In 1971, the Army commissioned several studies on dissent in the ranks and arrived at the following definition: “Deliberate, willful activities by members of the Army representing disagreement with Army missions, practices, government policy that could to some degree, however slight, adversely affect the ability of the Army to accomplish its mission.” Under this broad definition, the service also delineated between direct disobedience and dissidence. For the Army at least, disobedience involved insubordination, combat refusals, and fraggings while dissidence included attendance at G.I. coffee shops, publication of GI David R. Segal, Recruiting for Uncle Sam: Citizenship and Military Manpower Policy (Lawrence, KS: University Press of Kansas, 1989); Eliot Cohen, Citizens and Soldiers: The Dilemmas of Military Service (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1985).

Richard Moser notes that dissenting soldiers turned “Fort Bragg into one of the most active centers of the GI movement.” Moser, The New Winter Soldiers, 93.
newspapers, and participation in demonstrations. In effect, there were two different, but intimately related, revolts inside the ranks. The first was the collective and public protest around an articulated antiwar position (an antiwar demonstration in the streets for example), and the second was any kind of behavior, such as refusing orders or sabotaging equipment, that did not conform to the script of the military as an institution of domination. Both variations severely compromised the military’s ability to function as a fighting force; each fed the other.

As a result, this project relies on this broad definition and often uses the terms dissent, disobedience, and revolt interchangeably. This methodology is purposeful. The Army itself was equally concerned with both the polymorphous collapse of discipline and the more explicit political dissent. Understanding the Army’s reaction to the whole spectrum of dissent, and how they defined the phenomenon, is the overall thrust of this project. There were other problems within the ranks as well. Military leaders also frequently lamented the explosion of desertion, drug use, and racial tension in the ranks. For this project, however, unless soldiers clearly connected their drug use or antiracist politics to their disobedience, these issues are treated as separate issues. For example, when a Fort Hood soldier attributed his drug use to his “guilt about being part of the

---

war machine,” and claimed, “all the big pot heads around Fort Hood tend to be against the war,” that particular drug use is integrally linked to an antiwar stance and thus included under the category of dissent. Increased drug use among soldiers more generally, though, remains a tangential concern in this project. Context matters a great deal, and those delineations are highlighted throughout the text. Ultimately, unruly conscripts were indeed destroying the Army from within by publicly demonstrating against the war, printing underground newspapers, refusing to fight, and assassinating superiors. The brass became convinced that the only way to save the service was to transition to volunteers.

This dissertation also highlights the contested nature of conscription in twentieth century America. The World War I draft was the first American conscription since the Civil War. During the Civil War, conscription was used as a last resort with both the Union and Confederacy considering conscripts unpatriotic and untrustworthy on the battlefield. The Union Army only drafted eight percent of its force while the Confederacy drafted somewhere between 10 and 21 percent. From World War I until the advent of the All-Volunteer-Force in 1973, however, conscription would become the preferred method for raising American armies. During this “Age of Conscription,” nearly 17 million Americans were thrust into military service against their will while

millions more were coerced into volunteering.\textsuperscript{43} Conscription, however, remained a charged proposition in the United States. A reflection of the state’s power at its most extreme – its demand that citizens offer their lives for the state – conscription highlights the tension between an American democratic hegemony based on legitimacy and consent and its military, an instrument of the state devoted to violent coercion.\textsuperscript{44}

Citizenship and the parameters of political belonging are not static, and historians have tried to capture how transformations in the civic sphere have affected a population’s penchant to view their obligation to military service. John Chambers, in his sweeping narrative on the impact of political, social, and economic factors on the US military, carefully deconstructs the myth that American society has always operated on a social contract involving citizens’ rights and duties. Chambers, who covers an exhaustive amount of documentary and secondary material, including over one hundred manuscript collections in the United States and Europe as well as newspapers periodicals, and monographs, argues that the military obligation of American citizenship has remained ill defined, with conscription remaining an episodic and

\textsuperscript{43} The number of draftees stretching from World War I through Vietnam break down as follows: World War I (3 million), World War II (10 million), Korea (1.5 million), Vietnam (2.2 million). George Q. Flynn, \textit{The Draft: 1940-1973} (Lawrence, KS: University Press of Kansas, 1993), John W. Chambers, \textit{To Raise an Army: The Draft Comes to Modern America} (New York: Free Press, 1987).

\textsuperscript{44} For a discussion of state power and conscription, see Christopher Capozzola, \textit{Uncle Sam Wants You: World War I and the Making of the Modern American Citizen} (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 21. In Max Weber’s theory of the state, violence was at the center: “Force is a means specific to the state...a community that claims the monopoly of the legitimate use of physical force within a given territory.” See Noam Chomsky, \textit{Hegemony or Survival: America’s Quest for Global Domination} (New York: Metropolitan Books, 2003) for a more recent analysis of coercive U.S. military power.
largely un-integrated part of the nation’s history. But as the notion of citizenship, specifically national citizenship, shifted in America, so did the populace’s sense of military obligation. Defining national citizenship as the nexus between a nation’s needs and an individual’s obligation, Chambers highlights World War I as an era of “intensified and expanded” national citizenship, which increased the sense of obligation citizens felt to the nation-state as opposed to the family, local community, or ethnic group. Conscription became the preferred way of raising American armies only after the centralized government had grown in scope and power during the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. And when conscription did come to America, in a nod to the power of localism in America, the US government implemented conscription by relying on local, decentralized draft boards manned by volunteers. As Chambers argues, the structure of the draft was unique to the “American type of state building.”

---

46 Beginning in the Progressive era, Chambers argues, reform administrations and the judiciary increased the rights and privileges of Americans. Those advances enhanced the importance and benefits of national citizenship, as opposed to the individual states, which forged a significant connection between the populace and the central government. See Chambers, *To Raise an Army*, 264. In a remarkably similar vein, Josh Sanborn argues that the frenzied Russian mobilization of 1914 swept away Nicholas II, his court, and any impediments to a national system. Public activism spurred men and women to support the war effort as soldiers, nurses, workers in social service organizations, or producers in the fields and factories. The performance of violence became the ultimate civic duty for most Russian political actors through the first quarter of the twentieth century. See Sanborn, *Drafting the Russian Nation*. In both countries, as Chambers and Sanborn argue, the expansion or advent of the nation and rising sense of national citizenship amplified citizens’ sense of obligation to military service. In fact, conscription and notions of citizen obligation became so intertwined that a few historians have suggested that the end of conscription actually tarnished the importance of citizenship.
States and nations have often justified the practice of coercive mobilization through the notion of universality, the theory that each and every citizen should shoulder an equal share of the nation’s military obligation. There was an inherent fairness in the theory of universal conscription. After the August 1793 *levee en masse*, there was a dearth of rioting and protest for one primary reason: citizens of France perceived the national recruitment as fair and equitable. In contrast, citizens responded in a dramatically different way to the previous French mobilization in the spring of 1793, known as *levee des 300.000*. This call-up featured a myriad of exemptions, privileged jobs for the well to do in the civil administration, and a plethora of opportunities for the rich to buy themselves out of service. The result was desertion, draft-evasion, and a certain animosity towards conscription throughout the populace.48 The same concept of fairness held true in America almost one hundred and fifty years later. Americans largely supported the peacetime draft of the 1950s and early 1960s because the population deemed the practice as fair and equitable.49 But when the burden of conscription grew inequitable, revolt ensued.

The United States, a nation that never accepted the idea of universal military service to the same degree as Europe, offers a particularly noteworthy case study of resistance to imbalanced conscription. After all, it was elites – the industrialists,

financiers, and corporate lawyers – who pushed the conscription bill through Congress in 1917 in an effort to avoid economic dislocation during the war in Europe and expand US economic power overseas. This class dynamic, which featured the upper tiers of society pushing for a conscription system that would eventually send the lower classes into combat in unequal numbers, would have profound impacts on conscription in America from 1917 to 1973. 

During the late 1960s, as the American war effort in Vietnam ground on, the upper-middle class and the rich largely avoided military service while those in the lower economic brackets increasingly became susceptible to the draft. Rather than operating a fair and equitable system of conscription, the US seemed to be relying on its poorest and most vulnerable citizens.

Christian Appy was one of the first historians to highlight this inequity of service during Vietnam and analyze its ramifications for American soldiers. Similar to Foley’s attempt to revive the image of draft resisters, Appy strives to recover and reinterpret the experiences of veterans, experiences that had become “disqualified” or “illegitimate”

---

50 In a previous project, I referred to the period stretching from World War I to 1973 as the “Age of Conscription” in American history. During this time, nearly 17 million Americans were thrust into military service against their will while millions more were coaxed into volunteering. The World War I draft was the first American conscription since the Civil War. During the Civil War, conscription was used as a last resort with both the Union and Confederacy considering conscripts unpatriotic and untrustworthy on the battlefield. The Union Army only drafted eight percent of its force while the Confederacy drafted somewhere between 10 and 21 percent. In World War I, the federal government filled 72 percent of the force with conscripts, a pattern that continued until 1973 and the advent of the All-Volunteer-Force. See Jennifer D. Keene, Doughboys, The Great War, and the Remaking of America (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2001); George Q. Flynn, The Draft: 1940-1973 (Lawrence, KS: University Press of Kansas, 1993).
forms of knowledge in the decades following the war. Highlighting the Selective Service System’s class-biased channeling, the military’s wartime slashing of standards, medical exemptions that favored the wealthy, student deferments, and the safe haven of the National Guard and Reserves for the upper class, Appy argues that class, and the power relations based on class differences, should serve as the key analytic for understanding Vietnam veterans’ experience. Comparing soldiering to industrial labor, Appy argues that the American poor performed the “dirty work” for the wealthy. These inequities, ensuring chapters will show, often galvanized the dissent movement. For example, at Fort Bragg, soldiers incorporated a working class, labor movement focus into their antiwar stance.

Finally, this project, almost counter-intuitively, expands the focus from dissenting soldiers to the military and political establishment. Historians have told the story of dissenting soldiers, but they have spent scant time on how military and political

---

51 Christian G. Appy, Working-Class War: American Combat Soldiers and Vietnam, Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1993), 10. Appy is, of course, relying on Michel Foucault’s notion of disqualified or illegitimate forms of knowledge from Power/Knowledge, p. 78-92. In their resuscitation of draft resisters and Vietnam veterans, Foley and Appy both rely on first-hand accounts, both interviews and questionnaires, from those that experienced the Vietnam war.

52 One must consider the timing of Appy’s monograph to understand its importance. During the late 1970s and 1980s, newly ascendant conservatives, led by Ronald Reagan, refashioned Vietnam into a noble cause narrative – a crusade against communism that the “Left” was too weak or immoral to win. In the neoconservative remaking of Vietnam, an effort in which political scientists and historians actively participated, the Vietnam veteran was recast as the mistreated hero, denied of a fighting chance and a proper homecoming. Appy’s monograph, published in 1993, served as a counter to the abstraction of the Vietnam soldier that had become so prevalent in the preceding decade. For examples of the revisionist history so prevalent in the 1980s, see Norman Podhoretz, Why We Were in Vietnam (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1982); Harry G. Summers, Jr., On Strategy: A Critical Analysis of the Vietnam War (Novato, CA: Presidio Press, 1982); Timothy Lomperis, The War Everyone Lost – and Won: America’s Intervention in the Vietnam’s Twin Struggles (Baton Rouge, LA: Louisiana State University Press, 1984)
leaders reacted to this dissent. Tracing the Army’s response, from heavy-handed prison sentences to attempts at co-opting the movement, enables us to appreciate the process that led to the All-Volunteer Force. To illustrate this connection, the project relies on a multitude of sources. Using oral histories, interviews, internal memos, phone call transcripts, studies, and programs, I show how the Army came to favor a transition to volunteers as a way to rid the ranks of dissent. In a bureaucratic and hierarchical organization such as the military, the internal memoranda that made the rounds from office to office inside the Pentagon are invaluable sources, and I have relied heavily on them. The archives at the Center of Military History, the Institute of Military History, and the National Archives in College Park contain materials that enable one to recreate the formal and informal conversations between Army general officers, their staff, and commanders in the field. The result is a project that pulls back the curtain in unprecedented ways on the brass’s behind-doors reaction to G.I. dissent.

In large part, the narrative proceeds chronologically. Rather than separating the revolt in the ranks from the military leadership’s reaction to rebelling soldiers, this approach highlights, step by step, just how seriously the Army took dissent and how quickly they acted in response to the rebellion. Chapter One traces the budding dissent in the ranks to detail how the soldier antiwar movement began with individual protest and grew into a collective social movement that would eventually galvanize thousands of soldiers at military posts across the US. When troops began challenging the war, the
divide between civilian peace activists and soldiers faded as the two groups realized they could act collaboratively. And as with any social movement, the G.I. dissent phenomenon did not develop in isolation. This chapter illustrates how developments in Vietnam, the growing peace movement in the US, and the ongoing civil rights and labor movements all had an impact on the movement inside the ranks.

As it charts G.I. dissent, this section also explores the military and political establishment’s initial reaction. From formerly classified documents and memoranda to phone call transcripts, the following pages reveal for the first time the inner workings of the Pentagon and upper echelons of the US Army. Tracing military and political leaders’ response to dissent within the ranks, from harsh prison sentences to spying and infiltrating the movement, I show how, at the same time, the suggestion for an All-Volunteer Force arose. From the first instance of revolt, the US Army’s reaction was immediate and fearful. As soldier dissent grew into an existential threat to the organization, the Army realized that it needed a more permanent way to rid itself of its “troublemakers.”

Chapter Two places the Nixon administration’s embrace of a volunteer army in the context of the growing G.I. dissent movement. As the chapter illustrates, behind the free market and libertarian language designed to de-politicize unrest over the draft, it is readily apparent that the revolt inside the ranks affected the administration’s turn to volunteers. Civilian unrest, particularly on America’s college campuses, surely played a
role in the decision, but the impact of dissenting soldiers has received scant attention. Even as this chapter charts Nixon’s initial effort to end the draft, both as a candidate and President, it also continues to trace the growing GI dissent movement and senior military leaders’ reaction to the disintegration of the US fighting force. One month prior to Nixon’s CBS address, the US Army, rocked by growing soldier dissent, had already begun its own study on a volunteer force. Not to be outdone, the Department of Defense was commencing its own study of the All-Volunteer Force, a project that became known as Project Volunteer. As this chapter illustrates, three different groups – the White House, the Department of Defense, and the Army – were simultaneously pushing for a volunteer force, but their efforts were not always synchronized or congenial. And all the while, the driving force behind the rush to end the draft was the servicemen and women who continued to protest the war in Vietnam, taking more dramatic and bolder steps to ensure their voices were heard.

Chapter Three seeks to understand how the soldier dissent movement at Fort Bragg became the largest, most volatile, and longest lasting of the entire era. The section examines the conditions on post and in the surrounding town of Fayetteville, North Carolina that spurred such a long-standing and effective movement, and at the same time, how the movement at Fort Bragg affected the Army’s overall response to soldier dissent. Analyzing how Fort Bragg leadership dealt with the soldier revolt and implemented the Army’s volunteer army program in the hotbed of dissent provides a
new and deeper understanding of the linkages between the dissenting soldier and the volunteer army.

Even as it focuses on the local, this chapter also traces the transformations inside the larger soldier dissent movement during the same period. By the summer of 1969, the unrest inside the ranks had spread to Vietnam. From combat refusals and the fragging of officers and enlisted supervisors to organized protests and petitions, front-line combat soldiers were increasingly vocalizing their dissatisfaction with the war. The movement was also expanding in the United States during a time when the Army’s response to dissent was complicated by competing and contradictory Department of Defense guidance on how to deal with dissidents inside the ranks. With soldiers in the US and Vietnam increasingly protesting the war, the Gates Commission, the Department of Defense, and the Army all reached the same conclusion: an All-Volunteer Force was the ultimate solution for ridding the ranks of dissent. The chaos in the ranks, caused almost exclusively by draftees, had become so debilitating by the time the Gates Commission released its report that senior political leaders were exploring the possibility of creating a volunteer-only force in Vietnam as they awaited legislative changes to the selective service system. By the fall of 1970, the Army, the service forced to deal with the majority of dissent, was ready to take drastic steps to create an all-volunteer force.

Chapter Four places the narrative of the Army’s final transition to a volunteer force alongside this ongoing GI dissent movement. It illustrates how programs such as
the MVA and the subsequent Volunteer Army (VOLAR) field experiments, although
touted to attract volunteers, were in actuality a direct response to the antiwar revolt
inside the ranks. Leaders at the most senior levels of the Army were very clear, in
private, that the top priority of these new initiatives was to rebuild and repair a
damaged force, damage caused in large part by unruly soldiers. When senior leaders
proclaimed that the MVA and VOLAR would improve “professionalism” in the ranks,
they were referring to dissenting soldiers. As historian Robert Griffith has argued,
professionalism was the US Army’s equivalent of motherhood, a sacrosanct tenet that no
one could oppose.53 Antiwar G.I.s were doing more than protesting a far away war; they
were challenging an institution’s long love affair with order and discipline. It should
come as little surprise then that the Army’s flagship volunteer program sought to
rebuild a “professional” force; attracting volunteers was merely a secondary concern.
The service chose its posts for the experimental changes carefully, focusing on
installations riddled with dissent and lapses of discipline. The Army’s efforts were
mostly successful. In a relatively short time span, as the initiatives took hold, dissent
faded, A.W.O.L.’s and desertions decreased, and soldiers reported more satisfaction with
Army life at military posts that had just recently been hotbeds of antiwar sentiment.

This final chapter also continues a close examination of the soldier movement at
Fort Bragg, striving to answer several questions. Why did the movement at Bragg

53 Griffith, The U.S. Army’s Transition to the All-Volunteer Force, 112.
continue well after dissent had subsided at other Army posts? Why were the Army’s volunteer programs that were successful elsewhere met with such animosity at Bragg? This section proposes that the answer lies in the unusually cohesive yet amorphous nature of the movement at Bragg. Beginning in 1971, just as the Army was instituting its profound changes, the soldiers in Fayetteville expanded the focus of their movement beyond the single issue of Vietnam to a multifaceted approach that condemned the structural problems that led to global wars in the first place, including racism, sexism, and capitalism. In other words, just as the Army was fielding a solution designed to placate soldiers opposed to the Vietnam War, the Bragg movement was expanding beyond that single issue. Soldiers in Fayetteville were outflanking the Army, and the result was the longest movement of the G.I. dissent era, stretching all the way into 1975.

Senior political and military leaders, however, were ultimately successful in culling dissent from the ranks, even at Bragg, for several reasons. First, as many had predicted, volunteers were much more obedient and compliant than conscripts. After the Army drafted its last man in December of 1972, the dissent movement lost its primary source of nourishment – draftees forced into service against their will. Secondly, the American presence in the jungles of Southeast Asia had been steadily decreasing. In April of 1969, the high water mark of American involvement, there had been 543,000 troops stationed in Vietnam. Two years later, US leaders had reduced that number by 200,000. By his State of the Union address in 1972, President Nixon was able to
announced a new troop ceiling of 69,000, a decrease of nearly half a million troops in just three years. With the war changing, the draft ending, and the Army removing other service irritants, the primary catalysts of dissent were evaporating. As this chapter illustrates, senior political and military leaders had suspected that by eliminating the draft and its unwilling conscripts, the US military could rebuild itself. Even at Fort Bragg, where soldiers held out longer than any other group, the movement was ultimately unable to survive the military’s goal of crushing rebellion inside the ranks.
Chapter One. “Our Voice is Our Weapon”: The Emergence of GI Dissent, 1965-1968

On November 6, 1965, a mere eight months after President Lyndon Johnson committed the first ground combat troops to Vietnam, Second Lieutenant Henry Howe became the first US service member to publicly protest the burgeoning war in Southeast Asia. Joining about a dozen young men and women, mostly college students, in a small protest march in El Paso, Texas, Howe carried a two-sided placard that read, “End Johnson’s Facist (sic) Aggression in Viet-Nam” on one side, and “Let’s Have More Than A Choice Between Petty, Ignorant Facists (sic) in 1968” on the other. Just twenty-four and a recent graduate of the University of Colorado, Howe was an assistant motor officer with the 31st Engineers Battalion at Fort Bliss, a massive Army installation on the outskirts of El Paso. During the march, an elderly counter-protestor shouted from the curb, “They oughtta turn the boys from Fort Bliss on ‘em,” unaware that an actual boy from Fort Bliss was among the protestors. Just six months earlier, Howe had written to his parents with noticeable pride over his military service, but the escalation of the war had soured the young officer. Howe’s sign was not out of place among the others that

1 Quote from the GIs United Against the War in Vietnam Statement of Aims. See Fred Halstead, GIs Speak Out Against the War: The Case of the Fort Jackson 8 (New York: Pathfinder Press, 1970), 97-98.
2 The Pentagon announced on March 6, 1965 that two battalions of US Marines, upwards of 3,500 men, were arriving in South Vietnam at the request of the government in Saigon. Although they joined over 23,500 American military “advisors” already in Vietnam, these Marines garnered the distinction as the first US ground combat troops. Officials stressed their mission would be “limited” and focused primarily on defending Da Nang, a major US air base, from attack. See Jack Raymond, “3,500 U.S. Marines Going to Vietnam to Bolster Base: 2 Battalions for Danang Are First Land Combat Troops Committed by Washington,” New York Times, March 7, 1965, 1.
read, “Have we asked the Vietnamese?” and “Would Jesus Carry a Draft Card?” but due to his recent comments against the war on the Army post, military police had already notified the El Paso police force of his military status. As a result, officers quietly pulled the young Lieutenant aside at the conclusion of the march and handed him over to military officials at Fort Bliss.³ It made no difference that Howe was off-duty, out of uniform, and supposedly within the bounds of military regulations.

The US Army charged Howe with using contemptuous language toward the president, promoting disloyalty and disaffection among the troops and civilian population of the United States, and conduct unbecoming an officer and a gentleman. On December 22, following a two-and-a-half day court-martial proceeding, a five-man military tribunal found the young officer guilty of the first two charges and sentenced him to two years imprisonment at hard labor, dismissal from the service with a dishonorable discharge, and a forfeiture of all pay and allowances. Oddly, the military judge dropped the charge of promoting disloyalty and disaffection among the troops and civilian population, claiming that Howe could not have attacked “the war aims of the United States” since the US was not at war.⁴ Military officials kept Howe in what

---

³ For the most descriptive account of events leading up to the protest, Howe’s participation, and his subsequent arrest see John Rechy, “‘Conduct Unbecoming…’ Lieutenant on the Peace Line,” The Nation, February 21, 1966, 204-208. See also “Officer is Found Guilty in Protest,” New York Times, 23 December, 1965; Cortright, Soldiers in Revolt, 52; Moser, New Winter Soldiers, 69.

amounted to solitary confinement, first at Fort Bliss than at Fort Leavenworth, Kansas, to ensure that his antiwar stance did not contaminate other members of the military. His telephone calls, mail, and reading material were all monitored and censored. Before military officials could interrupt Howe’s telephone conversation with the Denver Post, the lieutenant told the reporter, “One of the hallmarks of fascism is the suppression of free speech… I have never refused an Army order. I would go to Vietnam if ordered to do so. On the other hand, I believe I have a right to express my opinions as a citizen.”

The US Army did not share Howe’s opinion on his right to express an opinion. Months removed from being a college student, the new second lieutenant and his simple placard against the war in Vietnam had drawn the attention and ire of the entire military legal system.

In a rare move, the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) announced that it was providing free legal counsel to Howe on his appeal. Melvin Wulf, the ACLU legal director, sent a letter to Major General George T. Powers, the Fort Bliss commanding officer, and the Secretary of the Army, claiming that the Army’s action could “only be interpreted as saying that a man who enters the armed forces leaves the Bill of Rights at home.” Even Captain Thomas Bigley, Howe’s Army-appointed defense lawyer, felt the sentence was too onerous. In a strategic move designed to ensure that Howe served a

---

5 Rechy, “Conduct Unbecoming,” 208.
full sentence regardless of the appeal process, Major General Powers quickly reduced the lieutenant’s sentence to one-year imprisonment.7 The US Army eventually released Howe on March 24, 1966 after only 3 months imprisonment under a Commandant’s Parole.8

Once released from prison, Howe spoke before several large audiences on the west coast, held numerous press conferences, and aired his opinions on a Denver local television station. Since Howe was technically still in the US Army pending his appeals, Alfred B. Fitt, the Army General Counsel at the time, suggested that Howe might be prosecuted and sentenced to ten years in prison if he continued to speak publicly against the war in Vietnam. When the Freedom Now For Lt. Howe organization published the Fitt correspondence in its second newsletter, the Army backed down and Howe continued to make appearances.9 Finally, in August of 1967, the US Court of Military Appeals, citing Howe’s protest as “a danger to discipline within our armed forces,”

7 Rechy, “Conduct Unbecoming,” 204.
8 Once again, the Army appeared to have ulterior motives with this decision. The Army used a Commandant’s Parole to release prisoners whose appeals are pending, and therefore, not considered “sentenced” by the Army. Freedom Now for Lt Howe, Newsletter #1, April 22, 1966. GI Press Project, http://gipressproject.files.wordpress.com/2011/04/lt_howe_newsletter_1.jpg (accessed October 21, 2014). National sponsors of the Freedom Now committee included Benjamin Spock and Howard Zinn.
9 Fitt’s letter, in part, read, “I want to make it very clear that Howe is not to make public attacks on the character of the President or otherwise play a public role which might tend to cause disaffection in the armed forces. Specifically, so long as he is subject to military jurisdiction, Howe should refrain from pamphleteering or participation in meetings, rallies, conferences and the like where it might reasonably be expected that his personal views concerning the President, our presence in Vietnam, the obligation of soldiers and related topics would come to public attention. Should he do so, revocation of his parole and other appropriate disciplinary action will follow.” See Freedom Now for Lt Howe, Newsletter #2, July 25, 1966. GI Press Project, http://gipressproject.files.wordpress.com/2011/04/lt_howe_newsletter_2.jpg (accessed on October 21, 2014).
upheld the court-martial, ensuring the Army’s ability to imprison those service members who dared to speak out against the war.\textsuperscript{10}

Lt. Howe’s moment of dissent caught the US Army ill prepared, primarily because the American military in Vietnam, until then, had garnered the highest praise for its professionalism and performance. General Bruce Palmer, the Vice Chief of Staff of the Army and a four-star general, labeled the mid-1960s US Army “as fine a fighting force as we ever had anywhere.”\textsuperscript{11} Palmer was correct; the combat force first assembled in Vietnam was perhaps the best-trained and best-educated military that America had ever amassed. In 1966, a grizzled first sergeant commented, “the amazing thing about our troops is that they fought with all they had, never complaining…and if I have to go into battle again I hope the same type of men are with me.”\textsuperscript{12} A year later, a US Army infantry officer exclaimed, “you just can’t understand how lucky we are to have soldiers like this.”\textsuperscript{13} Despite the plethora of college and graduate school deferments, the Vietnam-era GI was far better educated than his World War I, World War II, and Korean War

\textsuperscript{10} The court also claimed that “an officer on duty is not a civilian and his off-duty activities do not fall outside the orbit” of military regulations. See “War Foe’s Appeal Rejected by Court; Ouster is Upheld,” \textit{New York Times}, August 5, 1967, 3. The US Court of Military Appeals was the highest military tribunal, made up of three civilian judges appointed by the President.

\textsuperscript{11} \textit{Department of Defense Appropriations for 1972: Hearings on Army Morale and Discipline Problems, Before a Subcommittee of the Comm. On Appropriation, House of Representatives, 92\textsuperscript{nd} Cong.}, 598 (September 1971) (testimony of Bruce Palmer, Vice Chief of Staff of the Army).

\textsuperscript{12} Interview with First Sergeant Walter A. Sabralowski, Operation Hawthorn, June 20, 1966, Center of Military History (CMH) interview file.

\textsuperscript{13} Interview with Captain George A. Joulwen, 1\textsuperscript{st} Infantry Division, April 3 1967, Center of Military History (CMH) interview file.
counterparts.\textsuperscript{14} The early US forces in War World II had suffered devastating defeats at Bataan and Kasserine Pass while the first American troops in Korea were utterly routed by the initial North Korean advance. The military force in Vietnam, however, performed magnificently from the very beginning. Just weeks after Howe’s moment of protest, in the first conventional battle of the war, troops of the US 1st Calvary Division hammered North Vietnamese regulars in the Ia Drang Valley. Brigadier General John Wright told the young troopers, “you met tough, professional, capable enemy troops and you gave them a mauling they will never forget.”\textsuperscript{15} The center, however, would not hold.

By 1971, just six years later, the US Army was in shambles. During those intervening years, the force began to disintegrate in the face of soldier protests at military posts across the United States, high desertion rates, and in Vietnam, combat refusals, and fraggings (assassinations) of officers. That year, a former Marine Colonel, Robert Heinl, argued that “by every conceivable indicator, our Army that now remains in Vietnam is in a state approaching collapse, with individual units avoiding or having refused combat, murdering their officers and non commissioned officers, drug ridden,

\textsuperscript{14} As Ron Spector points out, the average draftee in World War I was “more likely to be illiterate, more likely to have five years’ schooling, and less likely to have graduated from high school” than males of the same age that avoided military service. Among World War II draftees, only 13.5 percent had attended college; in 1968 that figure was 30 percent. Only about 24 percent of World War II draftees had completed high school, while the Vietnam-era Army had close to 80 percent graduates. See Ronald H. Spector, \textit{After Tet: The Bloodiest Year in Vietnam} (New York: The Free Press, 1993), 35-36.

and dispirited where not near mutinous."16 A 1971 Pentagon survey found that more than half of all soldiers had refused orders, sabotaged equipment, or actively protested the war.17 From 1966 to 1971, the Army desertion rate increased nearly 400 percent, from 14.9 incidents per thousand to 73.6 per thousand.18 Across the United States, at nearly every military installation, dissenting GIs began producing underground newspapers, founding over 250 publications that criticized the war effort and the military’s efforts to stem dissent in the ranks.19 By the early 1970s, the US armed forces, particularly the Army, had ceased to function as an effective fighting force, a decline directly attributable to the revolt in the ranks. General Palmer, the same Army leader who had lavished praise on the mid-1960s force, reflected years later, “I don’t know whether people realize how close to destruction we were. It was nip and tuck there in ’70 and ’71.”20

This chapter traces the budding dissent in the ranks to detail how the soldier antiwar movement began with individual protest and grew into a collective social movement.

---

17 Howard Olson and R. William Rae, Determination of the Potential for Dissidents in the U.S. Army (McLean, VA: Research Analysis Corporation, 1971). The commissioning of this report itself is evidence of the military’s concern over soldier dissent.
18 Cortright, Soldiers in Revolt, 10.
20 The All Volunteer Army Collection, Box 14, U.S. Army Military History Institute, Carlisle Barracks, Pennsylvania, Oral Histories, GEN Bruce R. Palmer, 29. Hereafter cited as AVA/MHI.
movement that would eventually galvanize thousands of soldiers at military posts across the US. As troops began challenging the war, the divide between civilian peace activists and soldiers faded as the two groups realized they could act collaboratively rather than combatively. And as with any social movement, the G.I. dissent phenomenon did not develop in isolation. As this chapter illustrates, developments in Vietnam, the growing peace movement in the US, and the ongoing civil rights and labor movements all had an impact on the movement inside the ranks.

As it charts G.I. dissent, this section also explores the military and political establishment’s initial reaction. Historians have told the story of dissenting soldiers, but they have spent scant time on how military and political leaders reacted to the revolt inside the ranks. From formerly classified documents and memoranda to phone call transcripts, the following pages reveal for the first time the inner workings of the Pentagon and upper echelons of the US Army. Tracing military and political leaders’ response to dissent within the ranks, from harsh prison sentences to spying and infiltrating the movement, I show how, at the same time, the clamoring for an All-Volunteer Force began. From the first instance of revolt, the US Army’s reaction was immediate and fearful. As soldier dissent grew into an existential threat to the organization, the Army determined that it needed a more permanent way to rid itself of its troublemakers.
In mid-1965, the war in Vietnam had not yet begun to cleave the American public, but it soon would. In a June 1965 Harris Poll, sixty percent of Americans were prepared to back additional US troop commitments to Vietnam and retaliatory air strikes against North Vietnam. Sixty-five percent of Americans supported President Johnson and his handling of the war. Two events in the following months, however, drastically affected public opinion towards the war. The first was President Johnson’s announcement that he would send forty-four combat battalions to Vietnam, increasing the military strength in country from 75,000 to 125,000 almost immediately. As a result of the sudden troop build-up, Johnson also announced that monthly draft calls would double from 17,000 to 35,000. To a nation constantly assured that the US commitment in Vietnam was nearly complete, the announcement was bracing. The second event brought the grotesqueness of war into every American home. Just one week after Johnson’s troop increase announcement, US Marine forces in Vietnam invited Morley Safer, a young CBS television correspondent, on a search and destroy mission south of Da Nang in the village of Cam Ne. Once the Marines arrived at the village, they set fire

---


22 John D. Pomfret, “Johnson Orders 50,000 More Men to Vietnam and Doubles Draft; Again Urges U.N. to Seek Peace,” New York Times, July 29, 1965, 1. Johnson refused to call up the Reserve forces, a decision that disappointed senior military leaders and would have a lasting impact on the war effort.
to peasants’ houses with zippo lighters and flame-throwers. With women and children hysterically weeping in the background, their homes and belongings ravaged by fire, a visibly shaken Safer stood before the camera and told the American people, “This is what the war in Vietnam is all about.”

Through these two events, over the span of a mere week, many viewers realized that the war in Vietnam was far from winding down and that American troops were capable of committing atrocities.

It was in this environment that Lieutenant Howe took to the streets of El Paso with his antiwar placard, and the US Army took note. Just days after Howe’s arrest, the Army’s top lawyer sent a memo to the Chief of Staff of the Army (CSA), explaining the circumstances of the officer’s dissent. Realizing that the Army was ill-prepared for any antiwar agitation inside the ranks, a two-star general advised the CSA that it was “prudent” to expect the incidence of “military participation in anti-Vietnam demonstrations” to increase. The general also recommended that the Army provide better guidance to its field commanders on how to handle soldiers’ antiwar activities and amend Army regulations to include more “restrictive guidance” for military personnel “participating against announced government policy.” As would be the case throughout the soldier antiwar movement, Army leadership carefully tracked the number of soldiers participating. General Creighton Abrams, the Vice Chief of Staff of

23 For video of Safer’s report, see https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hNYZZi25Ttg (accessed October 22, 2014).
the Army at the time, penciled a note on the memo before it arrived on the CSA’s desk:

“I would much prefer to know the size of the problem, ie, two men among a million is a minority which doesn’t deserve or require a regulation.”24 Yet a single officer’s protest had garnered instant four-star scrutiny inside the Pentagon.

A week later, Army leadership realized that the problem was potentially much larger than two men among a million. On November 24, 1965 the Ad Hoc Committee of Veterans for Peace in Vietnam took out a full-page ad in the New York Times, proclaiming that the war was not a “worthy cause” and that “for anyone to die in this war is a tragic waste.” Over five hundred veterans of past American wars placed their names on the ad, encouraging other veterans to participate in the November 27th march on Washington for peace. The ad urged veterans to come to Washington with their “caps, ribbons, battle stars, and medals” and lead the march from a special veteran section.25 On the day of the march, veterans led between 15,000 and 25,000 antiwar demonstrators to the White House. The protest was mostly peaceful, and three members of the Johnson administration even met with a committee of demonstration leaders.26

24 Memo, Lt Col Thomas, Secretary of the General Staff (SGS), to General Creighton Abrams, Vice Chief of Staff of the US Army (VCSA), November 19, 1965, sub: Participation by Military Personnel in Anti-Vietnam Demonstrations, Folder 198, Ron Spector Files, U.S. Army Center of Military History (CMH), Washington, DC. Hereafter cited as Spector-CMH.
The following Monday morning, less than forty-eight hours after the antiwar rally, Army staffers had another memo on General Abrams’ desk. It addressed his earlier comment on the magnitude of the “anti-Vietnam demonstration problem.” Referencing the “number of veterans” who had participated in the weekend’s rally, the memo noted the likelihood of continued demonstrations in the coming year. The staff officer recommended that Army personnel and manpower officers, along with government lawyers, immediately “study the problem in greater detail.”

Two months later, in February of 1966, it became clear that veterans could no longer be counted on to support the war in Vietnam. At the beginning of the month, one of the first veterans of Vietnam operations to speak out against the war, retired Master Sergeant Donald Duncan, published “The Whole Thing was a Lie” in Ramparts. Duncan, a former member of the elite Special Forces, recounted his transition from “militant anti-communist” to someone who wondered whether communism was “spreading in spite of our involvement or because of it.” Duncan praised antiwar protestors, arguing that they were simply “opposed to people, our own and others, dying for a lie, thereby

Cooper, specialist on Vietnam from the staff of George McBundy, the associate White House press secretary, and an associate special counsel to the President.

27 Memo, Lt Col Thomas, Secretary of the General Staff (SGS), to General Creighton Abrams, Vice Chief of Staff of the US Army (VCSA), November 29, 1965, sub: Participation by Military Personnel in Anti-Vietnam Demonstrations, Folder 198, Spector-CMH.
corrupting the very word democracy.” The next day, Edward Bloch, a Marine veteran of World War II, led thirty-two demonstrators into New York City’s Times Square, bringing traffic to a standstill. Apparently still struggling with his decision to wear his Marine Corps jacket, along with his Purple Heart and Bronze Star, Bloch told reporters that he was “a little ashamed at the exhibitionism, but under the circumstances, I feel that wearing the uniform is all right.” Just three days later, one hundred veterans of World War II and Korea marched to the White House to return their medals, medals earned from past American victories in battle. After initially being turned away, the group returned and claimed, “We shall return again and again until President Johnson, the Commander in Chief and the man ultimately responsible for the war, agrees to receive us.” One by one, the veterans stepped forward and placed their medals won across Germany, Japan, and Korea in a steel box meant for President Johnson.

By that June, both members of the general public and soldiers in the ranks were increasingly turning against the war. Just one year after sixty-five percent of Americans had approved of President Johnson’s actions in Vietnam, a new Gallup poll revealed that only forty-one percent now favored the way the war was being handled. On June 11, the story of Private Adam Weber, a 24-year old soldier who received a year’s imprisonment for refusing to join an infantry battalion, landed on the front page of the

---

New York Times. Weber was a soft-spoken soldier and not as defiant as Howe had been; he pleaded with the military court to place him “in the Medical Corps or some job more involved in saving lives than in taking them.”32 But his action still seemed threatening enough to the Army to merit a prison sentence. With public opinion turning against the war and veterans of previous wars participating in antiwar demonstrations, the prospect that more soldiers inside the ranks could turn against the war effort became quite real.

Up until the summer of 1966, soldiers had acted independently when they protested the war or refused to serve, but those who became known as the Fort Hood Three changed that. On June 30, 1966, Pfc. James Johnson (20), Pvt. Dennis Mora (25), and Pvt. David Samas (20) held a press conference in New York City to announce their opposition to the war and refusal to report to Oakland, California, for embarkation to Vietnam. Johnson an African American, Mora a Puerto Rican, and Johnson a Lithuanian with Italian parents; they were, as their public statement highlighted, “a cross section of the Army and of America.” The three soldiers, all drafted the previous December, were from the 142nd Signal Battalion out of Fort Hood and had been on furlough since June 10. Their statement was a bold repudiation of the war:

“We have decided to take a stand against this war, which we consider immoral, illegal, and unjust…under no circumstances will we board ship for Vietnam. We are prepared to face court martial if necessary…Large

numbers of men in the service either do not understand this war or are against it…We want no part of a war of extermination. We oppose the criminal waste of American lives and resources. We refuse to go to Vietnam!!!!”

The three chose Stanley Faulkner, who had previously represented an Army cook who refused to go to Vietnam, as their attorney. In addition to refusing to fight, the men also filed suit against the US, challenging their orders on the basis that Vietnam was an “immoral, illegal, and unjust” war, and requested an injunction that would effectively stop the Army from sending them overseas.33

Accustomed to quietly handling individual dissenters, the Department of Defense and the US Army frantically worked on a plan of action. On July 3, a senior Defense Department legal expert even hinted that the death penalty was a possibility for soldiers who refused to fight in Vietnam.34 Finally, on July 7, military and civilian police acted. As all three men were making their way to an anti-war rally at a New York church, plain-clothes agents appeared on either side of the men, flashed badges, and whisked them away in waiting cars to Fort Dix, the nearby Army base in New Jersey. Once news of their arrest reached the rally, nearly 500 people flocked into the street.

33 Martin Arnold, “3 Soldiers Hold News Conference to Announce They Won’t Go To Vietnam,” New York Times, July 1, 1966, 13. For the group’s full statement and excellent oral histories from each of the three soldiers, see Alice Lynd, We Won’t Go: Personal Accounts of War Objectors (Boston, MA: Beacon Press, 1968), 181-190.
34 Benjamin Welles, “Soldiers Who Refuse to Fight Held Subject to Courts-Martial: Pentagon Legal Aide Insists Wartime Military Code Applies to Vietnam – Death Penalty Called Possible,” New York Times, July 3, 1966, 4. Troops who refused to move to a combat area with their unit could be subjected to the provisions of Article 99 in the Uniform Code of Military Justice (UCMJ), which covers cases of soldiers who “shamefully run away,” throw their weapons aside, or by “cowardly” conduct, endanger the lives of their units.
marched up Fifth Avenue to Times Square, and demonstrated at an armed forces recruiting station. An official Army statement tersely claimed that the men’s furlough had been cancelled, the men had been directed to “report immediately” to Fort Dix (the pseudo arrest of all three made sure this order was followed), and that an investigation was underway to uncover whether the three had acted “prejudicial to good order and military discipline.”

By July 12, the Fort Hood Three’s fate was mostly sealed. A federal judge threw out their suit to prevent Secretary of Defense Robert McNamara from sending them to war, arguing that the lawsuit “is in reality a suit against the United States and the United States has not consented to being sued.” The same day, the commanding general at Fort Dix fired off a message to the US Army Chief of Staff entitled, “Plan for Suppression of Anti-Vietnam Activities by U.S. Army Personnel (Mora, Johnson, Samas).” In the memo, the commanding general declared that he had sufficient evidence – the public press conference being the most obvious – that the three had caused “disaffection and disloyalty among the civilian population and members of the military forces,” the same charge that had been earlier dropped in the Howe case. On July 14, as all three men stood in their jail cells, Army leaders gave them formal orders to board a

plane bound for Vietnam at nearby McGuire Air Force Base. All three refused.37 Two months later, separate military courts sentenced Samas and Johnson to five years in prison and Mora to three years. The men were kept separately from other prisoners; Army officials worried that they might try to recruit other dissenters in the stockade.38

As the Fort Hood Three incident marked the first time that soldiers had acted collectively, it also highlighted a major strategic shift in the soldier antiwar movement. Rather than face the Army machinery alone, the three soldiers approached civilian antiwar groups for assistance prior to their announcement. Days before the press conference, the men walked into the offices of the Vietnam Peace Committee seeking advice and assistance. Together, the soldiers and the civilian war protestors toiled to ensure that the public combat refusal had the maximum impact. They ensured that major players of the antiwar movement were present at the press conference, along with the GI’s families. The New York contingent put West Coast antiwar groups on notice to meet the soldiers in Oakland if they were forced against their will to report to the Army terminal.39 In a letter meant for civilian antiwar organizations, Samas wrote from jail, “the GI should be reached somehow. He doesn’t want to fight. He has no reasons to risk

37 For the text of the Fort Dix commanding officer’s memorandum to the US Army Chief of Staff and Mora, Johnson, and Samas’ accounts of their refusal on July 14, see Lynd, We Won’t Go, 191-195.
38 “3d Soldier Opposed to War in Vietnam Convicted,” New York Times, September 10, 1966. For consistency, the courts eventually sentenced all three soldiers to three years.
39 For details and personal accounts of the cooperation between the Fort Hood Three and civilian antiwar organizations, see Fred Halstead, Out Now! A Participant’s Account of the American Movement Against the Vietnam War (New York: Monad Press, 1978), 167-186.
his life. Yet he doesn’t realize that the peace movement is dedicated to his safety. “Tell them you want them to live, not die,” he urged, imagining a new approach among civilian protestors.40 His hopes of GIs and antiwar protestors working together came to fruition in the summer of 1967.

A month before the Fort Hood Three’s public combat refusal, Andy Stapp, a self-proclaimed communist and revolutionary, entered the US Army. Unfulfilled by protesting the escalating war from Penn State University, Stapp decided that joining the Army and leading resistance from inside the ranks was the most effective way to end the war. It is rather shocking that the Army even allowed Stapp into the ranks. In October of 1965, while still in college, Stapp had joined others in burning his draft card on campus; the students set their cards ablaze in a Nazi helmet. After his induction physical that December, Stapp did not hear from the Army for several months. Finally, in April of 1966, Stapp stormed into his draft board and demanded to know why he had not been drafted. The reason was simple, the board told Stapp, “we can’t take you, you don’t have a draft card.” The recent graduate, apparently now regretting putting his original card to the flames the previous October, told the board to get him a new card. After all, he told them, “I want to serve the country the best way I know how.” And so, in May 1966, Andy Stapp the civilian antiwar protestor, became Private Andy Stapp, US Army

40 Lynd, We Won’t Go, 202.
antiwar protestor.\textsuperscript{41} As Samas, Johnson, and Moras were proclaiming their opposition to the war from New York, Stapp was going through basic training at Fort Sill, an Army artillery base outside Lawton, Oklahoma.

In the meantime, another high profile combat refusal of sorts seized the public imagination, hassled Army leadership, and inspired dissenters such as Stapp. Howard Levy was a 25-year old doctor of dermatology from Brooklyn, New York, who had just finished his residency when he was drafted into the Army. Levy reported to Fort Jackson outside Columbia, South Carolina, where his primary duty was to train Green Beret medics on how to treat the many skin issues that affected soldiers in the moist, tropical environment of Southeast Asia. As a dermatologist, Levy faced no serious threat of going to Vietnam, but he found his own way to protest by refusing to train the soldiers the Army sent his way. Levy had already gained notoriety at Fort Jackson for his participation in local civil rights issues and his indifference to uniform standards and authority. He later admitted to telling black soldiers, “If I were a Negro, I would not fight in Vietnam.”\textsuperscript{42}

In October of 1966, when Levy’s leadership discovered his refusal to train the Green Beret soldiers, they issued him both verbal and written orders to fulfill his duties.

\textsuperscript{41} See Andy Stapp, \textit{Up Against the Brass} (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1970), 11-17 for Stapp’s voluntary transition from draft card burner to Army private.
\textsuperscript{42} Roy Reed, “Army Doctor Refuses to Train Guerrillas,” \textit{New York Times}, December 29, 1966. Levy also refused to join the officer club, waved to saluting enlisted men rather than returning their salute, and insisted on calling non-officers “sir,” all of which were rather taboo acts for an officer.
When he refused, the Army charged Levy with conduct unbecoming an officer, failure to follow orders, and the old stand-by, promoting disloyalty and disaffection. Levy’s refusal was not groundbreaking, but his defense approach during the court-martial and resulting international attention was. His lawyers relied on a Nuremburg defense, the idea that one could and must disobey orders that promoted genocide. The legal maneuver, which no previous American soldier had attempted, was for naught; after almost a year of legal wrangling and front page headlines in the nation’s papers, a general court martial convicted Levy and sentenced him to three years at hard labor.43

Still, Levy’s public fight inspired Stapp down at Fort Sill, who by April of 1967 had convinced several soldiers to turn against the war.44 The fact that Stapp was still at Fort Sill was surprising; all of his basic training compatriots had already received their orders to Vietnam, Europe, and elsewhere. Even though the Army allowed Stapp into the ranks, they were not about to transfer him beyond their watchful eyes. The troublesome trainee remained in Oklahoma where the Army could keep tabs on him. Stapp, now joined by six other soldiers, telegrammed Levy during his trial:

We support you in your courageous stand against America’s dirty war in Vietnam. You have recognized that as a doctor your duty lies in healing

44 Stapp, Up Against the Brass, 40-41.
the sick, not in training Gestapo-like Green Beret killers. We wish you luck in your trial and hope others will follow your example.\textsuperscript{45}

One month later, Stapp became embroiled in his own legal battle.

On May 13, 1967, Stapp’s one-year anniversary in the Army, a lieutenant ordered the rebellious soldier to open his footlocker on the suspicion that it contained antiwar materials. Eight months earlier, the Army had confiscated Stapp’s “radical” literature; he was not going to give up his property so easily this time. When Stapp refused to open the padlock, the lieutenant responded, “I’m going to ask you one more time. If you refuse you’ll be court-martialed.” Stapp refused.\textsuperscript{46} The officer called in a sergeant, who entered the room carrying an ax and began to demolish the locker so aggressively that the sound of splintering wood could be heard throughout the barracks. In what Stapp refers to as a comical scene, it took the officer two hours to go through G.I.’s immense collection of the Socialist Workers Party’s newspaper, Militant, the Communist Worker, Ramparts magazine, and the works of Karl Marx and Malcolm X.\textsuperscript{47} The humor did not last; Stapp was court-martialed immediately for his refusal to open the locker. Perhaps having learned from Howard Levy’s enlisting of the ACLU in his defense, Stapp realized he was going to need outside help. He reached out the National Emergency Civil Liberties Committee (NECLC), which had a reputation for defending leftists that

\textsuperscript{45} Ibid, 41-42.
\textsuperscript{47} “Court Martial Convicts GI of Disobeying Direct Order,” The Baltimore Sun, June 2, 1967, A4.
the ACLU turned away. In addition to providing a lawyer, the NECLC sent out a press release encouraging antiwar groups to support Stapp’s fight against the brass.48

Only one group, the Youth Against War and Fascism (YAWF), responded, but their small contingent and Stapp’s supporters inside the ranks soon turned the dissident’s legal proceedings into a circus that would have been unimaginable a decade earlier. Before the court-martial began, the demonstrators passed out a mimeographed statement by Stapp declaring his “right of revolutionary socialism to organize within the Army against America’s imperialist war of aggression in Vietnam.”49 When the Army found him guilty of refusing a direct order and sentenced him to forty-five days of hard labor, the YAWF began chanting, “End the war in Vietnam” and “Bring the troops home now.”50 Fellow G.I.s, who had witnessed the trial joined in the chanting as well. One soldier screamed into a testifying officer’s face that he was a liar and was promptly arrested.51 A CBS camera crew stood on the other side of the courtroom’s locked door, recording the cacophonous rally for Walter Cronkite’s news telecast that evening. Eventually, Military Intelligence agents rushed in and forced the protesting group out of the courtroom.

48 Stapp, Up Against the Brass, 44-49.
50 The group also chanted “The brass is a tool, Wall Street rules.” “Big firms get rich while GIs die.”
51 It was Private First Class (Pfc) Paul Ilg who yelled in the face of his battery commander, Lieutenant Urquhart, the same officer who ordered Stapp to open his locker. The Army charged Ilg with showing disrespect to a superior officer. Captain Ronald Boyer found him guilty as charged and sentenced the private to 30 days of confined hard labor, reduced rank, and forfeiture of two-thirds of his pay for one month. See “2D Private Faces Trial at Fort Sill,” New York Times, June 7, 1967, 13.
A month later, the Army court-martialed Stapp for a second time, this time for violating his barracks restriction. Once again, the YAWF organizers descended on Oklahoma, but this time the US Army was ready. When the group’s caravan of cars set out for Fort Sill on the day of the court martial, police cars trailed them while military helicopters whirled overhead. A roadblock awaited them at the post’s gates, and once Army officials stopped the protestors, military police arrested two of the primary YAWF organizers for violating their prohibition from entering Fort Sill. As this was unfolding, the Army quickly led Stapp to the courtroom, now surrounded by Military Police armed with bayonets. After all this drama, Stapp was found not guilty after only a few hours on a technicality over the difference between barracks restriction and post restriction. As Stapp walked back to the jeep that had brought him to the courthouse, he noticed an enlisted man putting a high shine on the vehicle. When asked why, the soldier smiled and said, “The Colonel wanted it to look good on television when we drove you to the stockade.”

The US Army could not force Stapp out of the service until April of 1968, when they gave him an undesirable discharge, but in his remaining time in service he pulled

---

54 Stapp, Up Against the Bass, 82.
off two stunts that troubled the Army long after he was gone. The first was taking over *The Bond* antiwar newspaper, the first national circular specifically designed to spread news of the antiwar movement in the ranks, from Bill Callison, a recent Stanford graduate and conscientious objector. The newspaper title’s referred to the hopeful bond between antiwar civilians and G.I.s. After Callison was arrested for draft resistance and had to give the paper up, he decided to pass the publishing rights (and his one-thousand name mailing list) along to Stapp. The first new issue of *The Bond* rolled off the presses on January 30, 1968. A month earlier, Stapp founded the American Servicemen’s Union (ASU). This first-of-its-kind union featured eight demands, including the end of saluting officers, rank-and-file control of court martials, the election of officers, federal minimum wages for enlisted soldiers, and the right to collective bargaining.

---

55 Oddly enough, even with as much trouble as Stapp stirred up, the Army had only convicted him of the relatively minor offense of refusing to open the footlocker. After Stapp’s marriage to Deirdre Griswold, the editor of the YAWF newsletter, the Army accused him of associating with Maryann Weissman, national coordinator of YAWF. See “GI is Facing New Charges,” *Baltimore Sun*, December 19, 1967. The result of the new charges was a Field Board Hearing to determine whether Stapp posed a security threat. The outcome was a foregone conclusion, but it allowed Stapp enough time to begin re-publishing *The Bond* and create the ASU while technically still on the Army rolls. See David Nagy, “Organizer of Union for GIs Faces Field Board Hearing,” *Washington Post*, December 20, 1967, C18; “Private is Awaiting Ruling on Dismissal,” *New York Times*, February 4, 1968, 10; “Communist Who Sought G.I. Union is Discharged,” *New York Times*, April 20, 1968. David Cortright, whose *Soldiers in Revolt* has long been the gold standard in the field of Vietnam GI dissent, argues that that Stapp and the ASU never “enjoyed the degree of success claimed by chairman Stapp.” Even so, as this chapter later illustrates, the mere threat of enlisted men unionizing was enough to create mayhem at the military senior-leader level.

56 *The Bond* is regarded as the first underground newspaper of the era, its first issue published on June 23, 1967. See Lewes, *Protest and Survive*, 51.

57 See also Leroy Aarons, “Protestors in Army are Increasing,” *Washington Post*, April 17, 1969, F1. ASU’s eight points also included ending racism in the armed forces, the right of free political association, and the right to disobey illegal and immoral orders. See Stapp, *Up Against the Brass*, 88-91.
As Stapp was stirring up trouble inside the ranks, the peace movement outside the ranks was rapidly expanding. In April of 1967, a month before Stapp’s footlocker splintered, over 100,000 protestors marched through the streets of Manhattan. It was the largest rally in New York since the war began, with loud chants of “Hell No, We Won’t Go” and “Hey, Hey L.B.J., How Many Kids Have You Killed Today.” A similar rally, also organized by the loose conglomerate of antiwar and leftist groups known as the Spring Mobilization to End the War in Vietnam, occurred in San Francisco on the same day. Several months later, in Oakland, California, thousands of marchers blocked the entrance to the Army induction center until police waded into the crowd with nightsticks, injuring over twenty of the protestors and arresting twenty more. The week of protests ended in Washington as 50,000 protestors marched from the Lincoln Memorial to the Pentagon, where several thousand of the demonstrators tried to force themselves into the military headquarters.

The April protest in New York also gave rise to a new antiwar group: the Vietnam Veterans Against the War. Six Vietnam veterans, after being called to the front of the parade, led the march that day; along the route, they decided to form their own organization in opposition to the war. In an interview with Richard Moser, Jan Barry,

---

one of the six veterans that day, recounted the march and the birth of the influential organization:

“There was this great contingent...at the entrance of Central Park, wearing Veterans for Peace hats. These guys were all older, World War II, Korean War, some of them were Spanish civil war veterans. Just as we got close...somebody said, “Vietnam veterans go to the front”...Somebody had provided a banner that said Vietnam Veterans Against the War...So I tracked down this Veterans for Peace group, went to one of their meetings, and discovered there was no Vietnam veterans group, they just brought along the sign, hoping some Vietnam veterans would show up.”

It worked. The group quickly gained members as disenchanted soldiers returned home from Vietnam. Their earliest statement labeled the Vietnam conflict a civil war with no American solution and accused the US government of lying to the American public about the conflict.

The antiwar movement was also raising issues of racial injustice, both inside and outside the ranks. One month before his assassination, Malcolm X had denounced the US involvement in Vietnam. After the 1965 combat death of civil rights activist John D. Shaw, the Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party distributed a leaflet declaring that African Americans should not fight “in Vietnam for the White Man’s freedom until all Negro People are free in Mississippi.”

---

61 Moser, *New Winter Soldiers*, 104.


before the mass protests, African Americans inside and outside the armed forces expressed anger that so many whites received air-conditioned, rear-echelon jobs while blacks made up 50 percent of many frontline combat units.\textsuperscript{65} Some black activists went so far as to claim that genocidal intent drove this discrimination in assignments. Reverend Martin Luther King’s outspoken protest against the war in 1967 only intensified African American soldiers’ frustration on the frontlines.\textsuperscript{66}

On July 27, 1967, two Marine corporals from Brooklyn, William Harvey and George Daniels, became the first servicemen inside the ranks to openly question the war based on racial discrimination. During a break in field exercises at Camp Pendleton, California, Harvey and Daniels gathered other black Marines together under a small tree to discuss why, exactly, African Americans should fight in Vietnam. The next day, the group of black enlisted men approached their commanding officer to discuss their concerns. Despite the fact that neither Harvey nor Daniels had refused an order or publicly protested the war, the officer had them both promptly arrested and charged

\textsuperscript{65} During 1966, for example, black soldiers made up 13 percent of the total Army personnel in Vietnam but suffered close to 23 percent of the casualties. In every Army division in Vietnam during 1965 and 1966, the percentage of African American deaths was higher than the percentage of blacks in the unit. Many infantry units were 50 percent black. Beginning in 1967, the armed forces, in a conscious effort to reduce black casualties, began reducing the numbers of black soldiers assigned to infantry, armor, and cavalry units. By the end of the war, the Department of Defense could truthfully say that blacks had not died out of proportion to their numbers in Vietnam, but the damage was already done. Spector, \textit{After Tet: The Bloodiest Year in Vietnam}, 37-38.

with an assortment of offenses, including violation of a 1940 law passed to combat Nazi agents during World War II. A military prosecutor argued that the two Marines had created an “extraordinarily dangerous situation,” comparing their efforts to a “wildcat strike” in civilian life. That November, the military sentenced Harvey to six years in prison; Daniels received ten years. The extreme prison sentences, particularly when the two men did not actually refuse an order, only encouraged more dissent in the ranks, particularly among African American troops.

Along with the burgeoning union movement and racial protest, another development caused consternation among military senior leadership: the G.I. coffeehouse movement. The coffeehouse idea was the brainchild of Fred Gardner, a veteran who had served in the Army during the 1950s before graduating from Harvard in 1963. In the summer of 1967, as Howard Levy and Andy Stapp faced trial, Gardner grew frustrated with the civilian antiwar movement’s animosity towards soldiers. His moment of epiphany came during an antiwar demonstration outside the San Mateo, California, induction center, when a protestor yelled “Eichmann” at a gloomy soldier bound for Vietnam. At the same rally, women were holding signs that pleaded with the Army to “Save Our Sons.” According to Gardner, when he inquired with these women about their sons, he discovered that they were all in graduate school, enjoying

\*\*\*\*

deferments. It was just an intuition, but Gardner sensed that the ranks might be full of antiwar G.I.s. The problem, in his mind, was that the mainstream peace movement had yet to view these soldiers as allies.

Over the summer of 1967, Gardner canvassed every major antiwar project to seek help with his plan for a chain of G.I. coffeehouses outside Army bases. The coffeehouse would serve two purposes in his vision. First, for the G.I.s, it would be a sanctuary from the Army brass and what Gardner called the “violent, venal atmosphere of the typical Army towns.” Second, by interacting with civilian volunteers and encountering antiwar literature, soldiers might find their own voice in opposing the war. Ultimately, the coffeehouse would be a safe place for the stimulus of a new kind of antiwar organization, one that joined those inside and outside the ranks. As importantly, these groups would be founded at key strategic locations, right outside the gates of the nation’s largest Army bases. Try as he might, however, Gardner was unsuccessful in raising funds. The civilian antiwar groups he approached thought that soldiers were “murderers, the enemy, [and] that my plans for getting in touch with were vague and

---

68 Gardner published this account in the November 1971 issue of Second Page, an underground newspaper in the San Francisco area. Stuart L.H. Pott, an investigator for the House of Representatives Committee on Internal Security, introduced the article as evidence during his Congressional testimony in June of 1972. See Investigations of Attempts to Subvert the United States Armed Services: Hearings before the Comm. on Internal Security, House of Representatives, 92nd Cong, 7338-7355, 7522 (June 1972) (testimony of Stuart L.H. Pott, Committee Investigator). As David Cortright points out in his research guide, the three-volume report of this committee, consisting of over 1,100 pages of testimony, documents, and ephemera is by far the most comprehensive Congressional study of GI resistance. See Cortright, Soldiers in Revolt, 282. Hereafter, this testimony is documented as HISC.
provided no ‘blueprint’ for ‘converting them.’” Gardner suspected that soldiers did not need any converting; they just needed a safe harbor from oppressive Army leadership. And so, with ten thousand dollars of his own money, he set off with a friend to Columbia, South Carolina, home to Fort Jackson and its 23,000 soldiers, to fulfill his coffeehouse vision. Gardner chose Fort Jackson because of its role as a basic training base, with the idea that a coffeehouse would be most attractive to soldiers at the low point of indignity during basic training as the Army broke down civilians and reconditioned them as soldiers.

Gardner opened the coffeehouse on Main Street in downtown Columbia in January of 1968, deciding to name it the U.F.O., a not-so-subtle caricature of the U.S.O. (United Service Organization) down the street and its traditional mission of boosting troops’ morale. At first, the local citizens and business community welcomed the new addition to Main Street, particularly since the previous tenant had operated a bar and poolroom. Gardner focused on entertainment, mostly musical acts from around the southeast, good food (relying on a local bakery for fresh baked goods), a robust record collection and hi-fi set, and a relaxing environment with dim lights, red tablecloths, and psychedelic posters on the wall. The response was almost immediate; within that first

———


dIbid, 7522.

d Harmony with the local citizenry would be short-lived. By August, Thomas Fitzpatrick, executive manager of the Chamber of Commerce would complain, “The so-called coffeehouse is a sort spot in our craw.” Police Chief L.J. Campbell admitted, “We check them every night to see if we can get something on them.” See Donald Janson, “Antiwar Coffeehouses Delight G.I.s but Not Army,” New York Times, August 12, 1968, 1.
month, Gardner was welcoming over six hundred visitors a week. The first month of operation, coffeehouse volunteers just listened to the G.I.’s gripes, but by February, they were passing out leaflets based on those gripes at bus stops and surreptitiously on post. The impact was almost immediate.

On February 13, 1968, just one month after the coffeehouse opened, more than thirty soldiers gathered at the Fort Jackson chapel for a “pray-in” against the war. When a Colonel demanded that the men disperse, five remained, drawing charges of disorderly conduct. Privates Steve Kline and Robert Tator proceeded to kneel and begin praying. A nearby officer declared, “I give you a direct and lawful order to stop praying and leave the area!” When the two G.I.s refused, military police ushered them to a nearby jeep, took them to post headquarters, and declared that the two would be court-martialed. When the soldiers attempted another gathering the following week, the leadership was waiting. They had put those they viewed as troublemakers on work details and shuttered the post’s gates, which were always kept open during the week. A military policeman approached Paul Cowan, a reporter that had managed to sneak on post, and stated “I’m afraid I’ll have to detain you at military police headquarters until I get further instructions.” Only two soldiers actually made it to the chapel, and they quickly dispersed in the face of the military police. One soldier told Cowan, “I’d say that
about forty percent of the guys in my company are against the war,” while another quickly chimed in, “But I don’t know how many will act on what they believe.”

Of course, the new coffeehouse was not the only contributor to the growing antiwar sentiment; conditions were rapidly deteriorating in Vietnam. On January 30, North Vietnamese forces simultaneously struck seven major South Vietnamese cities, burning government buildings, freeing prisoners, and lobbing rockets and mortars onto military installations in what became known as the Tet Offensive. Just a day later, General Nguyen Ngoc Loan, a South Vietnamese general and the national police commander, executed a suspected National Liberation Front officer on a public street in front of an NBC camera crew and an Associated Press cameraman The gruesome image shocked American viewers. By mid-month, a new Gallup poll indicated that only thirty-five percent of Americans now approved of President Johnson’s handling of the war. On the night of February 27, when Walter Cronkite declared, “It seems now more certain than ever that the bloody experience of Vietnam is to end in a stalemate,” he was echoing the opinions of an increasing number of Americans.

71 See Paul Cowan’s sidebar in Edward Sherman, “A Reform of the Code is Long Overdue: Military Injustice,” The New Republic 158, no. 10: 20-23 for the most detailed account of the Fort Jackson pray-in. Cowan managed to sneak on post during the second pray-in attempt the following week. See also Myers, Black, White & Olive Drab, 201-202; Cortright, Soldiers in Revolt, 53.
Although the court-martial charges against the two privates were dropped, the Fort Jackson pray-in had an immediate impact on the U.F.O. project and overall coffeehouse movement.\footnote{Most likely, leadership at Fort Jackson dropped the charges due to outside pressure and fear of additional negative publicity after the Howard Levy drama. Congressman William Fitts Ryan had petitioned the post commander for leniency, national newspapers such as the New York Times and Washington Post had picked up the story, and the two charged soldiers acquired Levy’s lawyer, Charles Morgan. See Cowan, New Republic, 23.} It was a strange time for the antiwar movement writ large. President Johnson’s announcement at the end of March 1968 that he would neither seek nor accept a nomination for re-election had a deflating effect on many activists.\footnote{Tom Wicker, “Johnson Says He Won’t Run,” New York Times, April 1, 1968.} One of the primary targets of the vehement protests was suddenly removed. But Gardner’s success in Columbia and the attention garnered by the soldiers’ protest at Fort Jackson rejuvenated many antiwar activists, who now viewed dissenting soldiers as a powerful source of antiwar agitation. For Gardner, who had struggled to fund and staff the coffeehouse, the sudden influx of attention, money, and manpower was “like coming upon water in the desert.”\footnote{HISC, 7522. Rennie Davis, who would gain notoriety later in the summer at the Democratic National Convention as a member of the Chicago Seven, was the first to arrive on the scene in Columbia.}

At a meeting sponsored by the National Mobilization Committee to End the War in Vietnam (NMC), antiwar groups such as Students for a Democratic Society launched a project known as the “Summer of Support.”\footnote{Robert Christgau, “Military Personnel Will Not Participate in Any Activity Having to Do With Creating a Union for Enlisted Men…Oh Yeah?,” Esquire, August 1968, 41-45. In addition to “Summer of Support,” organizers toyed with other names such as “Army Town Project” and “Summer of Liberation.”} According to NMC literature, activists intended to “break down” the conviction among soldiers that peace activists were
“unconcerned” with their welfare, while at the same time demonstrating to antiwar advocates that the soldier was “not an enemy of their cause.” In order to achieve this objective, the NMC expanded Gardner’s original coffeehouse plan. With added staff and funding, the NMC planned to open coffeehouses in Missouri (Fort Leonard), Texas (Fort Hood), Louisiana (Fort Polk), California (Fort Ord), Kentucky (Fort Knox), and Washington State (Fort Lewis). These sites, similar to Fort Jackson, featured large numbers of draftees and basic trainees. In addition to musicians, performers, and films, organizers planned to provide child-care services and legal counseling to soldiers. The idea, the organizers hoped, was to build more of a “friendly retreat” than a blatant antiwar center. By July, the Army was reporting that the group had already succeeded in opening coffeehouses in Texas and Missouri.

In the summer of 1968, a series of newspaper and magazine articles placed Stapp’s unionization plan and the coffeehouse movement squarely in the sights of the US Army, the Department of Defense, and the White House. On Sunday morning, July 14, 1968, the Washington Post carried a shocking account of drug use at Fort Hood, the same post where the Summer of Support contingent had just recently established a

---

79 The NMC was a coordinating organization intent on unifying the disparate antiwar movement organizations across the nation. The group was an outgrowth of the ad hoc Spring Mobilization Committee to End the War in Vietnam, which formed during the planning for the nationwide antiwar protest on April 15, 1967. See US Air Force Significant Counterintelligence Brief (SCIB), “Anti-war Group Stages Campaign Near Military Installations,” June 12, 1968. Spector-CMH, Folder 183.

80 Memo, Mr. William K. Brehm, Assistant Secretary of the Army (Manpower and Reserve Affairs), to Alfred B. Fitt, Assistant Secretary of Defense (Manpower and Reserve Affairs), August 1, 1968, sub: Coffee Houses and Union Movement. Spector-CMH, Folder 141. See Cortright, Soldiers in Revolt, 56.
coffeehouse. The most scandalous claim by the Post’s staff writer was that four hundred pounds of marijuana exchanged hands on a daily basis at the 35,000-soldier military installation. Extrapolating from the figure, the reporter guessed that nearly thirty-four percent of the soldiers on post were involved in the marijuana trafficking, a figure that G.I.s on post tended to confirm. To make matters worse for Army leadership, the article detailed how drugs were grown and manufactured on Army installations. More than one soldier claimed that Army personnel crafted acid tabs in the labs at Fort Sam Houston. Soldiers detailed how drug traders inside the Army grew marijuana, peyote cactuses, and mescal beans on the Fort Hood target ranges. A large number of G.I.s reported that it was not unusual for individuals, and sometimes, entire platoons to report to duty stoned. More ominously, it was becoming obvious that soldiers were connecting their drug use to an antiwar stance. A Fort Hood soldier attributed his drug use to his “guilt about being part of the war machine.” “All the big pot heads around Fort Hood tend to be against the war,” he reported.81

From his new office on the outer ring of the Pentagon, the highest-ranking general in the US Army had to confront these allegations of drug use and dissent. General William C. Westmoreland, who on July 3, 1968 became the twenty-fifth Chief of Staff of the US Army, was no stranger to controversy. Westy, as he became known at West Point from the start, seemed destined for greatness in the Army. In the West Point

class of 1936 that included three future Army chiefs of staff, a member of the Manhattan Project, and the originator of the Green Berets, it was Westmoreland who rose to First Captain and Regimental Commander, receiving the John J. Pershing sword as the cadet who most excelled in military training. One of his later biographers labeled him the “inevitable general.” Westmoreland’s ascension through the ranks became the stuff of legend. He was the leader of a unit that turned back Rommel in North Africa and an artillery officer in the campaign that brought Hitler to defeat. On his way up the Army leadership ladder, he held the most prestigious jobs, from commander of the 101st Airborne Division and XVIII Airborne Corps to Superintendent at West Point.

But along the way, there were cracks in the general’s facade of greatness. During his first assignment at Fort Sill, Oklahoma, his company commander gave him a negative rating, but the post commander enjoyed having the young Lieutenant on his fox hunts and salvaged his career. He commanded an infantry unit in Korea, but most of the fighting had ended and peace talks had begun by the time he arrived. During his command of the 101st Airborne Division, he never made a single combat jump. It was during his stint in the 1950s as the top assistant to General Maxwell Taylor, then the US Army Chief of Staff, that the young general first encountered Lyndon Johnson. The senator from Texas was impressed with the young brigadier general’s appearances before Congress, and just a decade later, when the one-star had become a four-star and

---

the senator a president, Johnson tabbed him as chief of military operations in Vietnam.83 When Westmoreland sat down General Douglas MacArthur before leaving for Vietnam, the elderly general told the young upstart, “I’m sure you realize that your new assignment is filled with opportunities and saturated with hazards.”84

Given the opportunity, Westmoreland would become much better acquainted with the hazards. He adopted a “search and destroy” strategy in Vietnam, a scheme of attrition that hoped to annihilate Vietcong forces before they could replenish their ranks. As with any strategy, the enemy gets a vote, and the North Vietnamese repeatedly thwarted Westmoreland’s plan by relying on small, hit and run engagements that prevented the Americans from decisively wielding their superior firepower. As the strategy stalled and images of American soldiers setting fire to villages reached the states, the antiwar protests grew. For a general who had been lauded at every single step of his career, Westmoreland found the antiwar movement’s vilification of him painful.

Another of Westmoreland’s biographers, Samuel Zaffiri, claimed that the “antiwar movement was alien to Westmoreland.”85 His response was to lash out at the protestors.

85 See Samuel Zaffiri, Westmoreland: A Biography of General William C. Westmoreland (New York: William Morrow & Co, 1994). In his own autobiography, Westmoreland held those “who burned draft cards and their country’s flag, besieged the Pentagon, paraded the enemy’s flag in the streets… and in general went beyond the bounds of reasonable debate and fair dissension” directly responsible for prolonging the war. Of course, the proud general could not hold them responsible for losing the war as Westmoreland insisted until 69
In April of 1967, Westmoreland declared that the enemy had “gained support” from the antiwar protests. The movement against the war in the US, he said, had given the enemy “hope that he can win politically that which he cannot accomplish militarily.” The soldiers fighting in Vietnam, the general claimed, were “dismayed, and so am I, by recent unpatriotic acts here at home.”

Days later, Westmoreland became the first battle commander in American history to address a joint session of Congress during hostilities. Once again illustrating his disdain for the peace movement, the general declared, “Backed at home by resolve, confidence, patience, determination, and continued support, we will prevail in Vietnam.” When President Johnson brought the general home to become the Army’s chief of staff, many considered it a demotion by promotion even though both Johnson and Westmoreland would deny it for the rest of their lives.

Either way, the four-star general who had already expressed his disdain for peace

his death, “the record of the American military services of never having lost a war is still intact.” See Westmoreland, A Soldier Reports, 413-414, 423.

*7 Tom Wicker, “Westmoreland Tells Congress U.S. Will Prevail,” New York Times, April 29, 1967, 1. In a dramatic scene at the end of the speech, Westmoreland turned and saluted the Vice President and House Speaker on the rostrum, and then solemnly turned and saluted the audience, not once, but three times, left, right, and finally center. Members of Congress were caught up in the spectacle and rushed to shake his hand as he departed.

*8 Westmoreland was well aware of the speculation that he had been relieved from his duties in Vietnam. In his autobiography, he claimed that President Johnson implored him to ignore the press speculation that he had been “kicked upstairs.” Westmoreland claimed that the North Vietnamese capitalized on this angle and used it for propaganda. In a stilted argument, the proud general rested his case: “Those who did so speculate apparently overlooked the fact that in a three-year war in Korea the United States had four commanders while in an essentially eight-year war in Vietnam there were only two.” Whether he was demoted or not matters little; Westmoreland’s pride was wounded nonetheless. Westmoreland, A Soldier Reports, 361-362.
activists was taking over an Army full of soldiers who were increasingly becoming peace activists themselves.

Westmoreland had been at his new post in Washington less than two weeks when the Fort Hood drug exposé broke. The day after its publication, the general telephoned the 2nd Armored Division commander at Fort Hood, Major General Joseph McChristian, to express his concern over the allegations. McChristian claimed that the reporter had “greatly exaggerated” the story. When Westmoreland demanded to know where the Post writer got his information, the Fort Hood commander immediately blamed the recently opened coffeehouse, claiming the reporter had spent a week with the coffeehouse staff members, who were trying to “be as subversive as can be.” McChristian was adamant that his staff had tried to set the reporter straight, but their evidence had been ignored.

A week later, Westmoreland completed a lengthy phone conversation with David McGiffert, the Under Secretary of the Army, and more importantly, the director

---

89 McChristian, always a subordinate of Westmoreland, would have an interesting history with his boss. McChristian served as Westmoreland’s Chief of Intelligence when he was commander of all ground forces in Vietnam and would become a key witness in his former boss’ lawsuit against CBS in the 1980s. Westmoreland brought suit against the television company after the documentary “The Uncounted Enemy: A Vietnam Deception” charged Westmoreland with purposefully underestimating North Vietnamese and Vietcong strength. McChristian, the highest-ranking military official called to the stand by CBS, turned on his former boss, claiming that Westmoreland did not relay timely or accurate intelligence on enemy forces to Washington because the information would be a “political bombshell.” In an awkward moment for both former generals, they avoided eye contact throughout McChristian’s testimony. See M.A. Farber, “Ex-Intelligence Aide Says Westmoreland Delayed Key Cable,” New York Times, February 7, 1985.

90 Record of Chief of Staff Fonecon, Subject: Newspaper Story about Marijuana at Fort Hood, July 15, 1968. General Westmoreland Papers, National Archives, Record Group 319, Box 25, Folder 452. Collection hereafter cited as Westmoreland-NARA.
of a civil disturbance steering committee that determined the level of US military forces to be used in domestic disturbances.91 Westmoreland lobbied McGiffert to portray the drug issue highlighted by the Post as a “national problem” rather than an Army problem. Trying to protect his service, Westmoreland pushed for an internal investigation, arguing, “We should do it ourselves.” Throughout the conversation, he deflected criticism of the Army by pointing to Marine drug use in Vietnam and similar drug problems at Air Force bases near Fort Hood.92 McGiffert remained noncommittal, but one thing was clear: The news out of Fort Hood had clearly rocked Westmoreland and senior Army leadership.

Just one week later, as the August issue of Esquire magazine hit newsstands, Andy Stapp’s American Servicemen’s Union and the Summer of Support coffeehouse movement became national news. The cover itself was provocative, picturing a young Army private snubbyng his nose at a regal four-star general under the headline, “Exclusive! The Plot to Unionize the U.S. Army.”93 The controversial magazine convinced senior leaders in the Pentagon that soldier dissent was a clear and present threat.

91 Following the National Guard’s poor performance in quelling disturbances in Detroit and Newark in 1967, the Johnson Administration placed McGiffert in charge of this steering committee to examine how to deploy active-duty troops into domestic trouble spots. The committee was responsible for the 6,000 regular Army troops at the 1968 Democratic National Convention and the undercover operation in which Army intelligence agents kept dossiers on thousands of civilians suspected of fostering dissent. See Joan M. Jensen, Army Surveillance in America, 1775-1980 (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1991), 244-245 and Wolfgang Saxon, “David McGiffert, 79, Pentagon Official in 60’s, Dies,” New York Times, October 25, 2005.
92 Record of Chief of Staff Fonecon, Subject: Investigation of Use of Marihuanna [sic], July 23, 1968. Westmoreland-NARA, Box 25, Folder 452.
danger. Major General McChristian, the same Fort Hood commander that General Westmoreland had frantically called after the Washington Post drug story, immediately banned the paper from post, declaring the “cover offensive and the article detrimental to the Army’s overall well-being.”

The article delivered on its sensationalized packaging. Robert Christgau, the writer who delved into the union and coffeehouse movements, had obviously spent significant time with Andy Stapp, Fred Gardner, and members of the NMC who were running the Summer of Support movement, but he also, for the first time, captured individual soldiers’ antiwar feelings. “The Army sucks,” one young draftee exclaimed while also acknowledging his helplessness, “I’ll go [to Vietnam] when they ask me. What else can I do?” For the US Army and the Department of Defense, the details of dissent were shocking. Just as unsettling was the coverage’s possible impact on other soldiers who were beginning to question the war. David Cortright, an enlisted soldier opposed to the war at the time of the Esquire piece, described the article as “a flash of illumination, that maybe I could do the same” as the soldiers he read about.

Mere days after obtaining a copy of the damning piece, Alfred Fitt, who had threatened Lieutenant Howe with prison in 1965 if he continued to speak out against the war and now the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Manpower and Reserve Affairs, sent

---

95 Cortright eventually became active in the G.I. movement, and in 1975, published the leading study on the G.I. movement, Soldiers in Revolt.
an urgent memorandum to his counterparts in each of the military services. Fitt instructed the Army specifically to pull the service records of every soldier mentioned in the article without the individuals’ knowledge, conduct an analysis of each coffeehouse near Army installations, and evaluate trends in “civilian efforts to subvert members of the Army by...encouraging formation of dissident groups within the Army.” The Assistant Secretary of Defense also requested the latest statistics on college graduates entering the enlisted ranks, revealing the Pentagon’s worries over the influx of college graduate draftees following the elimination of graduate school deferments in 1967. Most ominous was Fitt’s demand that the military services provide details on the procedures used to “maintain surveillance” over coffeehouses and the union movement. America’s counter-insurgency tactics were coming home.

Although the Air Force and Navy detailed their own intelligence collection efforts on the “New Left” in return memoranda to Fitt, the Army’s response illustrated best how grave a concern the antiwar movement inside the ranks had become to senior

---


97 The fear over an increased number of college graduate draftees was based on the theory that lower ranking yet highly educated soldiers would chafe at being led by higher-ranking yet less-educated Noncommissioned Officers or NCOs. Congress passed the Military Service Act of 1967 by an overwhelming majority. The act extended the basic draft system that Congress adopted in 1940 until 1971 with one exception; for all intents and purposes, the Act ended graduate school deferments. Undergraduate exemptions actually became easier to obtain since the new law no longer required students to maintain a certain class rank or test scores to qualify. For more details on the changes in 1967, see “20 Questions About Draft Answered: How New Law Will Work,” US News and World Report, July 10, 1967.
leaders. William Brehm, the Assistant Secretary of the Army, outlined the service’s concern and efforts to combat dissent in a fascinating, classified four-page memorandum. First, he provided the service records of Andy Stapp, Fred Gardner, and the other soldiers mentioned in the Esquire story. Each statement of service, as the Army called the report detailing soldiers’ careers, clearly explained that there was “nothing of record to indicated that [the individual] has authorized release of this information from his records.” In other words, the Army had pulled their personal information – social security number, date and place of birth, home address, names of family members, etc. – without their knowledge or consent. Brehm detailed the Army’s “continuous program of information collection and evaluation” of both the union and coffeehouse movements. Acknowledging that these coffeehouses remained civilian establishments, the Assistant Secretary outlined the Army’s close coordination with FBI, local police, and sheriff’s offices. Through these collection efforts, commanders were able to maintain “continuous evaluation” of antiwar soldiers and their allies in the peace movement.

Brehm also detailed the Fort Hood Three’s public combat refusal, acknowledging privately for the first time that their rebellion “gave rise to other incidents of dissidence

---

88 The US Air Force explained how they exploited “their own collection capabilities and resources to provide continuing coverage of activities affecting the security and mission performance of USAF bases,” but that there was “no evidence at present of the existence of “coffee houses” or “union” movements at or near USAF installations. The US Navy similarly stated how it conducted “its own surveillance of those organizations which have specifically targeted Navy and Marine Corps personnel and installations.” See Spector-CMH, Folder 141 for the full collection of the services’ response to Fitt.

90 Memorandum, Mr. William K. Brehm, Assistant Secretary of the Army for Manpower and Reserve Affairs, to Alfred B. Fitt, Assistant Secretary of Defense for Manpower and Reserve Affairs, August 1, 1968, sub: Coffee Houses and Union Movement. Spector-CMH, Folder 141.
in the Army.” The Army highlighted the Pentagon demonstration of October 21, 1967 as a key turning point in the collaborative efforts between civilian activists and active soldiers. For an Army already struggling with an elusive enemy on the other side of the world, Brehm’s conclusion was chilling: “The Vietnam war and possibly less motivated soldiers, may increase the potential for dissidence and the number of soldiers who are responsive to anti-Vietnam groups.” On August 12, after compiling all the service’s responses, Fitt forwarded a report to the new Secretary of Defense, Clark Clifford, who had replaced Robert McNamara the previous January.100

The US Army barely had time to recover from the Esquire exposure when another report, this time from the New York Times, carried worse news for the Army. Donald Janson, a guest reporter for the Times, published a front-page exposé on the U.F.O. coffeehouse in Columbia, South Carolina. It is hard to imagine senior Army leaders’ reaction that Monday morning upon seeing photos of young Army recruits reading copies of the Vietnam G.I. underground newspaper with anti-Vietnam posters behind them on the front page of a national paper. The article not only exposed the Army’s and FBI’s intelligence collection and surveillance efforts, but once again, provided a forum for individual soldiers to express their dissent. Despite an Army intelligence officer referring to the coffeehouse as a den of “antiwar and communistic, ____________

100 Memorandum, Alfred B. Fitt, Assistant Secretary of Defense for Manpower and Reserve Affairs, to Clark M. Clifford, Secretary of Defense, no subject, August 1, 1968. Specter-CMH, Folder 183. Clark Clifford would only serve in the position Defense Secretary for one year, giving way to President Nixon’s appointee, Melvin Laird, in January 1969.
and subversive” propaganda, a young private called the U.F.O. “the place where the
action is.” An Air Force enlisted man from nearby Shaw Air Force Base who called the
U.F.O. an “oasis” claimed, “ninety-five percent of people in the barracks hate the Army
and oppose the war.”

The reporter highlighted the more direct techniques the Army used to police the
coffeehouse. A month earlier, for example, a patrol of Military Police had barged into the
establishment and forced five G.I.s in uniform to leave. After the National Emergency
Civil Liberties Committee, the organization that helped Stapp the previous year, accused
the Army of “outrageous conduct,” an embarrassed Army spokesman admitted that the
“courtesy patrol” had made a mistake. Another soldier echoed a now-familiar sentiment
inside the ranks: The coffeehouses were not converting G.I.s into antiwar activists, but
merely providing a sanctuary away from the oppressive brass. Specialist Phil Stewart,
an Army cook, argued that “nobody in the U.F.O. is trying to persuade anyone to
defect” or turn against the war. In his view, the Army’s disdain for the coffeehouse was
symptomatic of the organization’s desire “to extend its control over you to places off the
base.” 101

That Wednesday, two days after the Times report, General William
Westmoreland had clearly decided that the time for a decisive counterattack had
arrived. In memorandum marked SECRET, Westmoreland detailed new “procedures

designed to detect and recommend countermeasures against subversive or quasi-
subversive activities which may be directed against the morale and discipline of the
Army.”

Highlighting the rapidly increasing incidents of soldiers publicly opposing the
war, using drugs, going AWOL, and outright deserting, he warned of a “threat...to basic
Army discipline” that was “most critical” to the survival of the military establishment.

With a nod towards the *Esquire* and *Times* stories, the general acknowledged that recent
publicity had revealed that the Department of the Army was ill equipped to “measure
the magnitude of such problems and develop countermeasures.” The solution to this
shortcoming, for now, was to establish a standing Morale and Discipline Committee.

Evidencing the seriousness with which the Army viewed its charge, the
committee was composed entirely of general officers from the personnel, intelligence,
provost (military police), and information directorates of the Army and was to
immediately report its findings to Westmoreland himself. There is one truism in
determining how seriously a military organization takes a particular problem: the rank
of the individuals assigned to the problem and to whom those individuals report their
information. The fact that this new Morale and Discipline Committee consisted entirely

---

102 Chief of Staff Memorandum 68-314, Brigadier General William A. Knowlton, Secretary of the General
Staff, to Deputy Chief of Staff for Personnel, Assistant Chief of Staff for Intelligence, The Adjutant General,
the Surgeon General, Chief of Chaplains, the Judge Advocate General, Chief of Information, and the Provost
Marshal General, sub: Deliberate Efforts to Undermine Army Morale and Discipline, August 14, 1968,
Spector-CMH, Folder 177. The Secretary of the General Staff would often the sign the Chief of Staff
Memoranda, but they were the voice piece of Westmoreland himself.
of general officers and reported directly to General Westmoreland, the Chief of Staff, is extremely telling of just how seriously the US Army took soldier dissent.

As the memo outlined each department’s responsibilities, it became clear that the US Army was planning an all-out assault on dissent in the ranks. Intelligence and Military Police agencies were, through all the means at their disposal, to “collect, evaluate, analyze, and disseminate” intelligence on subversive activities and disciplinary problems in the ranks, including coffeehouses, unions, and soldier gatherings. Army judge advocates were to maintain statistics on morale and discipline indicators and provide legal advice to the committee. The memo instructed the Army’s Chief of Information office to mount its own propaganda initiative to highlight the “positive aspects concerning Army morale and discipline.” Above all, the Army wanted its counter-attack to remain a secret, perhaps to keep dissenting soldiers from realizing the immense impact their actions were having. In closing, the Chief of Staff emphasized the surreptitious nature of the operation: “The fact that such a committee has been organized and that special attention is being given to suspected subversive activities is classified as SECRET information.”

Even as the Army prepared its counterattack, the GI movement was expanding faster than anyone inside or outside the Pentagon could have imagined or predicted. In April, G.I.s led a protest march of over two thousand people in San Francisco, marking
the first time that active soldiers, rather than veterans, led a civilian antiwar rally.\textsuperscript{103} Shortly after the opening of the coffeehouse outside Fort Hood, Texas, nearly two hundred soldiers gathered in Condor Park in Killeen, Texas, for a “love-in,” which featured rock music and antiwar speeches.\textsuperscript{104} Two weeks later, nine servicemen went AWOL together and sought sanctuary in a San Francisco church. On July 17, as the nine chained themselves to clergymen during a “liberation” service, Military Police armed with wire cutters stormed into the church, realizing too late that they were interrupting communion. A reporter described the weapon-toting soldiers as waiting “silently while the bread was broken and the wine poured from a silver chalice.” After the service, the Military Police took the nine service members and the clergymen that had been hiding them into custody.\textsuperscript{105} Additionally, servicemen were increasingly showing their dissatisfaction with the war by simply walking away from their units. At the beginning of the military’s long hot summer of 1968, senior Department of Defense leaders appeared before the Senate Armed Services Committee to explain the exploding number

\textsuperscript{103} Cortright, Soldiers in Revolt, 57.
\textsuperscript{104} See Testimony of Homer E. Shelton, and Cordus Jackson, both members of the police force in Killeen, Texas, before the House Internal Security Committee on May 10, 1972 for details on the Fort Hood “love in.” HISC, 7277-7278. The police officers described the protest as a combination of rock music and guerrilla theater aimed at US involvement in Vietnam. They estimated that out of the four hundred attendees, thirty percent were soldiers. See also, Cortright, Soldiers in Revolt, 56.
\textsuperscript{105} See “9 G.I. Foes of War Arrested in Church,” New York Times, July 18, 1968, 3. The group consisted of two Air Force airmen, two Navy sailors, and five Army soldiers. They all described themselves as “ex-servicemen” and claimed they had “resigned” from the military.
of AWOL soldiers and desertions in the ranks. In the Fiscal Year of 1968 alone, which ended on June 30, 1968, the Pentagon reported 53,352 deserters, almost 40,000 from the US Army.

The turmoil in the ranks soon drew attention at the highest level of government; six days after creating the Morale and Discipline Committee, General Westmoreland had lunch with President Lyndon Johnson to discuss soldier dissent and the Army’s plan for countering the revolt inside the ranks. Following the meeting, a shaken Westmoreland returned to the Pentagon where he immediately telephoned Vice Admiral Nels Johnson, the Director of the Joint Staff, to provide a debrief on the meeting with the president. According to the general, President Johnson had “expressed considerable concern over coffee houses and other efforts to subvert the military” and was demanding to know how many coffeehouses there were, how many soldiers frequented them, the magnitude of the problem, and what the Army was doing about it. The president also knew of the Fort Hood love-in and specifically asked his Army chief of staff to provide more details. Leaving the White House, the general promised his Commander in Chief a memo outlining the situation.

---

106 See Hearings Before a Subcommittee of the Committee on Armed Forces, United States Senate, 90th Congress, 2nd Session, May 21-22 1968.
108 Record of Chief of Staff Fonecon, Subject: Debrief of White House Meeting, August 20, 1968, Westmoreland-NARA, Box 25, Folder 452.
On August 25, General Westmoreland made good on that promise, formally responding to President Johnson via a classified memorandum. The general admitted that he, too, was “deeply concerned” with the development of a soldier union, increased drug use, and dissent within the ranks, all of which formed a direct “threat to morale and discipline.” Describing the recently created Morale and Discipline Committee, the general declared that its mission was to “analyze continuously all available information and to maintain close and coordinated surveillance of all aspects of antiwar-motivated activities.” Attaching a fact sheet on the coffeehouse movement, Westmoreland highlighted to the president that the proprietor of Fort Hood’s Oleo Strut coffeehouse was planning to travel to Chicago to disrupt the Democratic Convention. Years later, Westmoreland told historian Tom Wells that he “was pretty much shocked by some of the things that I saw and I was very sensitive to the trends.”

The Democratic Convention itself, and political and military leaders’ decision to send troops into the city, furthered the antiwar movement in the ranks. The US Army

---


110 Westmoreland sent President Johnson another memorandum on September 7, informing the President that military and local police had hauled 32 “drug dealers” (15 civilians/17 Army personnel) to prison in Killeen, Texas, and Fort Hood. Holding up Joshua Gould as a sort of trophy, Westmoreland informed Johnson that police had apprehended Gould on his way to Chicago to stir up trouble at the Democratic convention. See Memorandum, General William Westmoreland, US Army Chief of Staff, to Lyndon B. Johnson, President of the United States, subj: Antiwar-Motivated Coffeehouses Near Military Establishments. The sentences handed out in the drug bust were harsh. For example, Private First Class Bruce Peterson received eight years at hard labor after police found marijuana residue on the lint in his pockets. In truth, Peterson’s sentence was punitive: He was a principal activist at the Oleo Strut and editor of the local underground newspaper. See Cortright, Soldiers in Revolt, 57.

used over 250 cargo planes to transport troops to O’Hare Field and Chicago’s Glenview Naval Air Station to “guard” the political gathering. The largest domestic airlift of troops in American history, it led some soldiers to question their deployment against American civilians. On the night of August 23, just days before the opening night of the convention, over one hundred African American soldiers gathered at a main intersection on the Fort Hood installation to protest the rumored riot control duty in Chicago. The soldiers protested through the night, even drawing Major General John Boles, commander of the 1st Armored Division, out of bed to plead with them to disperse. Finally, as the sun rose and the soldiers still refused to leave, Military Police arrived on the scene and arrested forty-three G.I.s. What was once the Fort Hood Three had now become the Fort Hood Forty-Three. At one of the court-martial proceedings that followed, Lieutenant Colonel John Cassidy, one of the commanding officers on scene during the protest, testified that the men “said they didn’t want to get involved in drawing blood or sticking bayonets in the throats of their brothers.”

---

112 See John Kifner, “Politics: Thousand of U.S. Troops Mobilized for Guard Duty at Democratic Convention, New York Times, August 25, 1968, 71. The reporter did not specify exactly what the troops were guarding the convention from. Just a week prior, six thousand soldiers participated in riot control training at Fort Hood in “Operation Jackson Park.” Fort Hood soldiers had also come to Chicago in April for riot control; they bivouacked in Chicago’s Jackson Park.


114 The officer revealed that the spontaneous protest also focused on racial discrimination in the Army. Lt Col Cassidy testified that the soldiers complained to him about slow promotions, rejection of sick calls, more severe punishment for black soldiers, and discrimination in choosing company clerks. “Army Court Finds 4 Negroes Guilty,” New York Times, October 26, 1968. Sentences were light for all the soldiers involved (6 months was the longest) and almost half were found not guilty. David Cortright argues that the public
remained concerned about its soldiers’ willingness to perform riot control duties until after the convention was complete.115

Alarmed, General Westmoreland began to take matters into his own hands through back-channel methods. On August 28, just days after his memo to President Johnson on the coffeehouse movement, the four-star reached out to J. Willis Cantey, a powerful banker and leading figure in the Chamber of Commerce in Columbia, South Carolina, and a relative of Westmoreland by marriage. During this era, the Department of the Army often appointed prominent civilian representatives from Army towns to keep an eye on things on post and around town.116 The civilian representatives had open access to the Secretary of the Army and met once a year at a gathering known as the Army Advisory Board. Cantey was one of these representatives in South Carolina. Westmoreland complained to Cantey that the coffeehouse movement had “gotten so bad I even got a message directly from the President on it, asking me what my people in


115 Lieutenant General John Michaelis, commander of the troops in Chicago, called General Westmoreland at the conclusion of the convention. The three-star general declared that the troops on the ground had behaved “magnificently – not so much as an AWOL among them.” With a hint of pride, he also told the chief of staff that the “hippies all moved out.” Record of Chief of Staff Fonecon, Subject: Chicago Sit Rep, August 30, 1968, Westmoreland-NARA, Box 25, Folder 452.
116 See Myers, Black, White & Olive Drab Olive, 137 for a description of the civilian representatives to the Army Advisory Board in Columbia, South Carolina during the Vietnam War. This practice does not exist today.
Columbia are doing.”\textsuperscript{117} Interestingly, Cantey had no idea that the coffeehouse even existed, but he promised to immediately “get with the mayor on this and get it closed and the hell out of here.”\textsuperscript{118}

Less than a week later, following a soldier uprising at the Army’s Long Binh jail, in what historian Richard Moser has described as the “largest and most explosive episode of soldier resistance in Vietnam,” General Westmoreland had seen and heard enough.\textsuperscript{119} The Army he was tasked to lead was changing. Up until 1967, volunteers had done the large majority of the fighting in Southeast Asia. That was no longer the case with the continuous troop build-ups, the reserve forces still on the sidelines, and the growing antiwar sentiment in the nation. By the summer of 1968, draftees made up half of the US Army; in some combat units, the number of conscripts exceeded two-thirds. Moreover, over half of those that volunteered for the service in the Army had only done so over fear of being drafted. Soldiers often volunteered to maintain some control over their destiny. Volunteers were often able to pick their branch of service and specific job;

\textsuperscript{117} Record of Chief of Staff Fonecon, Subject: Coffee House in Columbia, August 28, 1968. Westmoreland-NARA, Box 25, Folder 452. When Westmoreland initially asked, “How’s the coffeehouse going,” Cantey responded with a joke, “Don’t know, haven’t been to Brazil lately.” From the transcript, it is obvious that the general was not in a joking mood and the conversation quickly turned serious.\textsuperscript{118} Interestingly, the local newspapers, at least in South Carolina, seemed to lag behind the national story of soldier dissent, even as their city became a hotbed for G.I. organizing. Andrew Myers, who provides the most detailed account of the movement in Columbia, found that the local papers often published responses or follow-ups to stories that had already appeared in the national papers. See Myers, Black, White & Olive Drab Olive, 202.\textsuperscript{119} See Moser, New Winter Soldiers, 51-52 for a description of several prison riots in Vietnam. The Long Binh jail was referred to as the “LBJ.” During the riot, prisoners fought guards and burned down parts of the complex. Many of them actually escaped.
draftees overwhelmingly ended up in combat units. So, in effect, over seventy-five percent of the US Army was either drafted or had joined in fear of being drafted.\textsuperscript{120} As the war dragged on, these inductees grew increasingly disenchanted with the US mission in Vietnam. Andy Stapp, Howard Levy, the Fort Hood Three, the Fort Hood Forty-Three, and the protesting soldiers at Fort Jackson were all draftees. Forced into service against their will, these dissenting soldiers refused to acquiesce once in the ranks. And the US Army was running out of ideas on how to combat the problem.

Harsh prison sentences, intelligence collection, surveillance, and discipline committees were not having the desired effect; a more drastic solution seemed the only sensible route to saving the Army. On September 3, 1968, after a summer of increasing dissent and turmoil in the ranks, the US Army Chief of Staff ordered a secret study to consider the “cessation of the draft and transition to a volunteer Army.”\textsuperscript{121} The four-star general responsible for maintaining good order and discipline for the entire US Army did not desire a mere “duplication” of past studies, but rather a more developed and achievable Army plan for moving beyond the draft. It was the first step, taken by a general and Army reeling from soldier unionism, coffeehouses, and antiwar agitation,


\textsuperscript{121} Memorandum for Record, Brigadier General William Knowlton, subj: Study of the Draft, September 3, 1968. AVA/MHI, Box 5, Folder 3.
towards ridding the service of reluctant and recalcitrant draftees and replacing them with more obedient volunteers.

What had begun as isolated incidents of protest, moments of personal conscience, had grown into a collective protest against the war in Vietnam from inside the ranks. Unbeknownst to the US Army, even as it took the radical step of considering a transition to volunteers, the worst was yet to come. Over the next three years, the tens and hundreds of soldiers publicly protesting the war would become thousands. Across the Vietnamese countryside, combat units would increasingly refuse to fight. The underground newspaper movement grew from a mere smattering of haphazard publications to regular, stylized papers at nearly every military installation. And through it all, military and political leaders continued to struggle to tamp down the movement, ultimately with the conversion to the All-Volunteer Force. The US Army never “dragged its feet” during the transition to volunteers. Quite the opposite; its leaders were at the vanguard of the developing volunteer initiative. But that initiative soon had many sponsors and champions, including the new President of the United States.
Chapter Two. “A Volunteer Army can be a Better Army”: The Rise of the All-Volunteer Force, 1968-1969

On a Thursday evening, less than three weeks before the 1968 presidential election, the Republican nominee, Richard Milhous Nixon, addressed a national radio audience on a “matter important to us all, but especially to young Americans and their parents…the draft.” Hours earlier, less than a mile from where Nixon spoke at the CBS broadcast center in New York City, Allan Solomonow appeared in Manhattan’s Foley Square with his wife and 2-month-old child in a symbolic gesture of just how important, and often traumatizing, the draft had become to many Americans. Two years earlier, Solomonow had defaced his draft card during an antiwar demonstration in Connecticut, received a one-year prison term for his actions; he was now surrendering to federal marshals in front of his young family. The thirty-one-year old clutched a bouquet of flowers as a crowd of sympathizers surrounded him with balloons and incense.

Candidate Nixon, who had supported either the draft or universal military service for

---

2 Richard Nixon, “The All-Volunteer Armed Force,” address on CBS radio network, October 17, 1968. Historical Reference Collection #1, 327.02, All-Volunteer Army Collection, US Army Center of Military History (CMH), Washington, DC. Hereafter cited as AVA-CMH.
3 In 1965, Mendel Rivers, Chairman of the House Armed Service Chairman, was irate over the burgeoning draft card-burning phenomenon and sponsored federal legislation making it a crime to destroy one’s card. Of course, the card itself was only symbolic and not required for induction into the armed forces. See Michael S. Foley, Confronting the War Machine: Draft Resistance During the Vietnam War (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2003), 39.
4 See “Surrenders in Draft Case,” New York Times, October 17, 1968, 14 and “Draft Foe Gets Flowery Sendoff,” Washington Post, October 17, 1968, D23. It is not clear from the record if Solomonow was aware of Nixon’s planned address on the draft.
his entire political career, announced that the time had come, once “our reduced manpower requirements in Vietnam will permit us to do so,” for the United States to “move toward an all-volunteer armed force.” Nixon relied on free-market and libertarian language that juxtaposed compulsory military service with the “concept of liberty, justice, and equality under the law.” Borrowing a 1940 quote from conservative Senator Robert Taft, Nixon argued that the draft was “absolutely opposed to the principles of individual liberty which have always been considered a part of American democracy.” With over 500,000 troops in Vietnam and an active military force of almost three and a half million, Nixon’s declaration was bold indeed.

In the weeks preceding the speech, Nixon and his closest advisors had gathered in Key Biscayne, Florida, to formulate a strategy for the final weeks of the campaign. Despite his lead in the polls, the candidate was disturbed by the press’ claims that he had not staked out clear positions on major issues. Turning on his campaign staff, an irate Nixon declared, “in the next ten days I want to put out something powerful and

---

6 From the very beginning, drafts of the speech included Senator Robert Taft’s quote from 1940. See, for example, Anderson’s initial draft of the speech from June 22, 1968 at Richard Nixon Presidential Library, Martin Anderson Collection, Box 3, Folder 4. Hereafter cited as Anderson-RNPL.
7 Nixon’s Democratic opponent, Hubert Humphrey, proposed a lottery selection method rather than a dismantling of the entire system.
new so that people know what my presidency is all about.” Martin Anderson, a thirty-year old professor of economics from Columbia University who had joined the Nixon campaign the year prior, had an immediate suggestion: “Well, how about the all-volunteer army that you’ve been speaking about?” Anderson reflected later that no one else in the room supported the idea, but Nixon responded before anyone could object, “Damn it, that’s good. We’re gonna do that.” So Anderson, who had been working on an all-volunteer force address since July, crafted the speech that became the first executive branch commitment to ending the draft.\footnote{\textsuperscript{9} For Anderson and Nixon’s comments during the strategy session, see Laurie Rice, “The Persuasion of Nixon,” \textit{The New Individualist}, \url{http://www.atlassociety.org/tni/persuasion-nixon} (accessed December 15, 2014) and Anderson, Oral History, AVA/MHI.}

The CBS address, however, raises just as many questions as it answers. How did Richard Nixon transition so quickly from being a staunch supporter of the draft to becoming one of the leading proponents of an All-Volunteer Force? How did a thirty-year old economic professor gain so much influence in the campaign, and eventually, the presidency? Why did the conservative, free market language appeal so much to the candidate, and more importantly, what issues did that same language efface? This chapter aims to answer those questions in a unique way by placing the Nixon administration’s newfound fondness for a volunteer army alongside the growing G.I. dissent movement. This chapter illustrates that the revolt affected Anderson’s, and thus

\footnote{\textsuperscript{10} Nixon was not the first politician to propose an end to the draft. The Wednesday Group, a group of congressional Republicans, had also called for the end of the draft in 1967. But as the leading candidate for the presidency, Nixon’s proclamation was a serious escalation.}
Nixon’s, preference for volunteers. Civilian unrest, particularly on America’s college campuses, surely played a role in the decision, but the important role of dissenting soldiers has received scant attention.

Even as it charts Nixon’s initial call to end the draft, both as a candidate and President, this chapter also continues to trace the growing GI dissent movement and senior military leaders’ reaction to the disintegration of the US fighting force. One month prior to Nixon’s CBS address, the US Army, rocked by growing soldier dissent, had already begun its own study on a volunteer force. The Army staff soon returned with the verdict that the Chief of Staff should “take a positive approach” and reflect a “positive attitude toward an All-Volunteer concept.”¹¹ Not to be outdone, the Department of Defense was commencing its own study of the All-Volunteer Force, a project that became known as Project Volunteer. As this chapter illustrates, three different groups – the White House, the Department of Defense, and the Army – were simultaneously pushing for a volunteer force, but their efforts were not always synchronized or congenial. And all the while, the driving force behind this mad rush to end the draft swelled as servicemen and women continued to protest the war in Vietnam, increasingly taking bolder steps to ensure their voices were heard.

¹¹ Career Force Study Briefing, 21 January 1969, Box 14, Folder 8, MHI/AVA. Westmoreland’s initial closehold study became known as the Career Force Study. The task fell to the Personnel Studies and Research Directorate of the Office of the Deputy Chief of Staff for Personnel. Lieutenant Colonel Jack Butler, a staff officer with a degree in research psychology, led the study, which was completed in a mere thirty days, and briefed to Westmoreland in January 1969. Also see Robert K. Griffith, The U.S. Army’s Transition to the All-Volunteer Force, 1968-1974 (Washington, DC: U.S. Army Center of Military History, 1997), 17-18.
In December of 1966, Martin Anderson attended a dinner party hosted by a Columbia University colleague in New York City. As fate would have it, one of the guests was a young lawyer who had recently joined Richard Nixon’s law firm on Wall Street. As the evening wore on, the political discussion around the table grew heated, and Anderson found himself dueling with Nixon’s newest lawyer. The young attorney grew exasperated, finally turning to Anderson and shouting, “with views like that, you should be working for Nixon. You think like he does.” Anderson did not think much of the comment until several days later he received a phone call from Leonard Garment, one of Nixon’s senior law partners, who extended a dinner invitation for later that week.12 Anderson was already one of the youngest professors to receive tenure at Columbia, and he had garnered a reputation in conservative circles for criticizing the reach of the federal government in his first book on urban renewal policy.13 But on the eve of Nixon’s decision to enter the presidential race, he now found himself in the candidate’s inner circle along with Patrick Buchanan, Ray Price, John Sears, and several others.

---

Shortly thereafter, in March of 1967, as this newly formed inner circle assembled in a tiny office at Nixon’s law firm, the issue of the draft came up. The group faced a quandary; during his time as Eisenhower’s Vice President, Nixon had faithfully supported the president’s stance on universal military service, and since 1960 had supported the draft. By the spring of 1967, however, it was clear that many Americans were becoming disenchanted with the war and the system that funneled soldiers into Southeast Asia. G.I.s inside the ranks were also rebelling against the way the US government raised its armies. The Fort Hood Three, all conscripts, had created a public stir with their opposition to the war, and just days prior to the March meeting in Nixon’s law firm, the Army had announced its plans to court martial draftee Howard Levy. The candidate was going to have to stake out a position on the draft, and soon. It was Anderson who spoke up at the meeting: “I have an idea. What if I could show you how we could end the draft and increase our military strength at the same time?”¹⁴ The meeting adjourned with Anderson promising to put together a position paper on the issue.

Several weeks later, Anderson delivered a seven-page document entitled, “Outline of the Factors Involved in Establishing an All-Volunteer Armed Force,” which would serve as the template for Anderson’s issue papers and Nixon’s stance on conscription throughout the campaign. Much of the language that would that would be

so prominent in the October 1968 radio address was already in place. Taft’s quote on the “principles of individual liberty” headlined the paper, and Anderson began his argument by claiming that the draft constituted “two years of involuntary servitude to the State” and was “inimicable to the basic principles of freedom that are the moral foundations of our Republic.”\textsuperscript{15} Anderson outlined the traditional objections to volunteers – the lack of flexibility in cases of national emergency, cost concerns, that African Americans would dominate the ranks – and succinctly rebutted each of them. Anderson remembers that Nixon read the document and found it “very interesting.”\textsuperscript{16}

By July of 1967, Anderson had expanded his outline to a twenty-seven-page paper that clearly staked out a position on transitioning to “a modern, highly trained armed force of competent professionals, staffed completely by volunteers.” Step by step, Anderson outlined the effect of volunteers on national security, the cost of recruiting those volunteers, and the possible negative ramifications of ending the draft. The young professor closed with a dramatic flair: “Because it is moral and fair...we should establish a volunteer armed force that will offer the young people of our country the opportunity to participate in her defense with dignity, with honor, and as free men.”\textsuperscript{17} An impatient

\textsuperscript{15} Martin Anderson, “An Outline of the Factors Involved in Establishing an All-Volunteer Armed Force,” Memorandum to Richard M. Nixon, New York, April 1, 1967. Box 2, All-Volunteer Armed Force Commission: Notes and Papers, Folder 20 of 22, Anderson-RNPL. In later years, Anderson claimed that this initial outline was 17 pages, but the initial draft in his papers indicates that it was only seven pages.


Anderson called Pat Buchanan, who assured him that the “boss” would be back the next week and that he would make sure he saw the position paper. Thomas Evans, another lawyer in the firm who had been largely been responsible for convincing Nixon to run in the first place, penned a memo to Nixon in August stating that he had reviewed Anderson’s “excellent” study and recommended that “steps be taken immediately to abolish the draft and establish a voluntary army.” Five days later, Alan Greenspan called Anderson to inform him that the campaign had put a “30-man task force” on his paper and that they were treating it as “a major question.” A mere six months after an innocuous dinner party, Martin Anderson was having a major impact on policy in the inner campaign circles.

By Anderson’s own admission, however, his argument was hardly original, and was in fact, largely based on an earlier paper by Dr. Milton Friedman. Friedman joined the University of Chicago faculty in 1946 and began a career that would place him as
one of the most influential economists of the twentieth century. Published in 1962, his *Capitalism and Freedom* became one of the most influential books of the 1960s, bringing the language of free markets to a broad, popular audience. In a chapter on the role of government in free society, Friedman outlined fourteen activities, including rent control, price supports, and military conscription, “currently undertaken by the government in the US, [that] cannot, as far as I can see, validly be justified” by the espoused American values of freedom and liberty. By the mid 1960s, Friedman had become the leading spokesman of a group of economists who spoke out against the draft. In December of 1966, around the same time Anderson was attending his fortuitous dinner party in New York, several leading economists and sociologists gathered at the University of Chicago for a conference on alternatives to conscription.

Milton Friedman’s contribution to the conference, a paper entitled “Why Not a Voluntary Army?,” had a monumental impact on the draft debate. Friedman argued that the draft was “inconsistent with a free society” and unnecessarily restricted “the freedom of individuals to serve or not to serve.” On the issue of costs, a long-standing concern over a volunteer force, Friedman, along with economist Walter Oi, introduced

---

22 Milton Friedman, *Capitalism and Freedom* (Chicago, IL: The University of Chicago Press, 1962), 35. On conscription, Friedman argued, “preset arrangements are inequitable and arbitrary, seriously interfere with the freedom of young men to shape their own lives, and probably are even more costly than the market alternative.”

the concept of an “implicit tax” or “tax in kind.” Friedman argued that an overlooked cost in the draft debate was the difference between the extremely low pay of a conscripted soldier and that individual’s earning potential had they not been drafted. When that implicit cost was “added to the explicit taxes imposed on the rest of us,” the real cost of the armed forces was more transparent. In May of 1967, Friedman gained a national audience when he published an expanded version of his conference paper in the *New York Times*, arguing that the draft was a “weapon…to discourage freedom of speech, assembly, and protest” as young men cowered in fear over the arbitrariness of their local draft board. Writing in 1967, however, Friedman may not have sensed what the burgeoning movement in the ranks would eventually become; conscripted soldiers had no qualms about expressing their right to free speech and protest in the Army.

Both Friedman and Anderson insisted on couching their arguments in the language of free markets, hidden taxes, and the concept of liberty, which allowed them to shy away from the polarizing issue of the war in Vietnam. And of particular interest to Nixon, the argument provided common ground for conservatives and liberals. As historian Beth Bailey argues, it was an “ideologically conservative argument” that easily

24 Walter Oi, a University of Washington economist, was a consultant for the Office of the Assistant Secretary of Defense from June, 1964 to July, 1965 for the Pentagon’s Military Manpower Study, which the Johnson Administration demanded in 1964. This experience, coupled with his paper at the December 1966 conference, made Oi the leading expert on the costs of moving to volunteers. See Walter Oi, “The Costs and Implications of an All-Volunteer Force,” in *The Draft*, ed. Tax, 221-251.
“completed a political circle to the left.”27 Even conservatives hawks were much more
comfortable viewing the draft as an infringement on personal liberty than as a
referendum on the US involvement in Vietnam. And for anti-authoritarian liberals,
already distrustful of the state’s power, the personal freedom argument was equally
appealing. Friedman and Anderson were de-politicizing an amazingly contentious issue
with language that resonated with both the right and left. There is little wonder how
such an argument resonated with a career politician seeking the presidency.

In October of 1967, as Nixon was preparing to leave on a campaign trip,
Anderson passed him an updated copy of his volunteer army essay and a copy of Milton
Friedman’s article.28 Less than a month later, Anderson, Nixon, and Robert Semple, a
young New York Times reporter, were returning to New York from Washington on the
Eastern Airline shuttle. Shortly after takeoff, Anderson gave up his seat next to Nixon so
that Semple could complete a pre-arranged interview. At the conclusion of the
interview, the reporter asked the candidate, “What you would you do about the military
draft?” Until this point, in public at least, Nixon had remained non-committal on the
issue; he began to give Semple his standard, ambiguous answer. Suddenly, Nixon
stopped in mid-sentence and firmly replied, “No—I’ll tell you what we’re going to do. I
think we should eliminate the draft and move to an all-volunteer force.” Somewhere

27 Beth Bailey, America’s Army: Making the All-Volunteer Force (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press,
2009), 23.
28 Martin Anderson, Memorandum to Richard Nixon, October 14, 1967 in Box 3, Folder 4, Anderson-RNPL.
over the eastern seaboard, as Semple frantically scribbled notes, Anderson could only sit back in disbelief as Richard Nixon detailed a position straight from the essays he had labored over. Years later, Anderson reflected with pride, “In the beginning it was what I wrote that started it.”

Even as they relied on the language of free markets and personal liberty, both Friedman and Anderson were keenly aware of the rising dissent in the ranks and its effect on the armed forces. Throughout his crusade to end the draft, Friedman continually placed prime importance on conscription’s impact on military effectiveness. In his paper from the December 1966 conference, the economist argued that “reluctant conscripts anxious only to serve out their term” were doing great damage to the nation’s military. In his lengthy article in the New York Times Magazine, Friedman highlighted that a voluntary force, first and foremost, would be more effective, and that an army “manned by people who had chosen a military career,” rather than reluctant and disruptive conscripts, would surely perform at a higher level. In a thinly disguised nod to dissenting soldiers, Friedman proposed that a volunteer army would “restore a proper sense of pride, of respect for the important, dangerous, and difficult task that the armed forces perform.” It is important to remember that as Friedman was preparing his initial essay on the volunteer army, the Fort Hood Three were on trial and in the

30 Friedman, “Why Not a Volunteer Army,” 201.
news, and shortly after the December conference, the Howard Levy affair at Fort Jackson began in earnest. Even for an economist initially concerned only with the role of government in the free market, it was impossible to ignore the turmoil inside the ranks. Friedman consistently placed the draft’s impact on military effectiveness ahead of claims about personal liberty and the role of the federal government.

Martin Anderson, who had carved out his influential niche in the Nixon campaign by parroting Friedman, went even further in highlighting the dangers of soldier dissent, primarily based on his own experience in the ranks. Anderson was a graduate of the ROTC program at Dartmouth in the late 1950s and served two years as a Second Lieutenant in the Army Security Agency. The experience taught the young college graduate that “people volunteering and making a career of military service were better soldiers because they were doing what they wanted to do and not being forced to do it.” As far back as April 1967, Anderson’s work reveals an economist equally concerned, if not more so, with unruly soldiers as with the free market and personal liberty. In his first outline of the “Factors Involved in Establishing an All-Volunteer Armed Force,” Anderson was adamant that a “motivated team of professionals” would “strengthen the military security of the US.” The problem with conscripts, he opined, was that “drafted men resent being conscripted, they often do just enough to ‘get by,’”

and the impact of their resentment, often manifested by dissent, was a “threat to the safety of career soldiers.”

As Anderson was frantically crafting his papers on the draft for Richard Nixon during the summer of 1967, the first issue of The Bond was popping up on military installations, and the army was convicting Andy Stapp for refusing to open his footlocker and Howard Levy for refusing to train Green Berets. Just days before Anderson turned in his final draft of his study, Privates William Harvey and George Daniels gathered a group of fellow black Marines at Camp Pendleton to question why African Americans should fight and possibly die in Vietnam. Up until the final draft of the speech, Anderson was still including the major question of “Then why do we continue to use reluctant conscripts?”

Leading up to the national CBS address, Anderson and the campaign staff had composed an accompanying newspaper article under Nixon’s name entitled “Toward a Volunteer Army,” which was never published. In language that the general public never saw, Anderson was blunt: “Our reliance on the draft has had a disastrous impact on the military effectiveness of our armed forces. We

34 Martin Anderson’s Handwritten Draft of “An Analysis of the Factors Involved in Moving to an All-Volunteer Armed Force,” Box 3, Folder 2, Anderson-RNPL.
now have a significant number of men...who don’t want to be there, who grudgingly
learn just enough to ‘get by,’” and who leave as soon as possible.”35

Almost four months prior to the national radio address, Anderson and other
campaign writers were highlighting volunteers as the primary path for “increased
national security for the country.”36 A late August draft of the speech declared, “The
soldier of the future must be a professional.”37 The campaign’s Key Issues Committee
submitted a draft to Anderson at the end of September that claimed, “in terms of morale,
efficiency, and effectiveness, a volunteer army should be a vast improvement over what
we have now,” particularly with its “higher percentage of skilled, motivated men.”38

These various drafts offer a rare insight to the campaign staff’s concerns over the
burgeoning turmoil in the ranks. In an interview with historian Robert Griffith,
Anderson admitted that dissenting soldiers were having a major impact on policy:

A feeling shared by a lot of people for and against the AVF was that
continuing the status quo with the draft would damage national security.
In terms of maintaining national security it was essential to restore the
prestige and morale of the Armed Forces. This wasn’t that clearly stated
at the time. One of the arguments that was made frequently was that

Files, Staff Member and Office Files, Martin Anderson, Box 14, Military Draft – Miscellaneous, 1968.
Collection hereafter cited as Anderson-WHCF.
36 Draft, Richard Nixon, “The All-Volunteer Armed Force,” address on CBS radio network, no date, Box 1,
Folder 5. Anderson-RNPL.
37 Draft, Richard Nixon, “The All-Volunteer Armed Force,” address on CBS radio network, August 28, 1968,
Box 3, Folder 7, Anderson-RNPL.
38 Draft, Richard Nixon, “The All-Volunteer Armed Force,” address on CBS radio network, September 26,
1968, Box 3, Folder 6, Anderson-RNPL.
forcing people to serve who didn’t want to undermined the esprit and discipline of the Services.\textsuperscript{39}

By the time Richard Nixon actually delivered the speech in October of 1968, however, senior campaign staffers had buffed out most of the references to unruly soldiers.

The question is why? Why did these explicit references to soldier dissent fail to make it into the final draft of Anderson’s issue paper and Nixon’s speech? And why have historians so consistently treated Nixon’s turn to volunteers as a crafty political move to appease the youth of America and their parents? The reason was fairly simple and would remain consistent throughout the G.I. movement. Just like the US Army, campaign insiders and Nixon himself had no desire to publicly reveal just how great an impact the soldier movement was having on policy. There was fear in senior political and military circles that an acknowledgment of the movement would only spur it to greater heights.

Since World War I, conscription had been the preferred method for raising American armies. During this time nearly 17 million Americans were thrust into military service against their will while millions more were coerced into volunteering.\textsuperscript{40} It was

\begin{itemize}
  \item Griffith’s question is equally important: “In your paper you argue for an AVF largely from an economic position. Yesterday you told me that there was a feeling that the draft was detrimental to national security. How did that reasoning go?” Anderson, Oral History, AVA/MHI.
  \item During the Civil War, conscription was used as a last resort with both the Union and Confederacy considering conscripts unpatriotic and untrustworthy on the battlefield. The Union Army only drafted eight percent of its force while the Confederacy drafted somewhere between 10 and 21 percent. Jennifer D. Keene, \textit{Doughboys, The Great War, and the Remaking of America} (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2001). The number of draftees stretching from World War I through Vietnam break down as follows: World War I (3 million), World War II (10 million), Korea (1.5 million), Vietnam (2.2 million). George Q. Flynn, \textit{The
\end{itemize}
only now, as those conscripts grew unruly and refused to quietly acquiesce to a war they no longer believed in, that volunteers were held up as the key to improved national security. During America’s previous wars with Germany and Japan, no group of economists or candidate for the presidency was lamenting the poor professionalism or performance of draftees. During the hot summer of 1968, however, as Anderson and the campaign staff passed around draft after draft of the speech, the G.I. coffeehouse movement was exploding, the Fort Hood drug exposé appeared on the front page of the Washington Post, and Andy Stapp’s union was making national news in Esquire. And as the presidential election neared, they could expect it to get much worse. Martin Anderson, the campaign staff, and eventually Richard Nixon himself soon realized that the only permanent solution to the problem was a transition to motivated volunteers.

In those weeks leading up to Nixon’s national address on the draft, G.I.s were finding more public ways to express their discontent with the war. The spectacle of protest was becoming just as important as the actual defiance. Taking a cue from the nine G.I.s who had barricaded themselves in a San Francisco church in July, servicemen continued to turn to churches and sympathetic clergy, which put the US Army and federal agents in the uncomfortable position of stepping over worshippers to seize those

who had fled their military posts. In October, over forty federal agents and Boston police fought their way through several hundred protestors inside Boston University’s Marsh chapel to apprehend Private Raymond Kroll. The young soldier had fled Fort Benning in July, just after the nine servicemen took their stand in the San Francisco church. Kroll refused to walk out of the church, and the image of the disheveled and emaciated 18-year old soldier being carried out by several federal agents was shocking to many Americans.41 Later that month, six hundred students at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology protected Private Jack O’Connor inside a campus chapel. O’Connor had fled Fort Bragg, North Carolina, in September and was on the run until November when military police seized him from the crowd in the early morning hours. Between October 1968 and March 1969, there were seven high-profile cases of military police and federal agents capturing active soldiers inside America’s churches.42

As with any social movement, actions in far-flung areas fueled collective protest elsewhere. Just as four black students in Greensboro, North Carolina, had galvanized

41 Another service-member, a Marine, entered the chapel with Kroll, but quickly surrendered to military officials, claiming he had been “used by antiwar groups for their gains.” Similarly, another Marine entered the Harvard Divinity School at the same time only to quickly end his standoff because he had been “duped.” The Resistance, an antiwar group involved in the Boston chapel movement, argued that both of these Marines were “military plants.” See “Soldier Arrested at Boston U,” The Washington Post, October 7, 1968, A3; “GI Taken from Boston Chapel ‘Sanctuary,’” The Baltimore Sun, October 7, 1968; “Students Guard Chapel Sanctuary,” Atlanta Constitution, October 6, 1968, 20B.
42 The practice of barging into religious buildings drew so much negative attention that the Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense demanded the Army provide details on each incident. Memorandum, Deputy Assistant Secretary of the Army, Manpower and Reserve Affairs, to Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense, Military Personnel Policy, May 15, 1969, subj: Apprehension of Military Absentees Who Take Refuge in Churches or Universities. Folder 152, Spector-CMH.
the sit-in movement almost a decade prior, the audacity of the church protests encouraged other military personnel to take similar stands. Such was the case in San Francisco. Military personnel in the area planned the October 12th “G.I.s and Vets’ March for Peace” as the most public spectacle to date, but the demonstration was exceptional for another reason as well. For the first time in the soldier movement, a female military member, a young Navy nurse, played a leading and drastically public role. Susan Schnall had lost her father during World War II, and her mother raised her in a home shrouded in resentment over the tragic cost of bloody wars. Schnall joined the Navy to “undo the damage the United States was doing abroad.” As a nurse, she hoped her work could center on healing and comfort, not death and brutality, but she soon realized that her military service was simply “promoting the war machine.”

Schnall was based at Oak Knoll Naval Hospital in Oakland, California, and once the word spread about the upcoming rally, she began attending organizational meetings and hanging up posters and leaflets at the hospital. Her frustration over hospital officials immediately pulling down her work led to perhaps the most sensational moment in an already sensationalized movement. Schnall, remembering the B-52 bombers dropping leaflets on the North Vietnamese encouraging them to defect, thought, “if the United States can do that in Vietnam, then why can’t I do it here?” So two days before the

\[\text{References:}\]

Saturday rally, Schnall recruited a friend, who also happened to be a pilot, to help her pull off one of the most bizarre bombing runs in American military history. Loading up the small plane with over 20,000 leaflets, Schnall and her small crew of three climbed to two thousand feet over the San Francisco area, and over the course of several hours, “bombed” the USS Enterprise, the Oak Knoll hospital, the Presidio Army Headquarters, Treasure Island Naval Base, and Yerba Buena Island Naval and Coast Guard stations. The leaflets not only announced the demonstration but also carefully spelled out service members’ rights should they choose to participate. As Schnall declared, “we wanted them to know they had a right to participate and no one could stop them.”

Her efforts were successful; somewhere between 200 and 500 active military members led 7,000 protestors from the east edge of the Golden Gate Park to the mall in front of city hall, the largest rally to date planned and led by active military personnel. Two participants, an Air Force enlisted man, Michael Locks, and Lieutenant Schnall herself, challenged a Secretary of Defense mandate that forbade military members from wearing their uniforms during antiwar demonstrations. At a rally following the march, clad in his Air Force blue uniform, Locks shouted, “I can think of no greater cause to wear my uniform for than the cause of peace.” Schnall argued that if General Westmoreland could wear his uniform in support of the war, she had just as much right

---

to wear her uniform while opposing the war.46 The young Lieutenant later revealed that she knew one of the microphones on the dais belonged to the Department of the Navy; the brass wanted to ensure it had the best possible evidence for her court martial.47

The march, which snaked through the streets of San Francisco, succeeded despite the military’s best efforts to squash it. For the first time during the movement, senior military leadership’s angst over soldier dissent was starting to become public. Mark Behrend and Dean Hardwick, two antiwar military members who also happened to be working in the Air Force Communications Center at the Pentagon, intercepted a message from General Howell Estes, head of the Air Force’s Military Airlift Command, to General John McConnell, the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff and the highest ranking member of the US military. The message was nothing less than tangible, four-star general to four-star general proof that senior officers were running scared. Estes pleaded with McConnell: “This demonstration should be quashed if possible because of…the highly undesirable impact on military discipline if armed forces personnel are permitted to demonstrate in uniform against national defense policies with impunity.”

46 See Vietnam GI, January 1969; Short, A Matter of Conscience, 12; and Moser, The New Winter Soldiers, 82-83. 47 The Navy did indeed court martial Lieutenant Schnall, and as Schnall predicted, military prosecutors introduced the audiotapes from her speech as evidence. In early February 1969, a general court-martial found her guilty of failure to obey a lawful general order (for wearing the uniform) and conduct unbecoming an officer (the publicized leaflet bombing). She received six months at hard labor for her transgressions. Navy policy, however, dictated that women sentenced for less than a year would not be confined. As a result, Schnall was allowed to return to her duties until her conviction was upheld. The sentence was eventually upheld, and she was dismissed from the Navy. See “Navy Nurse Convicted for Antiwar Activities,” Los Angeles Times, February 2, 1969, B5 and “Navy Nurse Gets 6-Month Sentence for War Protests,” New York Times, February 4, 1969.
Estes went on to suggest that the Department of Defense simply ban the rally and deal with the legal and political fallout later; anything would be better than the sight of active soldiers and sailors in the streets. Behrend and Hardwick leaked a copy to several underground newspapers and the general’s message soon went viral, causing a major embarrassment to the brass who had thus far steadfastly refused to publicly acknowledge the impact of the movement.48

On the day of the actual march, local military leaders did their best to sabotage the rally. Commanders at a local Army base held inspection formations every two hours while other military installations in the area held training exercises that Saturday, an unprecedented act since it was also Columbus Day.49 Those that did make it to the rally were steadily harassed. Air Force Office of Strategic Intelligence agents prowled the streets, demanding that every young man with short hair produce an ID and pass. Along the route of the protest, military undercover agents steadily took pictures of the crowds that trooped by. The Army even sent Sergeant Steven Black to film the entire rally for use in any subsequent court martials.50 But despite the brass’s ham-handed efforts, and the rainy weather that kept some protestors away, the rally illustrated that antiwar military members had staying power.

48 For Mark Behrend’s reflections on the message intercept and its content, see http://the1968exhibit.org/reflections/pentagon-paper (accessed January 3, 1968). Also see Task Force 2 (October 1968), 3, the San Francisco area’s underground GI newspaper, in which the message was reprinted
49 Waterhouse and Wizard, Turning the Guns Around, 73.
Just two days later, all the swirling antiwar activity inside the ranks in the San Francisco area would coalesce at the Army’s Presidio stockade, forcing a denouement of sorts. Stories of the movement had spread from soldier to soldier in an underground grapevine that gave soldiers solace that they were not alone in their battle against the war and the brass. Already inside the prison as soldiers and sailors marched through the streets on that Saturday, Keith Mather was one of the nine servicemen arrested inside the San Francisco church back in July. Inside the prison walls, news of the soldier-led protest began to trickle in. Richard Gentile, who was stationed at the Presidio and had been denied a weekend pass, soon found himself in the stockade after leadership caught him sneaking back on post following the rally. Richard Rowland, a twenty-one year old son of an Air Force colonel, had been AWOL for several months and decided to publicly turn himself in at the Presidio following the demonstration.

The conditions inside the Army prison were beyond inhumane. Almost 150 prisoners crammed into a reconverted building that was designed to hold 60 men. Without enough beds, men were forced to sleep on tables or the floor. Food was always short, and the toilets, unable to handle the overcrowding, backed up, spreading excrement into the shower stalls. Between June and October, there had been over two-dozen suicide attempts as prisoners hung themselves, cut their wrists, and even drank

---

lye to escape the wretchedness. In this stinking, crowded space, Rowland and Gentile sought out Mather, and throughout that Saturday night, the three men spread news of the growing movement inside the ranks. Most of the men were eager to listen; they had seen one of the Presidio guards murder a fellow prisoner the day prior.

Rusty Bunch was only nineteen years old when he died at the Presidio, a grapefruit sized hole in his back and chest from double-ought buckshot. By the time he was gunned down after begging a guard to shoot him if he tried to escape (the guard, a Vietnam vet, had ruefully responded, “try it and see”), Bunch was going through a nervous breakdown. After going AWOL, he eventually made his way to his parents’ home in Ohio. His parents were shocked by his mental state as Bunch rambled on about how he had died and been reincarnated. Unsure of how to handle his condition, his mother called the Army for help. Although officials promised psychiatric care to convince his parents to turn him over, the Army simply locked him in the stockade. There, his condition worsened. He ran into walls, screamed throughout the night, spoke in broken and indecipherable gibberish, and asked anyone who would listen the easiest way to commit suicide. His fellow prisoners knew that the young soldier needed help, but they could only watch helplessly as the stockade guards withheld his medication for

---


their own entertainment. When Bunch calmly walked away from an outside work detail that Friday morning, the guard, rather than firing a warning shot at the ground behind the prisoner as he had been trained, took square aim in the center of his back. Private Bunch was dead, soldiers were leading a march through the streets the next day, and as Monday morning dawned, the prisoners of the Presidio were unified enough to finally act.

The Presidio events that morning of the 14th indicate that soldiers were following cues and practices from other struggles, specifically the labor and the civil rights movements. The prisoners’ plan called for a sit-down strike at 0730 following breakfast formation, the withholding of their labor and time being their only recourse. During roll call, Mather headed for a grassy area of the prison yard, followed by twenty-six other prisoners. Sergeant Woodring, a despised guard, chased alongside the group, screaming in each prisoner’s face that he would be tried for mutiny if he didn’t return to formation. In a scene eerily reminiscent of Selma and Birmingham, the soldiers sang “We Shall Overcome” as they were surrounded by military police carrying fire hoses, rifles, and gas masks.54 Captain Robert Lamont, the stockade commander, was ill equipped to handle the uprising. Rather than listening to the men’s complaints and defusing the situation, he immediately began reading the prisoners, who would soon become known as the Presidio 27, Article 94 of the Uniform Code of Military Justice, the

54 Ibid, 74.
mutiny act. Many of the men eventually had to be carried back to their cells. Three days later, Richard Nixon addressed the nation, calling for a volunteer force that “in terms of morale, efficiency, and effectiveness…would assuredly be a better armed force.”

A full month prior to Nixon’s speech, the US Army had already begun its close hold study on ending the draft, but its officers were not the only ones anxious to rid the ranks of unruly conscripts. In early October, almost two weeks before Nixon pledged to end the draft, the Secretary of Defense initiated his own study on a volunteer armed force. Alfred Fitt, the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Manpower and Reserve Affairs, notified his counterparts in the military services via memorandum that, based on “the inherent difficulties of selecting men for service involuntarily,” the Department of Defense (DoD) was initiating a comprehensive study effort to “maximize our future voluntary recruitment capability and minimize direct or indirect reliance on the draft.”

A little over a month later, Fitt sent a nine-page study plan to his counterparts in the military departments detailing the program, which by now had become known as

56 Memo, Alfred B. Fitt, Assistant Secretary of Defense for Manpower and Reserve Affairs, to Assistant Secretaries of the Military Departments, October 4, 1968, sub: Manpower Procurement Planning Study. Document G0247 in Bernard Rostker, I Want You! The Evolution of the All-Volunteer Force (Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation, 2006). Rostker’s work, the result of a RAND Corporation study, includes an electronic version with a plethora of primary sources. Two weeks later, Fitt also sent Mendel Rivers, Chairman of the House Armed Services Committee, a letter to update the Congressman on the Department’s “comprehensive planning study to systematically re-examine all possible ways to maximize the use number of volunteers.” Letter, Alfred B. Fitt, Assistant Secretary of Defense for Manpower and Reserve Affairs, to L. Mendel Rivers, Chairman, Committee on Armed Services, October 17, 1968. Document G0248 in Rostker’s I Want You.
Project Volunteer. The DoD plan clearly revealed the impact of dissenting soldiers. Project Volunteer tasked each service to “undertake a comprehensive review” of its practices and procedures that might “improve morale and job satisfaction,” particularly disciplinary policies. With Susan Schnall’s bombing run and the Presidio rebellion dominating the nation’s headlines, the study also dictated an “information program designed to enhance the overall image of the Military Services.” 57 Contrary to the widely held opinion that the services, particularly the Army, opposed ending the draft, Dr. Harold Wool, the man tasked with shepherding the study through the Pentagon bureaucracy, reported back to Fitt in January that not only were the military services on board with the study, but they were clamoring to expand it. 58

If the Office of the Secretary of Defense was worried about the military’s public image, then the Army was obsessed with the issue. The service had not only become the face of the draft and opposition to it, but Howard Levy, Andy Stapp, the Fort Hood 3, the Fort Hood 43, and now the Presidio 27 were all army soldiers. In the minds of many, the dissent issue was an army issue. In October, just as the Department of Defense was introducing Project Volunteer, the Army’s Deputy Chief of Staff for Personnel instructed the commanding general of the Army’s Recruiting Command to mount a publicity plan that portrayed the army as “mission oriented, dedicated, dignified, and disciplined.” By

57 Study Plan for “Project Volunteer”, 15 Nov 68. AVA-CMH.
avoiding the negative trends inside the ranks, particularly the dissent movement, and focusing on its strengths, the Army could “counteract elements that were doing all possible to ridicule the army and undermine its foundation.” Interestingly, this new initiative was an update to a March 1968 memorandum, which had included the initial objectives for the Army’s publicity program. A revision surely made sense; a plan crafted before the summer of Stapp’s union, Fort Hood’s drug problem, and the coffeehouse movement, not to mention the recent chaos in San Francisco, was in urgent need of updating.59

In November, after almost six months as Chief of Staff, General Westmoreland had outlined his vision for the Army and planned to present the program at an upcoming commanders conference. Although the vision was straightforward in most ways, concentrating on the Army’s missions and plans for modernization, for example, Westmoreland was also clearly concerned with the turmoil within the ranks. The general was clear that the organization desperately needed to improve the “dignity, pride, and motivation” of its soldiers. Officers and noncommissioned officers needed to encourage the “highest possible degree of professionalism.” As would be the case throughout the G.I. movement, coded words such motivation and professionalism were invariably a reference to the lack of these qualities in antiwar soldiers. Never wanting to draw overt

59 Memo, Deputy Chief of Staff for Personnel, to Commanding General, United States Army Recruiting Command, October 4, 1968, sub: Army’s Advertising and Publicity Program. AVA-CMH.
attention to dissent, the Army’s senior leaders relied on these codes instead. But the message was clear; dissenting soldiers were neither motivated nor professional. And as with everyone at the upper echelons of the Army, Westmoreland was concerned with the service’s public image. According to the general, an Army image that engendered “a high degree of public respect and appreciation for the Army’s vital contributions in securing the national objectives is essential.”

As Westmoreland crafted his vision for the Army, he knew that he would soon be serving a new Commander-in-Chief. On November 5th, Richard Nixon was elected the 37th President of the United States when he defeated Hubert Humphrey by less than a percentage point. During the election, Nixon had pledged, “new leadership will end the war and win the peace in the Pacific.” In precursor to his 1973 phrase, peace with honor, the candidate had promised Americans, “We shall have an honorable end to the war in Vietnam.” Antiwar soldiers wanted to make sure the President-elect kept his promises. On November 29th, sixty eight soldiers from Fort Jackson sent a petition to Nixon in which they declared their “fundamental opposition to the war in Vietnam.”

The soldiers had been model recruits throughout basic training, purposefully avoiding

---

60 Letter, William C. Westmoreland, US Army Chief of Staff, to each Commander operating under Chief of Staff, Army, and each senior officer serving in a Joint Command, November 29, 1968. Box 24, Folder 443, Westmoreland-NARA.
61 For example, see Robert B. Semple Jr., “Nixon Vows to End War with a ‘New Leadership,’” New York Times, March 6, 1968, 1.
any AWOLs or disciplinary status; they didn’t want to be cast as troublemakers when they took their stand against the war. Soldiers, even the newest inductees, were getting bolder and brasher.

By this point, the Secretary of Defense, Clark Clifford, had seen enough. The Presidio rebellion, Schnall’s bombing run, and the rally in San Francisco had been an embarrassment to senior military leaders, and now the lowest ranking of recruits were sending petitions to the next President of the United States. In early December, Clifford took the unprecedented step of demanding that General Westmoreland provide, in person, a weekly update on threats to Army discipline. For a Secretary of Defense to request a weekly face-to-face briefing with a four-star general, particularly on disciplinary issues, was extremely rare if not completely unprecedented. Despite their refusal to publicly acknowledge the turmoil in the ranks, it was a problem of great importance to senior military and political leaders.

During the second week of December, Westmoreland and his senior staff marched down to Clifford’s spacious office on the outer-ring of the Pentagon. From the outset, the four-star was blunt, admitting up front that the “very reliability of the Army is at stake.” The briefing stretched back to the summer of 1968 as the Army Chief of Staff recounted the coffeehouse movement, Fort Hood’s drug problem, and the forty-three African American soldiers who protested riot control duty in Chicago. In a rare admission, Westmoreland revealed that the Army had performed “clandestine
operations” to gather intelligence on the coffeehouses outside military installations.64 During the following week’s briefing, the army general updated the Secretary on the Presidio mutiny trials, revealing that civilian counsel for seventeen of the twenty-seven men had filed a petition for habeas corpus and injunctive relief with the Court of Military Appeals that named the Secretary of Defense himself as a respondent. The petition claimed that that overcrowding, unsanitary conditions, and terrorization by guards was “designed to break the resistance of Army ‘malcontents.’”65 Rather than denying the charges, Westmoreland briefed Clifford that Army lawyers and law enforcement agents were gathering the necessary information to reply to the petition. In a subsequent briefing, the Army even presented a graphic depicting underground newspapers seized at specific installations.66

Several days after President Nixon’s inauguration, Westmoreland briefed the new Secretary of Defense, Melvin Laird. It was the first meeting between the two men who played a vital role in the abolition of the draft over the next three years.

Westmoreland was determined to emphasize just how serious the problem inside the

---

64 Talking Paper, Presentation by the Chief of Staff Army to the Secretary of Defense at Weekly Monday Meeting, n.d. Folder 183, Spector-CMH. In the US military, talking papers are often used for briefings, similar to a script. Although the date is unclear, it is obvious by the opening salvo that this is the first such briefing: “I understand, Mr. Secretary, that you would like me each week to update you on the latest information we have concerning activities which might impact adversely on Army discipline.” The second such briefing took place on December 16, 1968.
65 Talking Paper, Presentation by the Chief of Staff Army to the Secretary of Defense, December 16, 1968. Historical Reference Collection 250, Opposition to the Vietnam War by Servicemen, US Army Center of Military History (CMH), Washington, DC. Hereafter cited as HRC 250-CMH.
66 Talking Paper, Presentation by the Chief of Staff Army to the Secretary of Defense, January 13, 1969. HRC 250-CMH.
ranks had become. Highlighting increased levels of AWOLs and desertions, drug abuse, and antiwar agitation within the Army, the Army Chief of Staff was clear: “The potential for undermining discipline is critical for the Army.” Westmoreland also introduced the Secretary to the standing Morale and Discipline Committee that he established the previous August. Over the previous six months, the committee had reached several conclusions, including the realization that “the potential for major problems exists and the subject requires continued surveillance.”

One week later, the senior Army leader briefed Laird on the number and location of underground newspapers, the increased attendance at the coffeehouses, and statistics from the US Army Recruiting Command that revealed the number of induction refusals had doubled in the past year. The inclusion of the induction refusal statistics offers an interesting insight to the Army’s increasing opposition to the draft. As Westmoreland explained, although the refusals were “representative of attitudes before beginning Army service, induction refusals represent one type of resistance to established authority.”

The new Secretary of Defense, only days into his new job, now realized the full extent of the chaos and

---

67 Talking Paper, Presentation by the Chief of Staff Army to the Secretary of Defense, January 27, 1969. HRC 250-CMH. Westmoreland began the briefing by explaining to Laird “this is my first report to you concerning activities which might impact adversely on Army morale and discipline.” As expected, the briefing was more in-depth than the previous briefing to Clifford, detailing the soldier movement from its earliest beginnings.

68 Talking Paper, Presentation by the Chief of Staff Army to the Secretary of Defense, February 3, 1969. Per the briefing, there were 174 induction refusals in the first quarter of Fiscal Year (FY) 1968 and 339 in the same period during FY 1969. Folder 271, Spector-CMH. From the archive, it is unclear whether this weekly briefing continued past early February. With the White House fast-tracking a commission on the All-Volunteer Force, and the subsequent increased workload for both men on the subject, Westmoreland and Laird may have decided to forego the standing meeting.
turmoil inside the ranks. A possible solution, however, seemed to be gaining momentum at the highest levels of government. Just prior to Westmoreland’s latest briefing, Laird had received a memorandum from the President on achieving an all-volunteer armed force.

Five days after taking the oath of office, President Nixon met with his National Security Council to discuss, among other issues, Selective Service reform and the All-Volunteer Force. Days later, Nixon signed a memorandum for his new Secretary of Defense, expressing his “firm conviction that we must establish an all-volunteer force after the expenditures for Viet Nam are substantially reduced, and that we must now to move in that direction.” The new President tasked his Secretary of Defense to “immediately” begin efforts to plan a special commission, which would develop a “detailed plan of action for ending the draft.” One thing was apparent from the President’s memo: he was in a hurry. Not only did he want action “now” and “immediately,” but the deadline for the commission’s findings and recommendations was May 1, 1969, just three months way.69 Though it is true, as Martin Anderson wrote to the President-elect in December, the draft was an issue that the Administration could leverage to “establish a rapport with the youth of the country,” there is little doubt that

---

69 Memorandum, Richard M. Nixon, President of the United States, to Melvin R. Laird, Secretary of Defense, January 29, 1969. AVA-CMH.
soldier dissent also played a pivotal role in the President’s haste. And the administration did not wish to waste time on a commission that studied the feasibility of an All-Volunteer Force; the group would spend its time on how to implement the President’s decision to move forward with volunteers.

Secretary Laird replied almost immediately. Even though he was in favor of a volunteer force, his response to the President was the first salvo in a long-standing misunderstanding between the Pentagon and the White House, which convinced Martin Anderson and others that the Department of Defense was either dragging its feet on the initiative or resorting to outright sabotage. Laird was not against a presidential commission, but he argued that such an organization should await the outcome of Project Volunteer’s findings, which according to Laird, would take approximately one year. It was Alfred Fitt who convinced Laird to lobby for Project Volunteer rather than the presidential commission. Writing to the Secretary the same day that the Pentagon received Nixon’s memorandum, Fitt argued that since “institutionally we prefer volunteers, for many reasons,” the Department of Defense should lead any study on

---

70 Martin Anderson, All-Volunteer Armed Force, January 3, 1969. Anderson-WHCF. Anderson’s piece was part of a larger briefing book for Nixon on campaign promises and recommendations on how to proceed. Anderson also urged the President to include the volunteer force in his inaugural, but Nixon declined to do so.

ending the draft. Fitt was also weary of the economists’ influence in the administration, warning the Secretary that those “charged with operating the Armed Forces and recruiting their personnel” should have an equal say.

Regardless of Laird’s intent, Martin Anderson was livid. He wrote to Arthur Burns, who was the chairman of Nixon’s program coordination committee, arguing that the Secretary had flatly “declined to comply with the President’s request.” To Anderson, the Secretary’s reply was mere stonewalling. As he opined to Burns, the “DoD is generally reluctant to move toward an all-volunteer force, and is proposing a ‘study program’ which would effectively delay matters for at least two more years.” President Nixon agreed, and a week after the first memorandum, wrote to Laird, informing the Secretary of Defense that the plan to end the draft “should be developed by an outside Commission which should, of course, draw heavily on the experts in your department.” Nixon encouraged the Pentagon to continue their efforts simultaneously and promised that the Defense Department would have a chance to review any of the commission’s recommendations. Laird got the hint that the President and his staff were in no mood

---

73 Memorandum, Alfred B. Fitt, Assistant Secretary of Defense for Manpower and Reserve Affairs, Melvin R. Laird, Secretary of Defense, 29 January 69. Fitt referred to Milton Friedman’s article in Newsweek as “silly” and “superficial.” Fitt’s main concern, however, was that the economists did “not stack the deck against a thoughtful, careful objective study of the problem.” Document G0260 in Rostker’s I Want You.
74 Memorandum, Martin Anderson, to Arthur Burns, February 3, 1969, subj: Secretary Laird’s Answer to President’s Directive in Regard to the All-Volunteer Force. Document A0002 in Rostker’s I Want You.
to dawdle on the issue, and responded the following day with his suggestions for members of the commission.\textsuperscript{76} Two months later, Nixon announced the creation of the Commission on an All-Volunteer Force, which soon became eponymous with its chairman, Thomas Gates, Eisenhower’s former Secretary of Defense.\textsuperscript{77}

The week prior to Nixon’s memo, General Westmoreland received his own briefing on the possibilities of a volunteer army, the final result of the study he had directed in September of 1968. The Army staff, tasked to “prepare, on a close-hold basis, a study on a cessation of the draft and transition to a volunteer army,” had spent the last several months examining the issues of quantity, quality, cost, and social implications of such a transition. The staff’s conclusions reflected the reality of soldier dissent and public antagonism towards the draft. Westmoreland’s advisors cautioned him, “An army stance against an all-volunteer concept would serve only to further dichotomize the issue and work against the army’s image.” More importantly, the staff pointed out, the Army was “the major recipient of inductees and bears the brunt of growing antagonism.” Ultimately, the final briefing suggested a “politically and socially

\textsuperscript{76} Memorandum, Melvin R. Laird, Secretary of Defense, to Richard M. Nixon, President of the United States, February 7, 1969. Document G0265 in Rostker’s \textit{I Want You}.  

\textsuperscript{77} White House Press Release, Statement By the President Announcing a Commission on an All-Volunteer Armed Force, March 27, 1969. Document G0266 in Rostker’s \textit{I Want You}.
acceptable stance,” which was a “positive approach” to the idea the idea of volunteers.78 The Army staff clearly favored a transition to volunteers from the outset.

Just days later, although it is not clear how, the Army received a bootleg copy of Nixon’s original January 29th memorandum to Laird on the presidential commission. Westmoreland’s immediate reaction was to expand the study his staff had just completed into what became known as Project Volunteer in Defense of the Nation (PROVIDE), which would serve as the Army’s voice and input for both DoD’s Project Volunteer and the President’s special commission. As before, the Army’s Chief of Staff declared that the subject be studied on “a close-hold basis” and that he “did not desire wide publicity on the fact that a study of this nature was being conducted by the Army.”79 Lieutenant General A.O. Connor, who was the Deputy Chief of Staff for Personnel at the time and responsible for directing the study, left no doubt as to the seriousness of the issue: “Because of the far-reaching implications of this study and the importance attached to this subject at the highest echelons, DCSPER Directorates will assign this project the highest priority.”80 The Army meant business; senior leaders assigned over twenty personnel to the study, and on March 17, Westmoreland issued a

78 Army Staff Briefing to General William Westmoreland, Close Hold Study on the Cessation of the Draft and Transition to an All-Volunteer Army, January 21, 1969. The All-Volunteer Army Collection, Box 14, Folder 8, US Army Military History Institute, Carlisle Barracks, Pennsylvania. Hereafter cited as AVA-MHI.
79 Memorandum for Record, Lieutenant Colonel Jack R. Butler, 3 February 1969, subj: Draft and the All-Volunteer Army. Background Material for Modern Volunteer Army Monographs, National Archives, Record Group 319, Box 14, Folder 41. Hereafter cited as MVA Background Material-NARA.
80 Memorandum, Lieutenant General A.O. Connor, Deputy Chief of Staff for Personnel, to various addresses, February 19, 1969, subj: Study: Project Volunteer in Defense of the Nation (PROVIDE). Box 14, Folder 41, MVA Background Material-NARA.
Chief of Staff Memorandum that formally appointed the PROVIDE Task Group.\(^{81}\) The Army was not dragging its feet on the all-volunteer force; it was leading the way.

Up to this point, the Army’s primary weapon against dissenting soldiers was the court-martial with an extreme, if not often absurd, prison sentence. Those days were now numbered, as the Army was about to face a major setback in its internal war against unruly G.I.s. By February 1969, the Presidio 27 “mutineers” were facing their court martial hearings. The Army had charged the men with mutiny, an offense punishable by death, which applied to any soldier who designed “to usurp or override military authority.” A young Army lawyer had recommended to senior military officials that such a charge was “an overreaction by the Army and a misapplication of the statute which could lead to a further miscarriage of justice,” but General Stanley Larsen, the Sixth Army Commander, who had the responsibility of meting out justice in the Presidio cases, ignored the advice.\(^{82}\) The first four men to face trial received between four and sixteen years’ imprisonment at hard labor, forfeiture of pay, and dishonorable

---

\(^{81}\) Chief of Staff Memorandum 69-113, Major General William A. Knowlton, Secretary of the General Staff, to Heads of Army Staff Agencies, March 17, 1969, subj: Project Volunteer in Defense of the Nation (PROVIDE). AVA-CMH. Per the memo, the study would be “a normal, unclassified staff action. However, study conclusions will be treated as CLOSE HOLD until reviewed by the Chief of Staff of the Army (CofSA) and approved for release.”

\(^{82}\) Philip Hager, “Is There Room for Protest? Army Facing Touchy Question at Presidio,” \textit{Los Angeles Times}, March 9, 1969, 1. There was suspicion that Larsen’s firm stance on the mutiny charge was an over-compensation for his failures in Vietnam. In 1966, as Westmoreland’s right hand man, Larsen had publicly advocated, in direct defiance of the State Department, for an expansion of the war into Cambodia Westmoreland quickly turned his back on his subordinate, and Larsen soon found himself back in the United States. How much of his personal shame was responsible for the first American mutiny charges in seventy-eight years remains to be seen. See also Gardner, \textit{The Unlawful Concert}, 7-8 and Nicosia, “The Presidio 27,” 77-78.
discharges. All this for leaving a formation, sitting in a circle, singing songs, and flashing the peace sign. Many Americans, and perhaps more importantly, senior political leaders were aghast at the extreme prison sentences.

Almost immediately, General Westmoreland and his Vice Chief of Staff, General Bruce Palmer, realized that they had a problem on their hands. During a February 21st phone call, Palmer reported back to Westmoreland after his trip out west to speak with General Larsen. Both generals lamented the way Larsen had handled the cases, agreeing that he should have acquiesced to lesser charges. Westmoreland, even though he could not legally force his subordinate commander to take action, hoped that Larsen “certainly wouldn’t sustain the severity of those high sentences.” More importantly, Palmer also acknowledged the horrible conditions inside the prison, telling his boss that a significant number of soldiers needed to be immediately transferred out of the Presidio, a stockade that was “completely unsatisfactory.” Palmer, of course, didn’t have the interests of the confined soldiers in mind; he told Westmoreland that sprucing up the stockade would save the Army “a lot of trouble later on” from a “hostile press.” The two highest ranking generals in the US Army realized that the strategy of court-martials and prison sentences had failed spectacularly. Palmer lamented to Westmoreland, “it’s not worth our while to waste time on them...[we] should try to get them out.”

---

83 Indicative of how serious the Army took the issue, the Secretary of the Army himself had sent Palmer to California to talk to Larsen. Record of Chief of Staff Fonecon, Subject: GEN Palmer’s Trip West, February 21, 1969, Box 24, Folder 443, Westmoreland-NARA.
already been done. The threat of prison had been an unsuccessful deterrent for dissenting soldiers, and now public opinion was also turning against the Army.

The trials were becoming macabre spectacles that drew the attention of Congress, the press, and many Americans. Private Louis Oszczeplinski, a twenty-one year old from New York, slit his wrists during a noon recess after receiving his sentence of sixteen years. The Army treated him at the military infirmary and promptly returned him to the courtroom. Another soldier, Private Edward Yost, had his medals, including the Purple Heart for being wounded in combat, ceremonially stripped from his uniform during a break in the legal proceedings. A chastened Army law officer was forced to return them. Military members, many of them veterans of the October 12 rally in San Francisco, including Susan Schnall, staged protests outside the courtrooms. One soldier argued, “They’re trying to crush dissent and terror is their method of coping with trouble.” Schnall, refusing to back down after her own court martial, told a reporter, “I really think it is important that the brass realize they can’t intimidate everybody.”

Yet through all of this, Army leaders on the scene remained oblivious to the shifting dynamics, failing to realize they were losing their battle against dissent. An army prosecutor claimed, “we live closer together than anyone in civilian life – except people in a ghetto perhaps – and that requires a certain rigidity of discipline. If you

don’t have it, you’re not going to have an army.” Another Army lawyer argued that senior leaders were just considering “the interests of the government and the Army. It is the attack on the system that counts.” At the same time, senior leaders were also revealing their fear over the turmoil in the ranks. As a New York Times reporter argued, the military was “petrified” of dissent, the only sensible conclusion to be drawn from the brass’s reaction to a fairly mild protest. Reporters confirmed that the Secretary of the Army was worried that the entire military legal system could be “undermined by dissent.”

The Army was losing control. In mid March, Senators Alan Cranston (D-California) and Charles Goodell (R-New York) called for a Senate investigation of the nation’s military prisons after learning of the “deplorable” conditions at the Presidio. In a joint statement, the two senators argued that the stories emanating from the Presidio, including an Army-confirmed fifty-two suicides in the past year, were “not helping military morale, already a problem among some of our draftees.” Less than a week later, Representative Robert Leggett (D-California), a member of the Armed Services Committee, and three other Congressmen attacked senior leaders for prosecuting a case that “in 178 years of our existence as a nation…only one or two such cases [had been]

---

86 Hager, “Is There Room for Protest?”
prosecuted by the Army."90 The impact was almost immediate. First, General Larsen reduced the sentence of the first conviction from fifteen years to seven, and when that was not sufficient to head off criticism, the Army’s Judge Advocate General reduced it further to two years. Soon thereafter, the Secretary of the Army reduced the other sentences to two years, launched an investigation of the army’s prisons, and established the Special Civilian Committee for the Study of the U.S. Army Confinement System.91 By June, the remaining defendants were sentenced to somewhere between three and fifteen months. The Army’s quiver was now nearly empty.

Perhaps sensing that the Army was on the ropes, a group of soldiers at Fort Jackson, South Carolina, took a brash stance against the war and military leadership. Fort Jackson, where Howard Levy faced trial for refusing to train Green Berets and Fred Gardner opened the first G.I. coffeehouse, had long been a hotbed of soldier dissent, but Private Joe Miles and other soldiers would test military commanders in novel ways. Miles was a handsome, young African American who had been an antiwar activist in Washington D.C. and a member of the Young Socialist Alliance. When he received his induction letter, Miles wrote to Army authorities explaining his antiwar stance and vowing to continue exercising his rights as a citizen, particularly free speech, inside the ranks. The Army drafted him anyway, a decision they would soon come to regret.

90 Leggett acknowledged that he had spoken to Resor and Westmoreland and that both had “expressed concern about the case.” Thomas J. Foley, “Soldier’s Sentence for Mutiny Cut from Seven to Two Years,” Los Angeles Times, March 19, 1969, 1.
When Miles arrived at Fort Jackson in January 1969, the level of antiwar sentiment in the barracks surprised him. He found guys “bitching and moaning all over. Not just about small things like shining boots, but ‘fuck the army,’ ‘fuck the war,’ ‘fuck the draft,’ this type of thing.” There was also a rising black consciousness on post, and Miles began gathering a large crowd of black and Puerto Rican soldiers around his bunk to play Malcolm X tapes. There was a duality at play during those impromptu assemblies, young soldiers who identified as both African American and G.I. The two entities meant different things at different times to each man, but in the musty Fort Jackson barracks, the combination suggested to many that it was time to organize. And thus a new organization, G.I.s United Against the War in Vietnam, was launched.

The core group decided to welcome white soldiers into the fold, on the grounds that both groups were victims of the same thing – the draft. In their statement of aims, the men claimed, “many of us were drafted into the Army against our will...we are forced to fight and die in a war we did not create and in which we do not believe.”

Refusing to cower in the barracks, they circulated a petition demanding that the Army allow the group to meet openly on post to discuss the war and the treatment of black soldiers. After receiving over three hundred signatures, Privates Steve Dash and Joe Cole personally delivered the petition to General James Hollingsworth, a 51-year old

---

*Fred Halstead, *GIs Speak Out Against the War: The Case of the Fort Jackson 8 (New York: Pathfinder Press, 1970), 79.

Vietnam veteran and post commander, who summarily rejected it. The general claimed
that the army did not recognize collective bargaining. Shortly thereafter, on March 20,
over one hundred soldiers participated in a spontaneous antiwar meeting outside
barracks B-14-4.94 A senior post official who arrived on scene to disperse the crowd was
roundly heckled and cursed. Before the tension turned to violence, the trainees
dispersed to their barracks.

The following day, the Army arrested nine members of G.I.s United for the
previous night’s disturbance, charging the men with breach of peace, inciting a riot, and
disrespect for an officer. In an embarrassing moment for the brass, the Fort Jackson
Nine, as they became known, abruptly became the Fort Jackson Eight when one of the
men scooped up in the sting was revealed as an Army informant planted by senior
officials. Since the early beginnings of the movement, the Army had been trying to
infiltrate G.I. organizations and here was glaring proof at the highest levels of the US
Army.95 Antiwar lawyers, including Leonard Boudin, who had defended Dr. Benjamin

---

94 A GIs United flyer described the rally: “GIs United held our biggest, most successful meeting to date. It
just happened. Guys gathered outside the barracks and began rapping about the Vietnam War to the
buddies…the brass came around and they were scared. But there was nothing they could do except a little
harassment of a few individuals. They knew they couldn’t break up our meeting…so they just left.” Terry
H. Anderson, “The GI Movement and the Response from the Brass” in Give Peace a Chance: Exploring the
Vietnam Anti-War Movement, eds. Melvin Small and William D. Hoover (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University

95 Following a May 6 article in the Washington Post on the Fort Jackson situation, the Secretary of the Army
demanded a report on the situation. One of the Army’s top lawyers responded promptly and acknowledged
that one of the nine arrested, John Huffman, had “cooperated with ACSI (Army Criminal Special
Investigation) in reporting the group’s activities.” Memorandum, R. Kenly Webster, Deputy General

131
Spock the year prior, flocked to the soldiers’ aid. The soldiers and their legal team launched a major legal offensive against the Army. Within days, the soldiers sued the army to ensure their right “to exercise their constitutional rights guaranteed by the First Amendment,” including the “right to have private and public meetings on or off Ft. Jackson for the purposes of peaceful discussions of public matters.” An Army spokesman in Washington described the suit as “without parallel in American military history,” and for perhaps the first time publicly acknowledged that the Army was “seriously concerned,” about soldier dissent at Fort Jackson and military posts across the country.

The strategy worked. On the same day that the US Court of Appeals ordered the Army to prove it had not abused its authority by jailing the soldiers for sixty days awaiting trial, the Army dropped all court martial charges against the Fort Jackson Eight. Michael Smith, one of the men’s attorneys, declared, “This is a tremendous victory for the anti-war movement. The Army has backed down in the face of public opinion and has no legal strength to victimize these men.” For Smith, the decision to

* Halstead, GIs Speak Out Against the War, 114-118
drop the case was a clear admission from the Army that “they can’t face the anti-war movement.” When reporters asked Colonel Paul Stickel at Fort Jackson if the Army’s decision validated the soldiers’ complaints that they had been “persecuted for being antiwar,” the senior officer tersely replied, “no comment.” Matilde Zimmerman, the national secretary of the G.I. Civil Liberties Defense Committee, claimed that the decision was “the most important victory to date of the G.I. antiwar movement.” The soldiers all received undesirable discharges, but that hardly mattered. They had stood up to the Army machine and won.

Richard Nixon may have promised to end the war, but his actions conveyed a different message altogether. Ostensibly entering into peace talks days after taking office, the new President authorized a secret bombing campaign against suspected North Vietnamese and Vietcong bases in Cambodia two months later. The New York Times would leak the story in May, prompting Henry Kissinger to place wiretaps on seven National Security Council staff members and four reporters. The day after the secret bombing authorization, the US launched one of the war’s largest operations as 10,000 troops swept in to block the North Vietnamese 7th Division’s advance towards Saigon.

---

Less than two weeks later, a strange letter from Ron Ridenhour arrived at the offices of 30 members of Congress and senior Pentagon officials. Ridenhour, a draftee, told a ghastly tale of the destruction of a Vietnamese hamlet, which he referred to as “Pinkville,” in March of 1968 with American servicemen “slaughtering villagers like so many sheep.” Although Americans would not learn of My Lai until November 1969, it was clear by now that the US effort in Vietnam had gone terribly astray. By the end of April, 543,000 US troops would be fighting in Vietnam, the high-water mark of US involvement. In May, in what became known as Hamburger Hill, military commanders senselessly wasted forty-seven American lives to take high ground in the A Shau Valley, only to immediately abandon the area. Hamburger Hill became the last major search and destroy mission by US troops. In a telling sign that any hopes of victory had been extinguished, Washington order General Creighton Abrams to avoid any large unit encounters in the future.104

As the war ground on that spring, the G.I. movement transformed from a local movement into a national one. The Army’s treatment of the Presidio 27 and Fort Jackson Eight had galvanized troops at military posts across the country. The mainstream press had picked up these stories, but by this time, thirty-five underground G.I. newspapers

---

103 For the full text of Ridenhour’s letter, see http://law2.umkc.edu/faculty/projects/ftrials/mylai/ridenhour_ltr.html (accessed January 10, 2015)
also covered them. Antiwar soldiers, who had often felt alienated and defenseless, were now receiving unfiltered news from other troops that often felt the same way. And the Army’s strategy of reassigning those they viewed as troublemakers was also a spectacular failure, as uprooted antiwar soldiers simply began agitating and recruiting at their new assignments. On March 30, the GI Defense Organization took out a full-page ad in the *New York Times* urging troops, “Don’t let the Pentagon court-martial the First Amendment.” The ad, signed by over 300 military members, detailed the Presidio and Fort Jackson cases, but more importantly, urged G.I.s to lead Easter weekend peace marches in seven US cities.

Across the nation, soldiers responded. At protest marches in New York, Chicago, San Francisco, Seattle, Atlanta, and elsewhere, antiwar soldiers proudly led protests, most of them wearing white paper hats that simply said, “G.I.s Against the War.” In New York, one soldier recently back from Vietnam told a reporter, “In Vietnam, there was a higher percentage in my company against the war than back in the states. Being over there just confirmed my beliefs.” In Chicago, protest organizers believed that hundreds of G.I.s had joined the crowd, some of them carrying a huge sign that read “G.I.s Against the War in Vietnam.” In San Francisco, thousands of protestors

---

105 Cortright, *Soldiers in Revolt*, 62.
marched to the gates of the Presidio army base to protest the war and the treatment of the 27 soldiers who had dared to speak out. In a rare moment of violence, around 150 protestors actually attempted to storm the Army bastion, injuring thirteen military policemen in the ensuing melee.\(^{109}\) What began with a lone Army officer marching in a small El Paso rally had erupted into a coordinated, nation-wide protest with dissenting soldiers at the forefront.

By this point, the Army could no longer publicly deny the growing unrest inside the ranks. A month before the Easter weekend rallies, the military services confessed to a Senate Armed Services subcommittee that servicemen were simply walking away from a war they no longer believed in. In a shocking revelation, the Army admitted that a soldier deserted, on average, every ten minutes, while the A.W.O.L. data reflected a defection every three minutes.\(^{110}\) The Army was simply hemorrhaging. A month later, after the Easter weekend protests, G.I. dissent became a national story. The New York Times, Washington Post, Time, Newsweek, and other major news outlets featured exposés on the soldier movement.

One consistent theme in this media coverage was the Army’s confusion over how to handle the rebellion. After the heavy-handed prison sentences backfired completely and charges were dropped against the Fort Jackson Eight, the service seemed unsure of

\(^{109}\) “15,000 March in Protest of War, GI Mutiny Trial,” Chicago Tribune, April 7, 1969.

what the next step might be. On March 24, a private memorandum from the First Army Command at Fort Meade, Maryland, declared that the best way to discourage dissent was to “convince the soldier that those in positions of authority have a direct interest in his welfare and morale.” Unfortunately, for the Army, that opportunity had long since been squandered. Thanks to the underground G.I. newspapers and tales passed from soldiers in transit, too many soldiers knew of Richard Bunch’s treatment in jail, the extreme prison sentences, and the daily intimidation of those who dared to speak out to believe that the Army had any real interest in their welfare.

By the end of May, in an unprecedented concession, the Department of the Army released a memorandum entitled “Guidance on Dissent” to every major command. The days of a defiant and punishing Army were gone. For the first time, the organization acknowledged that the “right to express opinions on matters of public and personal concern is secured to soldier and civilian alike by the Constitution and laws of the United States.” In formal, step-by-step fashion, the Army provided allowances for almost every aspect of the G.I. movement. On the issue of the possession and distribution of political materials, Army leadership informed subordinate commanders that an official could not “prevent distribution of a publication simply because he does not like its contents.” The memo spelled out clearly that literature “critical, even unfairly

---

critical, of government policies or officials” was not grounds for denial of the right to distribute.

A year after Army leaders had been shocked and angered by the coffeehouse movement, they decreed that officers could no longer “restrict soldiers in the exercise of their Constitutional rights of freedom of speech and freedom of association by barring attendance at coffee houses.” Even underground newspapers, as long as they were published on soldiers’ down time and off Army property, were permissible. And although the Army still refused to acknowledge union demands, soldiers were now free to join such organizations. The memo closed with a confession of sorts: “Severe disciplinary action in response to a relatively insignificant manifestation of dissent can have a counter productive effect on other members of the command…thus, rather than serving as a deterrent, such disproportionate actions may stimulate further breaches of discipline.” The memorandum was tangible proof that rebellious soldiers had stood up to the brass and walked away with a victory. For Henry Howe, Howard Levy, James Johnson, Dennis Mora, and David Samas, soldiers who had spent years behind bars for minor offenses, the memorandum may have offered some solace that others would no longer have to face the same tribulations.

---

Though the new guidance on dissent possibly offered a temporary solution to the Army’s problems, a more permanent resolution was needed. A month later, the PROVIDE task force offered just that. After nearly six months of work, the group submitted an unclassified Executive Summary to senior leaders that was quite clear; the Army should support the all-volunteer concept and begin initiatives to reduce reliance on the draft, particularly those that did not require any funding or legislative action. One of these suggestions, which would become a major strategy for the Army’s struggle against dissenting soldiers, was to identify and eliminate service irritants, such as reveille formations and random inspections. It was a foolhardy effort to some extent. Soldiers were not merely complaining about having to shine their boots or make their beds; rather, they were protesting a war they were often forced to fight against their will. But the Army could not unilaterally remove itself from the war, and so the organization focused on what it could influence. Junior officers and enlisted men were dissatisfied with Army life; “if an all-volunteer army is to become a reality, the Army must convey a high degree of morale and job satisfaction.”113 It is important to note that the Army was not being pressured from the outside. The President’s Gates Commission would not release its report recommending a volunteer armed force for another seven months.

113 Directorate of Personnel Studies and Research, Office of the Deputy Chief of Staff for Personnel, U.S. Army, PROVIDE: Project Volunteer in Defense of the Nation, Vol. 1 (Executive Summary), June 20, 1969. AVA-CMH.
Instead, the Army was trying on its own terms to remedy the chaos in the ranks, chaos clearly attributable to reluctant conscripts making up the majority of the force.

By the summer of 1969, the Nixon administration, the Department of Defense, and the US Army were all in favor of an all-volunteer force. Though all three entities had somewhat different motivations, one of the primary catalysts for each was the expanding G.I. dissent movement. Martin Anderson and Milton Friedman may have relied on free market and libertarian language to build their consensus, but it was obvious that conscripts’ impact on military effectiveness loomed larger than any economic argument. Melvin Laird, the new Secretary of Defense, was also convinced by his initial briefing with General Westmoreland that something needed to be done about unruly conscripts. From this concern Project Volunteer and the plan to transition to volunteers was born. The Army, which was forced to deal with the brunt of G.I. dissent, had been leading this charge for volunteers long before Nixon or his new Secretary of Defense announced their own studies or intentions. The days of drafting reluctant, and increasingly antiwar, soldiers seemed numbered.

The Army’s power to lash out at dissenting soldiers was also finished. The Presidio 27 and Fort Jackson Eight had fought back against the military establishment and it was the Army who had blinked. Rather than handing out heavy-handed prison sentences, the organization’s new strategy seemed to almost cater to antiwar soldiers for fear of galvanizing more dissent inside the ranks. It would, however, take time for the
new policy to be embraced by subordinate Army leaders. Not every post commander was thrilled about granting G.I.s the right to speak out against the war, publish underground newspapers, or frequent antiwar coffeehouses. Fort Bragg, North Carolina, was such a place. It was here, in the sandhills of eastern North Carolina, that the Amy learned the danger of transferring its unruly soldiers to other posts. Joe Miles, even though he helped found the GIs United organization at Fort Jackson, was not one of the eight soldiers arrested in March. In February of 1969, with only three hours notice, Army leadership hastily transferred him to Fort Bragg. Soon after arriving, Miles began organizing soldiers on the sprawling military installation, establishing the framework for what soon became the epicenter of the soldier dissent movement
Chapter Three. “Caution! Reading this Paper May be Hazardous to Your Discipline, Morale & Loyalty”: Fort Bragg and the Soldiers’ Antiwar Movement, 1969-1971

Early on the morning of July 23, 1968, Fort Bragg’s military police led Private Johnson back to his seven by eleven foot solitary confinement cell. Johnson was beginning his 78th day of solitude after striking one of the guards who had taunted him and spit in his face. Upon arriving at his cell, the young enlisted man pleaded with the guards for some extra exercise time in the hallway before entering the dark, dank space he had called home for almost three months. When the guards refused, Johnson began to fight his imprisoners, eventually scaling the cell bars to escape their retaliatory strikes. The prison commandant ordered fire hoses to the area to blast Johnson from his perch. The tactic worked; the blast of frigid water flung the prisoner from the bars, breaking most of his fingers in the process. Dazed, Johnson attempted to get to his feet before several guards pounced on him, forcing him spread-eagled to the ground. A senior enlisted man, known as a ‘lifer’ to the young draftees inside the stockade, approached the rebellious soldier with his fist wrapped in a pistol belt and began thrashing the injured man.

Across the prison, Mike O’Connor and several other prisoners watched the beating unfold from behind a flimsy fence. Enraged, the group of prisoners broke down

---

the barrier and sprinted to Johnson’s aid. They turned the fire hose on the retreating prison guards and were soon joined by other prisoners from across the stockade.

O’Connor gained access to prison’s main control panel and began unlocking prison cells across the facility. Within fifteen minutes, 238 inmates, almost all conscripts imprisoned for desertion or going AWOL, had seized control of the stockade. The men began sawing mop and broom handles into pieces as they assembled a crude weapon cache to repel the certain counterattack. A squadron of military police spent most of that first day rushing a small gate, only to be repeatedly repulsed. During the night, the inmates burned down several buildings and raided the officer’s mess. As dawn broke, the ill-equipped and exhausted military police gave way to a battalion of 82d Airborne Division paratroopers. The new troop commander gave the prisoners twenty-four hours to surrender, and the following day, after their refusal to do so, the elite airborne troopers attacked. For five violent hours the battle raged until the paratroopers pulled back; the prisoners had held the line. Eventually, the commanding officer stepped forwarded, proclaiming that he had permission from Washington, DC to shoot any man who continued to resist. And with that, after holding the prison for three days and going toe-to-toe with the army’s best-trained soldiers, the prisoners surrendered.2

---

2 For the most detailed account of the stockade seizure see the Andy Stapp, “Rebellion Ripped Fort Bragg Stockade,” The Bond, November 18, 1968, which is reprinted in Waterhouse and Wizard, Turning the Guns Around, 116-118. See also Cortright, Soldiers in Revolt, 70 and Moser, The New Winter Soldiers, 74. News of the riot leaked out to local media, but the details remained murky to most Fayetteville citizens. The Fayetteville Observer vaguely reported on “disorders” over two successive days and “a wave of unrest,” but the Army
It would take nearly a year, and the galvanizing arrival of Private Joe Miles, for the G.I. dissent movement to wreak havoc at Fort Bragg, but as the stockade riot reveals, the underlying tension between reluctant draftees and career soldiers was present long before. The movement at Bragg, to some degree, lagged behind the larger rebellion sweeping through the ranks. Prior to the spring of 1969 and the opening stages of the Bragg movement, soldiers in large numbers had already revolted at Fort Hood, Fort Jackson, Fort Lewis, and elsewhere. Perhaps this is why Army leadership initially dismissed the Bragg movement as “very small and very poorly organized.” It was an underestimation that senior Army leadership would come to regret.

Despite its delayed development, the soldier dissent movement at Fort Bragg became the largest, most volatile, and longest lasting of the entire era. Why was this? What conditions on post and in the surrounding town of Fayetteville, North Carolina, spurred such a long-standing and effective movement? And how did the movement at Fort Bragg affect the Army’s overall response to soldier dissent? This chapter aims to answer these questions in a unique way by placing the local movement at Fort Bragg alongside the national narrative of soldier dissent. In the current literature, Vietnam-era dissent and the birth of all-volunteer force have remained national narratives with local post was successful in keeping the violent details from the public. See “Stockade Disorders Reported,” *Fayetteville Observer*, July 25, 1968.

dynamics too often ignored or overlooked. Analyzing how Fort Bragg leadership dealt with soldier revolt and implemented the Army’s volunteer army program in the hotbed of dissent provides a new and deeper understanding of the linkages between the dissenting soldier and the volunteer army.

Even as it focuses on the local, this chapter also traces the transformations inside the larger soldier dissent movement during the same period. By the summer of 1969, that movement had spread to Vietnam. From combat refusals and the fragging of officers and enlisted supervisors to organized protests and petitions, front-line combat soldiers were increasingly vocalizing their dissatisfaction with the war. The movement was also expanding in the United States during a time when the Army’s response to dissent was complicated by a contradictory Department of Defense guidance on how to deal with dissidents inside the ranks. With soldiers in the US and Vietnam increasingly protesting the war, the Gates Commission, the Department of Defense, and the Army all reached the same conclusion: An All-Volunteer Force was the ultimate solution for ridding the ranks of dissent. The chaos in the ranks, caused almost exclusively by draftees, had become so problematic by the time the Gates Commission released its

report that senior political leaders were exploring the possibility of creating a volunteer-only force in Vietnam as they awaited legislative changes to the selective service system.

By the fall of 1970, the Army, the service faced with the majority of dissent, was ready to take drastic steps to create an all-volunteer force.

There is a popular perception that Fayetteville, North Carolina, was a backwater, sleepy hollow of a place before the US Army came calling. That simply was never the case. The town lay at the head of navigation of the Cape Fear River and served as North Carolina’s largest inland center of trade for most of the 19th century. The town received a national arsenal in 1836, but when the antebellum railroad system bypassed the city, the arsenal failed to reach its full potential. Beginning in the 1890s, however, Fayetteville’s boosters began to feverishly lobby the federal government in hopes of securing a military post. The city’s promoters viewed the large military installation as proof positive that the town was returning to its position as one of the leading cities in North Carolina and the South.5

Camp Bragg was a “loaded symbol” since its first days in 1918.6 Local residents, particularly those who lost land unwillingly with the establishment of the post, did not share in the boosters’ enthusiasm. Henry Groves Connor summed up the sentiment

---

when he wrote, “When Sherman and his ‘bummers’ came in ’65 they almost ruined us but this invasion has completed the work.”7 Others protested the Army’s arrival, and subsequent loss of land, at a time when agricultural advances promised an increase in the area’s productivity. The post’s opponents, however, had few methods of publicly expressing their displeasure as Bragg’s supporters enjoyed the unwavering support of the local paper, the *Fayetteville Observer*. Whether citizens supported or opposed the new military presence, there was no disputing the fact that Fort Bragg began to affect the region in drastic ways.

World War II dramatically transformed Fort Bragg and the town of Fayetteville. Within months of America’s entry into the war, Fayetteville “suddenly found the little suburban fort growing into an overwhelming neighbor.”8 In just a year, troop strength increased from 6,000 to over 60,000, the civilian workforce surged to over 30,000, and the Fort Bragg physical plant increased from 376 to 3,135 buildings.9 By 1943, Fort Bragg housed over 150,000 personnel, effectively making the military post the third largest city in the state.10 Thousands of “lusty and vigorous” soldiers with free time on their hands would test the patience and resolve of the citizens of Fayetteville.11 Soldiers began to feel

---

7 Henry Groves Connor to Josephus Daniels, 19 March 1920, File 331, Henry Groves Connor Papers, #175, Southern Historical Collection, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill [Southern Historical Collection, UNC]
10 “Facilities at Post Rapidly Expanding; Will Quarter 64,000 Troops,” *Charlotte Observer*, 29 November 1940.
that they were shunned by the citizens of Fayetteville and lamented that it was
“impossible to meet nice girls.” A recruit from the Midwest found that a soldier “in a
strange town and especially a southern town hasn’t much chance of meeting any girls
who aren’t prostitutes.”

Following hostilities in Europe and the Pacific, troop strength began to ebb at
Bragg, dropping to 15,000 by the late 1940s. The Cold War and the resulting large,
standing military force, however, ensured Fort Bragg would remain Fayetteville’s
permanent neighbor. Soon after World War II, the 82nd Airborne Division established
its headquarters at Bragg, transforming the post from an artillery training post to “Home
of the Airborne.” The addition of the famous military unit set Fayetteville apart from the
numerous southern towns with military posts, a development that generated a certain
level of pride in the town of Fayetteville. Fayetteville found itself thrust into an
elaborate set of war games that strove to emphasize the role of the Army soldier in the
nuclear age. Exercise Flash Burn featured 64,000 soldiers, simulated use of atomic
weapons and practice in chemical and biological warfare, and extended well into the

12 Both quotes from Robert J. Norrell and Guy C. Vanderpool, Dixie’s War: The South and World War II
(Tuscaloosa, AL: Center for Southern History and Culture, University of Alabama, 1992), 9.
city limits. The Fayetteville Chamber of Commerce published brochures highlighting the city’s role in the exercise while local businesses offered “Flash Burn Specials.”  

By 1966, Bragg was sending division-sized elements to Vietnam. That same year, the Army activated the US Army Training Center (USATC) on post, a basic training facility that would prepare over 200,000 young men for combat in Vietnam over the next four years. At the peak of the Vietnam War in 1968, Fort Bragg’s military population rose to 57,840, making the post the largest military installation in the United States. Bragg was also unique for its blended mission of basic training and operational units. As an example, Fort Jackson, another center of GI dissent, was almost exclusively used as a training location.

This combination of operations and training would prove crucial to the G.I. movement on post. As Bragg became the primary center for returning combat veterans, impressionable new recruits came into contact with disgruntled and unmotivated veterans. When Joe Miles arrived at Fort Bragg in February of 1968, it was this ever-increasing population of combat veterans that he turned to in his quest to establish another chapter of G.I.s United Against the War.

In February of 1968, nearly a month before military police arrested the Jackson 8 in Columbia, South Carolina, a sergeant approached Private Joe Miles and informed him

---

that he had three hours to vacate Fort Jackson. Army officials dropped the young
organizer off at the transportation depot, leaving him with only a bus ticket to Fort
Bragg. It took several days for the private to get his bearings on post, but almost
immediately, he recognized a different vibe at Fort Bragg. For sure, there was the same
rampant antiwar sentiment he had seen at Jackson; Miles claimed that walking through
the 82nd Airborne’s barracks was “like walking through some college dormitory as far
as opposition to the war is concerned.” But techniques that had proved so effective at
Jackson, the playing of Malcolm X tapes for example, fell flat. The primary difference
between Bragg and Jackson, he soon found, was the lack of any real animosity or sense
of division between black and white soldiers. The post was teeming with Vietnam
veterans, and the young private pointed to this large population as a primary catalyst
for the unity among the soldiers. As combat veterans, Miles found that “it was easy for
guys at Bragg to understand being brothers in the struggle…and they’d accept anyone
who’d fight with them. They just sort of apply that battlefield experience into the
political battle.” Ultimately though, it was a petition in support of the Jackson 8 that
galvanized the Bragg movement and provided early momentum. Miles collected
hundreds of signatures on a petition which protested “most strongly the violation of the
constitutional rights of the GIs at Fort Jackson,” arguing that as “soldiers defending the

17 Halstead, GIs Speak Out Against the War, 94.
Constitution with our very lives we have more of a right than any one to discuss the war in Vietnam, racism, and the military in general.”18

In mid April, less than two months after Miles’ arrival, the Fort Bragg chapter of GIs United Against the War in Vietnam held their inaugural meeting in the Braggabout Service Club on post. The Fort Bragg chapter’s statement of aims, similar in almost every way to the Fort Jackson version, reflected the plethora of combat veterans in the group: “Many of us in the Fort Bragg GIs United are Vietnam returnees…we have seen the destruction, the death, the misery of Vietnam, and we say it’s wrong!”19

It did not take long for the group to garner the attention of the post’s commanding officer, Lieutenant General John Tolson. In addition to the petition supporting the confined Fort Jackson soldiers, the group had also begun circulating a second petition, this one demanding an open meeting on post to discuss the legal and moral questions related to the war in Vietnam. Tolson was a North Carolina native who grew up less than two hours from the Army post and a 1937 graduate of West Point. Tolson had taken command of the XVIII Airborne Corps and Fort Bragg the year prior, just days after the stockade riot, and was unprepared to deal with the dissent spreading across his installation. Prior to arriving at Bragg in 1968, he had commanded the 1st

18 For Miles’ first-hand account of his transfer from Fort Jackson and the early months of the Bragg movement, see Halstead, GIs Speak Out Against the War, p. 91-95. For the GIs United Statement of Aims and subsequent petitions, see pp. 97-105. In 1969, Halstead interviewed nearly all of the participants in the Jackson 8 saga, and his book remains an excellent oral history source.
19 Ibid, 99.
Calvary Division in Vietnam, an assignment that offered him little first-hand experience with the upheaval among stateside soldiers.20

Just days after the first GIs United meeting, General Tolson and his staff hastily released a policy that forbade the “distribution of publications, including pamphlets, newspapers, magazines, handbills, flyers, and other printed material” without prior approval from senior post leadership. This new policy also allowed the post seven days to review any submissions. When reporters asked officials if the new policy was directly related to the new antiwar organization on base, a spokesman curtly replied, “The directive speaks for itself” and strutted away.21 The new policy, an overt retaliation for the two recent petition drives, and leadership’s decision to ban the group from meeting in the post’s enlisted club, even on the outdoor patio, only further incited the GIs United organization. Specialist Fourth Class David Shulman, a Bragg soldier with a master’s degree in business administration from UCLA, penned a letter to President Nixon, declaring, “crimes are being committed in your name.”22 Miles and the other soldiers in the group hatched a plan that simultaneously hewed to the new policy and firmly placed the Army in an embarrassing predicament.

Following the new directive’s decree down to the exact detail, the group carefully requested permission to distribute copies of the Bill of Rights and the Army’s Oath of Enlistment on post. It was a plan, as Miles declared, that put the Army in a losing position: “Either they let us show our strength on the base or they put themselves in the ludicrous position of suppressing the Bill of Rights, which they are already doing.” Making matters worse for themselves from a public relations perspective, the post leadership waited the entire seven days to render a decision. In the meantime, national media members from New York and Washington, DC had descended on the southern base to cover the standoff. The GIs United held several press conferences in an off-post motel, and Army leadership continued to draw negative attention when they arrested a young peace activist from Durham for trespassing when he came on base to drive Miles to a press conference. It was, as the antiwar group put it, a sign of “how uptight the Army is.” Eventually, General Tolson announced that the group could distribute their leaflets, but with extreme restrictions. Miles was the only one allowed to actually distribute any leaflets since he was the lone individual to sign the request, and he was allowed just one hour on Monday and Tuesday afternoon at three specific intersections. Despite the restrictions, Tolson’s decision was the first time an Army post

---

23 The G.Is chose the oath of office to “explode the myth that the oath we took says anything about giving up our rights,” and the Bill of Rights to “extend a legal noose to those responsible for this regulation.” Ibid.
commander had officially sanctioned distribution of literature by a G.I. antiwar group, and the first win for Bragg’s antiwar soldiers.25

Despite their concession on the leaflet distribution, the Bragg leadership was furious with Joe Miles. In an inexplicable move, military policeman actually arrested him while he was distributing the approved leaflets. They apprehended him on unspecified charges, held him overnight, and then just as suddenly dropped the mystery accusations. Four days later, the Army notified Miles that he was being reassigned to a remote Alaskan post 250 miles north of Fairbanks, quite literally above the Arctic Circle. The young private proclaimed to the media that he was being exiled to the “American Siberia” on a “one man Department of Army levy.” The Army denied this, claiming that others were being sent to Alaska as well. Miles’ mother, Agnes Lowe, traveled from Maryland to hold a press conference in defense of her son with representatives from the GI Civil Liberties Defense Committee.26 It was no use; the Army was determined to put Miles, who still had eleven months of service remaining, out of the G.I. organizing business. Days before he left Fort Bragg, Miles told an author, “even if they send me, there’ll be a good cadre of GIs United here.”27 He was correct; he had successfully planted the organizational seeds at Bragg for the largest uprising of the entire G.I.

26 “Antiwar GI Fights Shift to Alaska,” The Washington Post, June 4, 1969, 3. Prior to his departure for Alaska, the Army gave Miles a 30-day pass during which he married Matilda Zimmerman, who received a doctorate in African studies at the University of Chicago.
27 Halstead, GIs Speak Out, 95.
dissent movement. Months later, Private Joseph Miles organized a chapter of GIs United at Fort Richardson, Alaska, and began publishing an underground newspaper called *Anchorage Troop.*

Despite Miles’ sudden transfer, the G.I. movement at Bragg had gained sufficient momentum to overcome the loss of its founder. Specialist Fourth Class Richard Yahr, a 24-year old philosophy major from the University of Wisconsin, joined with Dave Shulman, the daring soldier who had penned the letter to President Nixon, to fill the organization’s leadership void. Both of the men were college graduates and draftees, their presence at Bragg a clear illustration of the impact that the cessation of graduate school deferments in 1968 was having on dissent in the ranks. Both men realized what they were up against in their struggle against the brass and the war. Yahr told the *Fayetteville Observer,* “We realize that it’s sort of like shooting BBs at the Army but we’re hoping some of them get through to the government of Washington…We’re just a group of guys who share the same feelings about the war.” No longer able use the post’s enlisted clubs, GIs United began meeting weekly in an empty lot adjacent to the 12th Support Brigade.

Fort Bragg officials continued to harass the group, often resorting to underhanded techniques to entrap the protesting soldiers. Specialist Fourth Class Jack

---

28 Cortright, *Soldiers in Revolt,* 60.

29 Pat Reese, “GI’s United Petitions for Underground Newspaper,” *Fayetteville Observer,* September 8, 1969, B1. This was the second installment of two-part series on antiwar activity at Fort Bragg. For many in the Fayetteville community, this was the first introduction to the Bragg G.I. movement.
Riley, a Vietnam veteran, received 30 days restriction and a reduction in rank for violating regulations against the distribution of “unauthorized literature.” Riley was distributing the Bill of Rights and the Army oath of office when a G.I. in civilian clothes approached him. When the soldier began asking for antiwar literature, Riley informed him that he was only allowed to distribute the authorized materials. After several minutes of cajoling, Riley finally relented and retrieved a copy of the GIs United statement of aims from his notebook that was nearly thirty feet away. Shortly thereafter, Riley found himself behind bars. In the ensuing court martial, Riley discovered that the random G.I. in civilian clothes was actually James Judson, a Provost Marshall investigator, who admitted under oath that he was instructed to conceal his identity from Riley. In early May, GIs United member Bruce Patterson suffered a loss of rank, forfeiture of pay, and fourteen days extra duty merely for appearing “unclean and unshaven.” A month later, Patterson and Paul Fowler, another member of GIs United, were arrested by military police in downtown Fayetteville for distributing antiwar literature, held for an hour, and then released with no charges.

The G.I. movement at Bragg may have faltered in the face of this harassment and intimidation if not for the opening of the Quaker House in downtown Fayetteville, a

---

31 Pat Reese, “GI’s United Know They’re Fighting Uphill Battle,” Fayetteville Observer, September 7, 1969, B1. Yahr and Shulman never seemed concerned about concealing their identity. They allowed the Fayetteville paper to publish their pictures and listed their names under the editorial staff in the Bragg Briefs.
peace activist center and unprecedented symbol of mutual support between civilian activists and antiwar soldiers. Dean Holland, a native of Omaha, Nebraska, enlisted in the Army when he was just eighteen and studied Vietnamese at the Defense Language Institute in California before becoming disenchanted with the war effort. After voicing his concerns to his superiors, Holland found himself in Fayetteville as a newly minted member of the Army Medical Corps. Shortly thereafter, Holland became the first soldier in history at Fort Bragg to apply for conscientious objector status. Under obvious pressure from his Army leadership, Dean reached out to Bruce Pulliam, a professor of history at Methodist College and fellow member of his church, for assistance. Pulliam suggested that Holland might seek out the Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends, otherwise known as the Quakers, in Chapel Hill, North Carolina. So on a Sunday morning, Holland hitchhiked the sixty-five miles to the small college town to tell his story and beg for assistance before the twenty to thirty Quakers in attendance.

Holland’s message resonated with the group, who vowed to investigate whether they could somehow help antiwar soldiers in Fayetteville. They kept coming back to Holland’s declaration that fateful Sunday morning: “Quakers should be in Fayetteville.” Eventually, the meeting decided to explore the possibility of opening a house, run by Quakers themselves, which would serve as a support center for other soldiers seeking conscientious objector status. A married couple, from the Durham Meeting of Friends, Wood and Susie Bouldin, volunteered to kick start the project. In May, the Bouldins
traveled to Fayetteville to meet with Holland on a scouting expedition for possible locations. On Ray Avenue, right off of Hay Street, which remains the main downtown thoroughfare, the trio found a nondescript two-story, wooden home with a peaked roof. In an odd coincidence reminiscent of the U.F.O. coffeehouse in Columbia, South Carolina, the home was just blocks away from the USO and a VFW lodge, two of the more traditional, and conservative, support centers for soldiers. That very day, the three paid one hundred dollars for the first month’s rent and signed a six-month lease. The Quaker House had begun its fifty-year journey in Fayetteville.33

Since the early stages of their founding, the Bragg GIs United chapter had been planning to publish their own underground newspaper, and with the establishment of the Quaker House, that vision soon became a reality. By the summer of 1969, there were over a hundred underground newspapers in circulation at military installations across the nation.34 Illustrative of the level of dissatisfaction at Bragg, there were no less than four soldier newspapers published in the spring and summer of 1969, an unparalleled number, even for such a large installation. Three of these, Strikeback, Sick Slip, and Free Press, were fairly crude periodicals, no more than several mimeographed sheets of

33 For the Quaker House’s origin story, Bruce Pulliam’s handwritten notes and the first pamphlets advertising the house in the Fayetteville Quaker House collection at Guilford College in Greensboro, North Carolina, are excellent sources. See also Alan K. Whiteleather, “Antiwar GIs Find Haven in Fayetteville,” Greensboro Daily News, December 8, 1969, B1. For an overall history of the Quaker presence in Fayetteville, see Chris McCallum, Quaker House & Forty Years of Front-Line Peace Witness (Fayetteville, North Carolina: Quaker House, 2009).
34 Cortright, Soldiers in Revolt, 62.
paper, often filled with profanity-laced rants against the war and Army life. The GIs United, however, envisioned a product with more substance, a paper that provided commentary on the larger G.I. movement and the political and military issues of the day.

On July 4, 1969, the group published the first issue of Bragg Briefs, an underground newspaper that would reach an on-post circulation of over 7,000 and remain in print through 1975, longer than any G.I. paper produced during the era. The editorial staff, consisting primarily of Richard Yahr and David Shulman in these early stages, dedicated the first issue to “that great American soldier and patriot, Private Joseph D. Miles.” The writers declared that the paper was produced “in the spirit of the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution of the United States…dedicated to establishing responsible alternatives to the current military system.” This first issue was cheaply produced as well, printed on flimsy, plain paper, but it provided a detailed history of the GIs United organization along with Shulman’s letter to Nixon and editorials on the war effort in Vietnam. The issue not only advertised the Quaker House, including its mission and hours, but it also detailed the G.I. movement spreading across the country. The writers even threatened to print pictures of military intelligence agents

---

35 Reese, “GI’s United Petitions for Underground Newspaper.”
caught spying on the group. It was obviously a periodical dedicated to the Fort Bragg movement, but even from its first issue, the editorial staff seemed to sense their place in the larger soldier movement. When one Briefs writer wrote, “it’s our lives and it’s our world…and it’s our graves,” he spoke for soldiers throughout the US Army.

The second issue of Bragg Briefs, released less than a month later, looked and felt dramatically different from the inaugural issue. The mimeographed, smudgy pages produced on an Army copying machine gave way to a professional-looking newspaper, both in its layout and paper stock. A publication of this caliber required more than just imaginative articles and editorials; it required funds. Initially, Dave Shulman contributed some of his own money and begged for contributions to get the paper off the ground. The majority of funds for the paper, however, came from the United States Serviceman Fund (USSF). Founded in 1969, the organization served as the financial linchpin for G.I. newspapers and coffeehouses, drawing on contributions from major players and organizations in the civilian antiwar movement. By 1971, the organization supported over seventy-six projects, ranging from protest movements to newspapers. Army leadership was well aware of the organization, carefully tracking which underground papers relied on the USSF to fill their coffers.

---

39 Ibid.
40 Moser, New Winter Soldiers, 91-92.
41 In January 1970, General Westmoreland briefed the Secretary of Defense that USSF was “providing financial assistance to the GIs United Against the War in Vietnam at Fort Bragg, North Carolina.” Talking
Although the Bragg soldiers could rely on the USSF for funds, the actual production of the paper fell to them alone. The Quaker House served as the new meeting place for GIs United, and it became the newsroom for the Bragg Briefs. Soldiers crowded into the home’s living room to share ideas and deliberate on which stories and cartoons would have the greatest impact. After typing up the final submissions, the group would secret away to Duke University where it had allies to use the school’s newspaper layout tables to arrange the paper. Once finished, activists delivered the finished product to a printer in Mebane, North Carolina, which produced half of the nation’s radical, underground publications.42

JC Honeycutt, an English major at Duke and the girlfriend of Dean Holland, aided in the clandestine distribution of the papers on post during the early morning hours. She was captured by the sense of adventure in this underground fight against the war: “It was fun. There was a risk involved but not a big risk. It was daring and there was sort of humor in it because it was unexpected to the people coming out and finding this paper and not knowing how it got there.”43

Fort Bragg leadership did not find the new paper that was appearing around post humorous. On July 9, the editorial staff of Bragg Briefs formally requested

---

Paper, Presentation by the Chief of Staff Army to the Secretary of Defense, January 19, 1970. Folder 309, Spector CMH. Also see “GI Papers Funded by USSF” paper in Folder, 197, Spector-CMH.

42 See Lutz, Homefront, 141.
43 McCallum, Quaker House, 1.
permission to distribute the newspaper on post. After nearly ten days of deliberation, leadership merely replied that the request was still “under consideration.” As the August issue of the underground paper sardonically pointed out, the Army made decisions much quicker on artillery strikes and bombing raids. There were rumors on post that General Tolson and his staff desired nothing more than to disapprove the request, but that the Staff Judge Advocate had cautioned that a refusal would surely spur a battle in court.44 A senior Army official notified Congressman Alton Lennon that the Army had determined that that paper “constituted a danger to the discipline and morale of the men at Fort Bragg.”45 Tolson’s legal adviser was correct; eighteen soldiers filed suit against Tolson and Stanley Resor, the Secretary of the Army, for permission to distribute the newspaper and use the post’s enlisted clubs for meetings.46

In October, lawyers representing GIs United and the US Army presented their cases before a US District Court. The military attorneys argued that the paper “spread dissension among the troops,” and that Bragg leadership was clearly within its purview to protect good order and discipline. Specialist Fifth Class, Hal Noyes, a GI United member, claimed that the paper was merely a vehicle to “counteract Army

41 Bragg Briefs, Vol. 2, no. 1, August 1969. Guilford-QH.
44 Bruce Pulliam wrote Congressman Alton Lennon, the Representative for North Carolina’s Seventh District, demanding an explanation from the Department of the Army on the decision to forbid Bragg Briefs distribution on post. After several months of delay, Colonel Robert Tully, Chief of the Army’s Special Affairs and Review Division, replied to the Congressman, explaining “Department of the Army policy to deny permission to distribute any publication on a Army installation…which would constitute a danger to loyalty, discipline, or morale of soldiers.” See Guilford-QH.
46 Reese, “GI’s United Know They’re Fighting Uphill Battle.”
propaganda.” In January of 1970, Federal District judge Algernon Butler sided with General Tolson and the Army, ruling that the Army could “reasonably conclude that the distribution of said publications presented a clear danger to the military loyalty, discipline, and morale of the military personnel.” Leaving no doubt, Butler claimed that G.I.s produced Bragg Briefs “with the express purpose of encouraging soldiers to organize in opposition to the war in Vietnam.” Neither the federal judge nor the Bragg leadership could not stop the publication of the newspaper; they just ensured that it remained an underground newspaper.

As far back as September, Richard Yahr had warned Bragg leadership about the repercussions of their continued repression when he told a reporter, “I think that the Army should relax its opinion on our efforts. If they don’t, if we should be unsuccessful, then I feel that it will lead to a more militant organization.” Yahr was prescient; soon, GIs United and the Quaker House staff would transform Fort Bragg and the streets of Fayetteville into ground zero of the soldier dissent movement. The G.I.s working on Bragg Briefs seem to already sense their significance in the larger movement, arguing that Bragg was “the most significant CONUS post for GI organizing.” But in that same

---

47 “GI Paper Distribution is Argued,” Fayetteville Observer, November 13, 1969. The soldiers themselves immediately connected the Army’s arguments to past struggles against oppression: “The Army’s case sounded very much like the arguments used to deny civil rights to blacks, prevent labor union organizing, deny women the right to vote, and to disenfranchise the un-propertied classes of America in the days just prior to the Revolutionary War.” See Bragg Briefs, Vol. 2, no. 4, December 1969 for G.I.s reaction to the case. 48 “Federal Court Backs Ban on Ft Bragg Newspaper,” Fayetteville Observer, January 7, 1970. 49 Reese, “GI’s United Petitions for Underground Newspaper.”
article, entitled “The Most Important Front,” the staff acknowledged that the key battlefront in the antiwar movement remained Vietnam itself. There, in the rice paddies and river deltas, “the word of one anti-war GI in RVN is worth the word of 5 GI’s stateside and probably over 20 civilian organizers.” As they prepared that August edition, the soldiers fighting against the war in Fayetteville did not realize they were about to get their wish.

In late August of 1969, on the side of a Vietnamese mountain, 30 miles from Da Nang and 8000 miles from his home in Davenport, Iowa, Lieutenant Eugene Shurtz picked up the crackling field telephone and radioed a report to his commanding officer: “I am sorry, sir, but my men refused to go – we cannot move out.” His men, the soldiers of Alpha Company, had spent the last five days crawling down the rocky slope of Nuilon Mountain into a labyrinth of North Vietnamese bunkers and trench lines, watching 60 of their fellow soldiers dropped by withering fire. When his superiors seemed incredulous that the men would not repeat the attack on the sixth day, the 26-year old Shurtz tried to explain: “Some of them have had enough – they are broken. There are boys here who have only 90 days left in Vietnam. They want to go home in one piece. The situation is psychic here.” The battalion commander, Lieutenant Colonel Robert Bacon, sent one of his veterans, Sergeant Blakenship, to give the men “a pep talk and a kick in the butt.” When the sergeant arrived on the scene, he found the men

exhausted and slumped in blackened elephant grass, their uniforms barely recognizable. One soldier was crying. Other soldiers unleashed a torrent of guttural complaints; they were sick of the endless battling and the heat, the sudden firefights around the clock, no sleep, no mail, and no hot food. After Blakenship’s cajoling and lies – “there’s another Company down to 15 men that’s still on the move” – the 60 remaining soldiers from Alpha Company struggled to their feet and trudged down the cratered slope.51

Alpha Company’s mutinous rebellion was not the first incident of combat refusal in Vietnam, but it was the first that unfolded in front of reporters.52 The story of Alpha Company’s refusal appeared in newspapers around the world, even garnering mention in the Stars and Stripes, a government-sponsored newspaper for US troops abroad. Within twenty-four hours, in a Confidential/Eyes Only message, Lieutenant General Herman Nickerson informed General Creighton Abrams, the commander of all ground forces in Vietnam, that the story was “basically correct.” Nickerson excused the soldiers’ behavior as a by-product of Lieutenant Shurtz’s lack of “drive, initiative, and overall leadership.” The three-star general assured Abrams that the battalion had performed

51 Horst Fass and Peter Arnett, “Told to Move Again on 6th Deadly Day, Company A Refuses,” New York Times, August 26, 1969. Fass and Arnett won the Pulitzer Prize for their story while Lieutenant Shurtz was relieved of command. The mission on Nuilon Mountain had no military value; the men were trying to recover 7 deceased soldiers from a helicopter crash site.

well overall; after all, he argued, the unit had killed 524 enemy soldiers while losing only thirty-four of their own men. Based on Nickerson’s message, senior military leaders seemed intent on convincing each other that Alpha Company’s refusal was an isolated incident dependent resulting from poor leadership at the junior officer level. In a September interview in US News & World Report, General Westmoreland went a step further when he claimed that combat troops’ morale and discipline was at an all-time high.

This was simply not true; soldiers in Vietnam were increasingly protesting a war they no longer believed in by simply refusing to fight. In 1968 alone, there were sixty-eight recorded incidents of individual combat refusals in Vietnam. By 1969, entire units were refusing to engage the enemy. In the elite 1st Cavalry Division, a unit that Army officials consistently held up as the epitome of professional soldiering, there were thirty-five instances of mutiny in 1970 alone. In March of 1971, as US troops supported the South Vietnamese invasion of Laos, fifty-three men refused to recover a damaged helicopter simply because, as one soldier put it, “the reason given wasn’t a very good one.” The squadron commander quickly pulled back the entire unit to prevent the

---

57 Cortright, Soldiers in Revolt, 37.
mutiny from spreading. Later that year, the Army removed an entire infantry company from a Fire Support Base after its men continually balked at going on patrol.58 From 1968 to 1970, in the Army alone, there were 374 court martial cases for mutiny or willful refusal to follow a lawful order.59

Army leaders in the field recognized the expanding antiwar sentiment among their troops, who were overwhelmingly draftees.60 A platoon sergeant lamented, “almost to a man, the members of my platoon oppose the war…the result is a general malaise which pervades the entire company. There is a great deal of pressure on leaders at the small unit level, such as myself, to conduct what are popularly referred to as ‘search and avoid’ missions.” A brigade commander explained the dramatic impact dissent was having on the fighting force, particularly when compared to the combat forces fielded earlier in the war: “Back in 1967, officers gave orders and didn’t have to worry about the sensitivities of the men. Today, we have to explain things to the men and find new ways of doing the job. Otherwise, you can send the men on a search mission, but they won’t search.”61 With antiwar sentiment spreading throughout the

59 HISC, 7057. The House of Representative’s Committee on Internal Security had tasked the Army to “furnish statistics for the last three years on military prosecution for insubordination, mutiny, or other acts involving willful refusal to perform a lawful order.” The committee was also interested in whether these incidents were politically motivated. The Army returned their raw data, but confessed that “it is not possible to determine the portion of these incidents which were politically motivated.”
ranks, commanders in the field no longer gave orders; they negotiated with their men over what they would be willing to do and under what circumstances. Captain Brian Utermahlen, a 24-year old company commander out of West Point and one of only five men in the entire company who was not a draftee, explained the relationship: “The colonel wants to make contact with the enemy and so do I, but the men flat don’t…These guys are no longer blindly following puppets. They’re thinkers.”62 One soldier summed up the newfound political awareness in the ranks: “I never gave a fuck about this or that until I came over here. I just read the sports pages before. Now I read and try to form my opinions. I feel I’m more mature since coming over here. I got more responsibility ’cause it’s my own ass I’ve gotta protect.”63

When these negotiations failed, or when officers or senior enlisted leaders refused to even acknowledge their men’s concerns, antiwar soldiers resorted to a more brutal tactic; they simply assassinated, or fragged, their superiors. Some US troops turned their weapons against their own officers during World War I, World II, and Korea, but during Vietnam, the total number of killings doubled.64 Between 1969 and 1972, there were between 800 and 1,000 fragging attempts with explosive devices alone

---

64 In World War I, with over 4.5 million troops in the field, the Army brought 370 fragging cases to court martial with similar rates in World War II and Korea. As Richard Moser points out, there was another difference in the Vietnam-era fraggings. In previous wars, the attacks often took place during combat when emotions ran high. In Vietnam, the largest number of fraggings happened on bases, a sign of the planning and deliberateness involved. Moser, New Winter Soldiers, 48.
in Vietnam. These numbers do not capture the assassination attempts by firearms or the hundreds of unreported cases. By conservative measure, the number of fragging attempts was well in the thousands. After the Hamburger Hill fiasco, troops put a $10,000 bounty on the officer that ordered the pointless and devastating attack. In a bizarre scenario that perhaps best depicts this “war within the war,” military police force air-assaulted a mountaintop site to save a company commander from his own troops after they had tried to assassinate him with fragmentation grenades on consecutive nights. It took the assault force an entire week to secure the US site from American troops. In April of 1971, Senator Charles Mathias of Maryland made an emotional statement on the floor of the Senate: “In all the lexicon of war there is not a more tragic word than ‘fragging’ with all that implies of total failure of discipline and the depression of morale, the complete sense of frustration and confusion and the loss of goals and hope itself.”

These forms of dissension, combat refusals and fraggings, reflect one of the primary differences between the stateside soldier movement that began in 1965 and the one developing in Vietnam by 1969. In combat, with the possibility of death or maiming

---

66 Cortright, Soldiers in Revolt, 43.
68 Stanton, The Rise and Fall of an American Army, 356
literally around every bend, soldiers’ dissension centered more on survival than politics. Rather than marching in the streets or circulating petitions, soldiers increasingly protested the war by simply refusing to participate or attacking officers that forced them to do so. In some ways, this was not new. Throughout America’s wars, soldiers, stricken by a very natural fear of injury or death, have avoided combat or lashed out at superiors. But in Vietnam, the situation was different. Troops still felt the age-old fear of death once bullets started ripping through the jungle canopy, but their anger over a war that seemed increasingly senseless aggravated this fear. Older soldiers were aghast to see one-year conscripts scribbling peace symbols on their helmets alongside phrases like “Kill a noncom [slang for non-commissioned officer, a senior enlisted member] for Christ,” “Power to the People,” and “The Army Sucks!”

As the war advanced, however, troops increasingly borrowed cues from their stateside counterparts and the antiwar protests occurring at US military bases. Initially, this rebellion took the form of individual statements in the media. In June of 1969, after

---

80 During World War I, doughboys developed a “live and let live” system where they purposefully avoided engaging the enemy; some injured themselves to avoid the trenches, even shooting off their own trigger fingers. At the battle of the Meuse-Argonne Valley in October 1918, more than 100,000 men fled the frontlines and refused to fight. World War II soldiers fragged over-eager officers by gathering around the ambitious officer to draw enemy artillery fire, and at other times, simply shoot the reviled superior. They also sabotaged risky night raids by purposefully making noise, including exaggerated coughs for comedic effect, until the officer in charge was forced to call off the mission. In the Pacific theater, some soldiers refused to take their malaria medicine in hopes of becoming ill and avoiding combat. And just as in World War I, self-inflicted wounds were rampant in both the European and Pacific theaters. In Korea, entire units faked patrols and ambushes with regularity in the war’s final years due to frustration with the conduct of the war. See Peter S. Kindsvatter, American Soldiers: Ground Combat in the World Wars, Korea, and Vietnam (Lawrence, KS: University Press of Kansas, 2003) and Christopher Capozzola, Uncle Sam Wants You: World War I and the Making of the Modern American Citizen (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008).

71 Cincinnatus, Self-Destruction, 66.
President Nixon announced the first troops withdrawal, Specialist 4/c Arthur Jaramillo told a reporter, "You can have this war and stick it. Why don’t they pull us all out?"72 A G.I. from Phoenix, Arizona, told a New York Times reporter, “If you’ll look closely, you’ll see some beads and a peace symbol under all this ammo. I may look like Pancho Villa on the outside but on the inside I’m nothing but a peacenik… I just work hard at surviving so I can go home and protest all this killing.”73 Private First Class Wayne Johnson out of Kissimmee told Life reporters that he had asked for a transfer out of the infantry because he didn’t “like to kill…our business is killing, but my heart’s not in it.”74

It was the series of civilian antiwar protests back in the United States during the fall of 1969, however, that spurred G.I.s in Vietnam to take a more political stand against the war. Young college students and workers from Senator McCarthy’s campaign staff sponsored a nationwide protest against the war, which became known as the Vietnam Moratorium. Millions of people, from San Francisco to Boston, marched through the streets of America. The protest culminated in the nation’s capital with Mrs. Martin Luther King leading tens of thousands of marchers from the Washington Monument to the White House.75 In November, over 250,000 protestors descended on Washington, DC

74 Saar, “You Can’t Just Hand Out Orders,” 33.
for the largest antiwar rally in American history. The day prior, 40,000 activists joined
in a forty-hour “March Against Death” which ended at the White House as the marchers
solemnly recited the names of Americans killed in Vietnam. The week prior, the New
York Times officially called for an end to the war and encouraged protestors to join the
rally in Washington.

These twin rallies were not only the largest to date, but they were also the first
antiwar protests to involve G.I.s in Vietnam. In the foothills south of Danang, fifteen
members of an infantry platoon wore black armbands on their patrol. One soldier told a
reporter, “It’s my way of protesting. We wanted to do something, and this was the only
thing we could think of.” In a cruel reminder of the realities of war, four of the
protestors were wounded by the end of the day. A dozen Airmen at an air base outside
Saigon wore their own crude armbands. One of them, asking not to be identified,
vocalized his support for the rally back home: “I couldn’t let this day go by without
some sort of gesture. Those people back home have to keep up the pressure until Nixon
gets us out of here. It’s the only way we’ll ever get home.” Private First Class Chris

---

76 Richard Harwood, “Largest Rally in Washington History Demands Rapid End to Vietnam War,”
Yapp told a Life Magazine reporter, “outside of our families, I think the protestors may be the only ones who really give a damn about what’s happening.”

There is a common perception that the antiwar movement in the US had a harmful impact on soldiers in the field. This idea, however, reduces soldiers’ agency by denigrating their capacity to think and act of their own volition; it implies that troops’ personal motivation derived from external stimuli, rather than from within. For sure, there were some soldiers who resented the protests back home. But there were also many soldiers who saw the civilian protestor as an ally in the fight against an unjust war.

Perhaps buoyed by the first moratorium demonstration, G.I.s played an even greater role during the November rallies. Days before the protest, over 1,300 G.I.s put their names on a full-page advertisement sponsored by the Student Mobilization Committee in the New York Times, declaring their opposition to American involvement in the war in Vietnam and urging fellow citizens to participate in the upcoming protest.

---

79 After interviewing one hundred G.I.s in eight different units across Vietnam, Hal Wingo reached four primary conclusions: “Many soldiers regard the organized antiwar campaign in the US with open and outspoken sympathy; the protests in the U.S. are not demoralizing troops in the field; nearly all feel that the Paris peace talks are a fraud; and the troops believe President Nixon has done a good job so far in pulling Americans out of Vietnam.” See Hal Wingo, “From GIs in Vietnam, Unexpected Cheers,” Life Magazine, October 24, 1969, 36.

80 As an example, see Kindsvatter’s American Soldiers. Kindsvatter argues that American soldiers, once immersed in combat, leaned heavily on a “direct dependency relationship” amongst fellow soldiers. American soldiers were also sustained by a “latent ideology” that motivated their efforts beyond mere survival. For Kindsvatter, this latent ideology was directly tied to support from the home front, and combat motivation accordingly fell apart, even if the buddy relationships didn’t, during the latter stages of the Vietnam War. See pp. 125-126, 136-141, and 145-154.
G.I.s serving in Vietnam provided more signatures than other stateside military installation. Dave Blalock, a soldier stationed in Vietnam, described the impact of the advertisement on combat troops at the time: “Everybody’s reading [the ad] and saying ‘Wow, this is great, this is really neat…why don’t we do something on this date, November 15.’” Over the next several days, Blalock and his fellow soldiers hatched a plan to shut down their entire base in honor of the protests back home.81 Captain Alan Goldstein, an Army dentist, collected over 130 signatures on a petition declaring “We the undersigned wish to express our support for the Vietnam War Moratorium,” which quickly drew the ire of Army intelligence officers.82 Several days before the demonstration, a lieutenant in the 25th Infantry Division pulled a reporter aside to tell him, “None of the men here believe in this war. Don’t believe what they tell you. We’re just here because we have no choice and for no other reason.”83 Military leadership was well aware of the dissent spreading through the ranks. Via high-priority message, a senior commanding general warned subordinate Army leaders in Vietnam that the “potentially explosive situation demands that all commanders closely monitor the

---

82 Military intelligence agents brought in soldiers suspected of signing the petition and asked them if they had indeed signed the document, had they done so voluntarily on their own time, and could they identify any other signatories. See Henry Kamm, “Army is Checking Antiwar Petition,” New York Times, November 21, 1969, 10.
situation to ensure everything possible is done to preclude adverse actions and publicity.”  

Following the moratorium demonstrations, soldiers capitalized on the holidays to make a statement about the war. In late November, over one hundred G.I.s of the 71st Evacuation Hospital in Pleiku, Vietnam, sent letters to President Nixon announcing a Thanksgiving hunger strike to protest the war. G.I. ringleaders distributed packets of letters encouraging soldiers to “pass the letters among the EM [enlisted men] of your compound. Do not under any circumstances let the ‘lifers’ get word of this. Big changes are brought about by small people doing small things that suddenly get very big.” The enclosed letters announced to President Nixon that “so long as American soldiers continue to fight and die in a senseless war that cannot be won, we the undersigned have very little for which to be thankful for. Therefore we intend to fast on Thanksgiving Day from 0100 to 2400 hours.” Army leadership was mortified by the soldiers’ audacity.

In a message to all commanders in Pleiku area, a senior Army official announced, “in spite of recent liberalization of army policy on dissent…members of the army will not, repeat, will not participate in any demonstration while service in Vietnam unless expressly sanctioned by competent authority.” Of course, the message allowed that the only competent authority was the unit’s commanding general. In a November 23

---

memorandum to General Westmoreland, the Army’s chief lawyer recommended
transferring the troublemakers to other posts, reminding personnel of the Army dissent
regulations, and if necessary, using force to quell the uprising.85

In one of the more daring rebellions of the era, fifty G.I.s staged a demonstration
in downtown Saigon on Christmas Eve where they handed out leaflets encouraging
other G.I.s to stop fighting. Shortly after the rally began, Colonel Keator, the top military
policemen in the capital city, announced over a loudspeaker, “All military personnel
have sixty seconds to leave this square or face arrest.” Nearby, the colonel had lined up
nearly a dozen jeeps filled with military policemen armed with machine guns and
wearing riot gear. Within minutes, they rushed in to disperse to rally, herding fellow
G.I.s off at rifle point.86 Specialist Fourth Class Lawrence H. Guthrie of Cambridge,
Massachusetts, wrote a letter to Senator Edward Kennedy shortly thereafter
complaining about the police overreaction.87 Back in September, General Westmoreland
had claimed that morale and discipline remained at an all-time high in Vietnam. Now, a
Washington Star exposé, entitled “Growing GI Disillusion Casts Doubt on Morale

85 The Army message to local commanders in Pleiku did grant soldiers permission to “skip any meal he
chooses for whatever motives of conscience or appetite he may have” with one important caveat: “Public
advertising of that fact by one or more individuals constitutes demonstration and will not be permitted.”
Folder 304, Demonstration at 71st Evacuation Hospital, Spector-CMH includes the Army message traffic, the
cover letter to G.I.s, the blank letter to President Nixon, and the Staff Judge Advocate’s message to
Westmoreland.
86 See Boyle, The Flower of the Dragon, 171-174 and Ralph Blumenthal, “Violations Mark Christmas Truce in
Claims,” highlighted the turbulence sweeping through the ranks in Vietnam.88 This disillusion, however, was not limited to Vietnam. The G.I.s at Fort Bragg, led by GIs United and the Quaker House staff, were ready to take their antiwar protest into the streets of Fayetteville.

As the Bragg Briefs distribution case wound its way through the courts over the summer and fall of 1969, antiwar G.I.s at Fort Bragg decided to open a new, and again unprecedented, front in their battle against the war in Vietnam. In the September issue of the underground newspaper, the soldiers announced the first annual GIs United Patriots for Peace Parade, an event designed to protest the “illegal, neo-colonialist racist war in Vietnam.” Former Green Beret Don Duncan, who in the years following the publication of his “The Whole Thing was a Lie” in Ramparts had become a celebrity of sorts in the soldier antiwar movement, and Dr. Howard Levy would be the guest speakers. In an intriguing sign of synergy between antiwar groups, the soldiers announced a charter bus was bound for rallies at the University of North Carolina and Duke University the Friday night before the Fayetteville rally, which would then hopefully return filled with students for the G.I. protest on Saturday. GIs United even had the audacity to apply for permission to hold the rally on Fort Bragg itself. The post’s Provost Marshall summarily dismissed the idea.89

---

88 Kirk, “Growing GI Disillusion Casts Doubt on Morale Claims.”
On a bright Saturday morning, over one hundred G.I.s, all out of uniform to conform to Army regulations, led 700 protestors down Hay Street to Rowan Street Park. As the crowd shuffled along, the soldiers up front led chants of “End the War in Vietnam – Bring the Troops Home Now!” and “Nixon’s Indicted by GI’s United.” Military Intelligence agents conspicuously filmed the proceedings. Two women hecklers shouted insults at the parade of protestors, one of them belting out the “Star Spangled Banner.” Fayetteville policemen stood along the route while the city’s riot squad remained on high alert but out of sight. Their presence was unnecessary; the rally was peaceful throughout.

Once the crowd arrived at Rowan Park in the heart of downtown Fayetteville, Dave Shulman acted as emcee on the park’s bandstand. Dave O’Brien, another G.I., took to the stage to explain the history of the GIs United organization and their demands, which included complete withdrawal of troops from Vietnam, an end to imperialistic wars and racism, and constitutional rights for soldiers. Donald Duncan received a standing ovation from soldiers and civilians alike when he shouted, “We are putting you on notice, Mr. Nixon. We will no longer allow corporate interests to define our enemy for us. We will decide that for ourselves.” Howard Levy highlighted the surprise many felt that such vehement antiwar spirit emerged in a town so connected to

---

its military neighbor when he declared to a cheering crowd, “They said it couldn’t
happen here, but it is happening, baby, and right here in Fayetteville, North Carolina!”
Levy, who had served two years in prison for his own antiwar stance, encouraged the
G.I.s in attendance and highlighted the impact their dissent was having on the war
effort: “Richard Nixon is running scared. He knows what the movement among soldiers
signifies and you can’t fight a war without an Army. The American G.I. ain’t gonna fight
this war.” After the rally, G.I.s and protestors found their way back to the Quaker
House to continue the conversation well into the night.

Although the speakers at the rally in Fayetteville made little reference to the
upcoming moratorium in Washington, DC, the aftershocks of the protest in the nation’s
capital were felt all the way in Fayetteville. As tens of thousands of activists spilled into
the streets around the White House, thirty G.I.s along with some of their wives held a
peace prayer vigil in the 12th Support Brigade chapel on Fort Bragg. A young soldier
read aloud Major Gordon Livingston’s now-famous “Blackhorse Prayer,” a satirical
homage to soldiering and war that Livingston had secretly distributed before Colonel
George S. Patton’s change of command ceremony in Vietnam. Another soldier

93 Reese, “Quiet Rally Follows War Protest March.”
94 Donald Duncan was the one speaker to connect the Fayetteville rally to the upcoming Moratorium in
Washington, DC when he claimed that the protest in Rowan Park was “but a tiny prelude to next
Wednesday when millions of people are going to fall out.” Ibid.
95 Army message traffic after the incident referred to Livingston as “a confirmed pacifist of some variety”
that had “previously tried to convince officers in the regiment, including Patton, that the Vietnamese War is
wrong.” When Army investigators asked Livingston “why he committed such an ill-advised and un-officer
like act, he stated, ‘I had to do it.’” The Army was so dumbfounded by the officer’s antics that they ordered
delivered a sermon in which he implored those in attendance to “realize that the nearly one million men who have died in Vietnam have not died in vain, but that they have died to show us the insanity of our position in Vietnam.”\textsuperscript{96} At the 71st High School in downtown Fayetteville, the school’s principal, Robert Lewis, suspended several students for wearing black armbands in support of the national moratorium. In a rare case of aligned opinion, both the \textit{Fayetteville Observer} and the \textit{Bragg Briefs} condemned the overzealous principal’s action. G.I.s dedicated the next issue of their paper to the students while the Fayetteville paper accused the school of “denying the legitimate rights of others, including the rights of concerned youngsters in school.”\textsuperscript{97}

As the November moratorium protest in Washington, DC loomed closer, the Army deployed around 4,000 paratroopers from Fort Bragg to the nation’s capital for


riot control. A cold rain fell as the troops landed at nearby Andrews Air Force base, bound for tents on the outskirts of the city for the next several days. In a poignant letter to the deployed troopers, the Bragg Briefs staffers reached out to their fellow soldiers, reminding them that G.I.s would be part of the demonstration as well:

> These people are not in any sense of the word your enemy. They will come in peace in an effort to overcome the insanity that has gripped this nation in an ever tightening vice since 1965. Just as you are of the troops and for the troops, they are of the people and for the people. Support them. Their struggle is our struggle. Sincerely in Peace, GIs United.

The commander of the troops, perhaps worried about any antiwar sentiments among his own men, ordered his paratroopers to only reply with “I’m proud to be a member of the 82nd Airborne Division and I’m here to do a job” if confronted by a reporter or protestor.

By December of 1969, it was clear to civilian antiwar groups in North Carolina that Fayetteville had become the epicenter of the state’s protest movement. On December 13, the North Carolina Vietnam Moratorium Committee and the North Carolina Mobilization Committee to End the War in Vietnam, along with GIs United, called for another rally that not only focused on ending the war but also on ensuring the soldiers at Bragg that they had allies in the movement. One Chapel Hill student argued, “It is the responsibility of the civilians to show the soldiers that the civilians have not

---

forgotten them. We must show them that we not only care, but are willing to support their struggle.”

A flyer for the demonstration proclaimed, “It’s GIs who are dying in Vietnam. Help them speak out.”

The organizers’ stated aims - bring all troops home now, end racism, grant full constitutional rights for G.I.s, ensure federal minimum wage for G.I.s, and abolish the draft – reflected this sentiment.

Around one o’clock on Saturday afternoon, approximately 700 protestors gathered at the Quaker House on Ray Avenue and heading for Rowan Park. As before, dozens of policemen stood along the route watching the crowd chant “one, two, three, four, we don’t want your lousy war!” and “What do we want? Peace! When do we want it? Now!”

Once the crowd reached the city park, Dave Shulman took the microphone and asked all G.I.s in attendance to raise their hands; half of the attendees did so. The rest of the attendees began cheering, eventually rising to their feet to show their appreciation for soldiers who dared to protest the war. Shulman challenged military intelligence agents in the crowd to take action against those that raised their hands, knowing they dared not make a move against so many G.I.s in public. Bragg leadership had recently relaxed the post’s haircut standards, but instead of being appreciative, Shulman went on the attack: “Now it seems we’re allowed to wear our hair a little longer. The army thinks they’re going to co-opt us that way. Well, we’re going to let our

---

101 Printed Handbill, “Support the GI Struggle Against the War,” n.d. Guilford-QH.
hair grow, then we’re going to control our barracks, then we’re going to control our own lives.”

Around seven members of the Young Americans for Freedom heckled the group, shouting “traitor!” and “communist!” at those assembled. As before, the event was spirited but peaceful as Andrew Pulley, a member of the Jackson 8, singer Barbara Dane, and former officer Gordon Livingston addressed the crowd. As the temperatures began to drop, the crowd drifted away, but it was clear to the G.I.s of Bragg that they were not alone in their quest to end the war in Vietnam. Of course, not everyone in Fayetteville was so enthusiastic. In a letter to the editor, a concerned citizen hoped “these doped up whining, dirty, non-working, non tax-paying, dutiless, non-Americans would end up behind bars where they belong.”

The Fort Bragg leadership, particularly General Tolson, also took the rapidly expanding soldier movement on the post quite serious. They had denied the G.I.s request to distribute Braggs Brief on post, and although they could not forbid soldiers from attending the rallies downtown, leadership put countless soldiers on mundane details such as “area beautification” to keep them on post. But leadership also realized that intimidation and harassment only exacerbated the problem. In a rare step not seen at other Army posts, Tolson actually met with members of GIs United in December. The

---

103 Heather Lynd, “Fayetteville Rally,” protean/RADISH, December-January, 7-8. Lynd was a participant in the rally. The protean/Radish was an alternative journal published out of Chapel Hill, North Carolina, for several years beginning in 1969.

104 Fayetteville Observer, 1 January 1970.
meeting was the brainchild of GIs United member David Wachter who sent a letter to General Tolson outlining the group’s complaints, which the soldiers began calling the “Wachter Initiative.” During the gathering, with a three-star general on one side of the table and outspoken junior enlisted men on the other, the soldiers voiced their concerns over harassment of members of the Bragg Briefs staff along with other complaints. The post had relaxed the aforementioned haircut regulations in an attempt to placate the soldiers, but as Shulman highlighted at the rally, antiwar soldiers recognized the ploy for what it was: a thinly veiled strategy of co-option. Bragg leadership, however, was not alone in their struggle to confront dissent inside the ranks; the entire Army was facing the same problem.

Throughout the summer and fall of 1969, the G.I. movement continued to expand at stateside military installations beyond Fort Bragg. At Fort Hood, Texas, two hundred soldiers seized control of a six-block area on post and fought with military police for several hours. Army officials eventually arrested forty soldiers who had served as ringleaders in the revolt that left several buildings damaged. Several days later, G.I.s staged a similar rebellion at Fort Carson, Colorado, during which they fought military police with rocks and bottles. In September, military police in Hawaii forced their way into three churches, without warrants, just after daybreak to arrest twelve G.I.s who had

---

taken sanctuary there for the past six weeks. Another nine G.I.s fled before police could apprehend them. A military spokesman explained that the armed services had been “more than lenient,” but the raids had become necessary once the men refused to return to their units. A month later, Army police arrested thirty-five G.I.s and three civilians during an American Servicemen’s Union meeting inside the enlisted club at Fort Lewis, Washington. An Army spokesman stopped short of declaring the organization illegal, but claimed, “I cannot think of any action a man would take as a member of the union which would not run into sharp conflict with the military code of justice.” Shortly thereafter, seventeen of the soldiers and three civilians, including Andy Stapp, the founder of ASU, filed suit against the Secretary of Defense and the Fort Lewis commanding general demanding the court recognize soldiers’ rights of free speech and assembly.106

Even as the movement expanded, the Army and the Department of Defense (DoD) were at odds over how to deal with the rebellion inside the ranks. The previous May, the Army had released its first official guidance on dissent, a document that went out of its way to acknowledge soldiers’ rights to express their opinions, gather at

---

106 For the Fort Hood and Fort Carson revolts, see Cortright, Soldiers in Revolt, 73. In Honolulu, military police had to literally break down the door at one church. A military spokesman declared, “The legal basis for apprehension of servicemen…in desertion does exist and was exercised.” See “12 Antiwar G.I.s Arrested in Raids,” New York Times, September 13, 1969 and “Hawaii MPs Arrest 12 Men in 3 Churches,” Los Angeles Times, September 13, 1969. At Fort Lewis, the Army initially charged the men with holding an illegal meeting but then quickly altered the accusations, eventually declaring that the group had been “boisterous” and “disrespectful.” See Steven V. Roberts, “17 G.I.s Sue to Clarify Speech and Assembly Rights,” New York Times, October 29, 1969, 5.
coffeehouses, and produce underground newspapers when off duty. The document was astonishingly permissive, focusing on steps G.I.s could take to protest the war rather than those they could not while striving to “safeguard the service-member’s right of expression to the maximum extent possible, and to impose only such minimum restraints as are necessary to enable to Army to perform its mission.” The Army was not acting on its own. Prior to publishing the document, the service had received approval from David Packard, the Deputy Secretary of Defense. In fact, shortly after the Army’s directive made its way to subordinate commanders, Packard proposed that the department draft similar guidance for the other military services. The result was a draft DoD Directive on dissent that mirrored the Army’s version. Faced with unprecedented dissent inside the ranks, both the Army and the Department of Defense both seemed to agree that appeasement, not antagonism, was the best way to stymie the revolt. This unified front would be short lived.

Over the summer, during closed hearings before the House Armed Services Committee (HASC), conservative congressmen attacked senior Army leaders over their new dissent directive after an incident at Fort Meade, Maryland, in which the post commander had allowed soldiers to distribute antiwar leaflets and demonstrate on post.

108 John Kester, Assistant Secretary of the Army, Manpower and Reserve Affairs, “Agenda Item for Discussion with Secretary Resor,” subj: Guidance on Dissent, September 17, 1969. Folder 192, Guidance on Dissent, Spector-CMH.
for ninety minutes. Representative Charles E. Bennett (D-FL) told the Secretary of the Army, “The dissent paper concerns me more than anything I have ever read from the Army...It is just nauseating to me to think that such a publication would be possible from the Army.” John Hunt (R-N.J.) scolded the Secretary, proclaiming, “I have never read anything which to me was more repugnant than this particular documentation.” Committee Counsel John Blandford labeled the dissent guidance “one of the most damaging documents ever put out by the Army.” The committee chairman, Mendel Rivers, a Democrat from South Carolina, claimed that he had literally struggled to compose himself after reading the document and threatened a constitutional amendment to “stop this kind of thing.”

Even though Department of Defense officials publicly denied that the committee’s threats influenced their actions, senior defense leaders scrapped the draft directive that emulated the Army’s language. By September, just six weeks after the hearings before the HASC, the department released a dramatically different document. In this version, the Army’s language of imposing “only such minimum restraints as necessary” was noticeably absent along with any mention of service members’ constitutional rights. Rather than allowing G.I.s the right to gather at off-post

---

109 Rivers openly confronted Westmoreland over the guidance, appealing to their shared home state: “I bet my hat you don’t agree with it. Now if you have got one drop of South Carolina blood left in your body, you don’t agree with it.” For all quotes above, see Richard Homan, “Crackdown on GI Dissent: Pentagon Tightened Rules After Rivers’ Panel Called Softer Set of Guidelines ‘Nauseating,’” Washington Post, November 10, 1969.
coffeehouses, the Department of Defense directive gave commanders “the authority to place establishments off-limits” if there was “a significant adverse effect on members’ health, morale, or welfare.” While military officials still could not stop soldiers from printing underground newspapers on their own time, they could discipline those associated with any paper that used any language “in violation of Federal law.”

If the Army directive cleaved to the permissible, then the new Department of Defense version hewed to the prohibitive. Days after the release of the new directive, Roger Kelley, the Assistant Defense Secretary for Manpower and Reserve Affairs, met with reporters to explain the department’s position. The source of the current problem with discipline and morale, Kelley explained, was the draft, or as he put it, “dissidence among the youth of the country, some those who are part of the military establishment for one or two or three years.” Kelley argued that the US military had never been a democratic organization and declared, “In order to have a military force, you have got to have discipline, you have got to have morale.” Kelley closed the press conference by explaining that “dissent in a military establishment which seeks to undermine morale and leadership may be harmful and therefore should be contained.”

---


111 News Briefing Transcript, Roger Kelley, Assistant Defense Secretary for Manpower and Reserve Affairs and Frank Bartimo, Assistant Defense Counsel, September 15, 1969. In particular, see pp. 22-25 of the transcript. Folder 192, Guidance on Dissent, Spector-CMH.
The Army was left scrambling. Although Roger Kelley had claimed that the Army directive was not incompatible with the new DoD version during his press conference, both the language and overall tone were sufficiently different to draw attention, particularly from the press. In a private phone call with Major General Knowlton, the Secretary of the Army General Staff, General Westmoreland refused to withdraw the Army directive, arguing that the press would claim the Army had panicked and backtracked on its early stance.  

Mr. John Kester, the Assistant Secretary of the Army for Manpower and Reserve Affairs, advised the Secretary of the Army similarly, arguing, “any change now might appear to commanders and the press to be a retreat.”  

For over a year, the Army grappled internally with its decision. By March of 1970, General Westmoreland had approved an Army version of the guidance much more in line with the DoD directive, but staffers in the office of the Secretary of the Army successfully fought its publication, arguing that “each statement of a right in the regulations is coupled with a statement of prohibition.”  

In August of 1970, nearly a year after the initial release of the DoD guidance, the Army’s chief lawyer recommended that the Army maintain its original guidance.  

---

112 Record of Chief of Staff Fonecon, Subject: Dissent, October 17, 1969, Box 26, Folder 455, Westmoreland-NARA.
113 Kester, “Agenda Item for Discussion with Secretary Resor.”
114 Memorandum, Ronald J. Greene, Assistant to the General Counsel, to Mr. Jordan and Mr. Keser, subj: Dissent Regulations, March 20, 1970. Folder 191, Spector-CMH.
115 Memorandum, Robert E. Jordan III, General Counsel, to Acting Secretary of the Army, subj: Regulations on Dissent, August 25, 1970. Spector-CMH.
Pentagon over dissent regulations was winding down, not so much through any consensus but because more permanent solutions were looming.

During the fall of 1969, as the GI dissent movement continued to spread in the US and Vietnam, the Army’s project on the All-Volunteer Force, PROVIDE, moved from the study phase to execution. In August, after receiving a briefing from the PROVIDE team, General Westmoreland not only approved the overall concept of an all-volunteer army but dictated that aspects of the study, particularly “those associated with the morale and welfare of the Army,” be implemented immediately.116 In September, the Army staff completed final staffing actions for the PROVIDE recommendations. As part of this staffing process, Army officers presented three courses of action: The Army could oppose the all-volunteer concept; it could maintain an uncommitted position and react only when directed by the Department of Defense; or it could “seize the initiative” and begin implementing the study’s major recommendations. The staff was nearly unanimous; the Army needed to seize the initiative.117

In October, the staff briefed Westmoreland on the final, staff-approved recommendations, who once again approved the all-volunteer army concept and the overall plan to begin a phased transition to volunteers. Despite his endorsement of the volunteer concept, Westmoreland did maintain an air of caution, recommending that

116 Memorandum for Record, Edward C. O’Connor, Assistant Secretary of the General Staff, subj: Briefing of the Chief of Staff, Army, on All Volunteer Army, August 18, 1969. AVA/MHI.
117 Staff Summary Sheet, Lieutenant General Walter T. Kerwin, Deputy Chief of Staff for Personnel, subj: Project Volunteer in Defense of the Nation (PROVIDE), September 19, 1969. AVA/CMH.
staffers ensure that the PROVIDE recommendations not “commit the Army to a particular course of action at this time.” Rather than any sort of ambivalence toward volunteers, the Chief of Staff’s restraint merely reflected political realities. Westmoreland had decided that the Army should seize the initiative, but he also wanted to avoid committing the Army to a particular plan only to find it at odds with the Gates Commission or Department of Defense studies on ending the draft.

Days later, Westmoreland formally established the PROVIDE task group, which would “provide the central direction necessary to coordinate the multiple activities associated with moving to an all-volunteer army.” There was no foot dragging here; the group was to implement the study’s recommendations as “rapidly as plans are developed and approved by Chief of Staff, Army.” Despite the Army’s focus on keeping the study and recommendations “close-hold,” news of the final PROVIDE study suddenly ended up in the Army Times, an independent newspaper for soldiers, within days of the task group’s founding. In a memorandum to Westmoreland, Brigadier General Quirey explained that the story contained specific information that could only have come from a leak at the highest levels of the Army. The actual source of the

\[\text{\footnotesize 118 Memorandum for Record, Edward C. O'Connor, Assistant Secretary of the General Staff, subj: Project Volunteer in Defense of the Nation (PROVIDE), October 22, 1969. AVA/CMH. For specific deletions and additions to the original PROVIDE recommendations, see Staff Summary Sheet, Lieutenant Colonel Jack Butler, Directorate of Personnel, Studies and Research, subj: Modification of the PROVIDE Recommendations, October 24, 1969. AVA/CMH.}
\[\text{\footnotesize 119 Chief of Staff Memorandum 69-473, Major General William A. Knowlton, Secretary of the General Staff, to Heads of Army Staff Agencies, sub: Task Group: Project Volunteer in Defense of the Nation (PROVIDE), November 3, 1969. AVA/CMH.}
\]

191
disclosure, however, remained a mystery. More importantly, the memo reveals that the Army was very much trying to keep its feelings on a volunteer force to itself pending the outcome of the Gates Commission. Quirey recommended that Westmoreland “not make a statement on this study until after the Gates Commission releases its report in December.” If the Army was forced to make a statement, the service should simply announce that it “has been analyzing the problem and has concluded that all volunteer Army is possible.”120 One thing was certain; even as the Army seized the initiative, it was keeping a watchful eye on the work of the Presidential Commission.

At 11:00 o’clock on February 21, 1970, Thomas Gates, Chairman of the Presidential Commission on an All-Volunteer Armed Force, presented President Nixon with a printed copy of the group’s report in the Cabinet Room.121 The commission had first met in May of 1969 and had spent the better part of nine months grappling with the issues of the draft and a volunteer force. Ultimately, the commission rendered a unanimous recommendation “that the nation’s interests will be better served by an all-volunteer force…than by a mixed force of volunteers and conscripts and that steps should be taken promptly to move in this direction.” The Commission had firmly

120 Memorandum, Brigadier General William O. Quirey, Director, Personnel Studies and Research, to General William Westmoreland, Chief of Staff, Army, subj: Premature Disclosure of Close Hold Information, November 16, 1969. AVA/CMH.
121 Martin Anderson prepped the President for the presentation via memo. He advised Nixon to simply state that he would now “carefully read and study the report” while a White House Task Group would begin “analyzing and reviewing the various options that are available, and the cost and implications of each.” Memorandum, Martin Anderson, to Richard Nixon, subj: Meeting with Commission on an All-Volunteer Armed Force, February 21, 1969. Box 3, Folder 9, Anderson-RNPL.
decided that “a volunteer force will not jeopardize national security, and we believe it will have a beneficial effect on the military.”\textsuperscript{122}

The fact that the group had reached this conclusion was no surprise. After all, when President Nixon appointed the commission, he did not ask its members to examine the feasibility of ending the draft, but rather to “develop a comprehensive plan for eliminating conscription and moving toward an all-volunteer.”\textsuperscript{123} The verdict had long since been decided. The commission had simply deliberated on the best plan for implementation. Far from groundbreaking, their primary recommendations centered on increasing pay for military personnel in the first two years of service and improving recruiting. If there were any surprises, it was the group’s recommendation that the draft be terminated by June 30, 1971, a deadline less than eighteen months away.

The Gates Commission report was quite clear on another matter: the G.I. dissent movement was crippling the US military. The all-volunteer force was the only viable, long-term solution:

The draft creates unnecessary problems for the military. Selection by lottery compels some to serve who have neither a talent nor a taste for military life, resulting in misfits or maladjustments to military service. Draftees who cannot adjust must nevertheless serve out a two-year tour. These men present morale and disciplinary problems which otherwise would not arise. Some spend much of their military service in

\textsuperscript{123} White House Press Release, Statement by the President Announcing a Commission on an All-Volunteer Armed Force, March 27, 1969. The President had initially tasked the group to present their final report in November. Document G0266 in Rostker’s I Want You.
confinement, because it is so difficult for them to adjust to military service. Dissent within the military presents particularly ticklish problems for the armed forces of a free nation. The problems raised by the forced military service of those who are unwilling or unable to adjust to military life will be largely overcome by voluntary recruiting.\textsuperscript{124}

Just like the White House, the Department of Defense, and the Army before them, the Commission concluded that the surest way to end resistance inside the ranks was to replace reluctant draftees with eager volunteers.

Despite this consensus and the ceremonial hoopla over the final Gates Commission report, the Department of Defense, the Army, and even the National Security Council did not embrace the commission’s overall findings. The Army had briefed the commission over the summer, but the service had purposefully avoided any mention of its own work on transitioning to volunteers, preferring instead to highlight the Army’s current dependency on the draft compared to the other services.\textsuperscript{125} William Meckling, the commission’s staff director, briefed the Army Policy Council on January 7, and the Army immediately criticized the commission for placing too much emphasis on entry-level pay raises at the expense of pay raises for all troops. The commission, in what was probably a reflection of the economists’ influence on the group, had focused almost exclusively on pay, avoiding improved housing and other quality of life factors

\textsuperscript{124} [Italics my own for emphasis] The Report of The President’s Commission on an All-Volunteer Armed Force, 32.

\textsuperscript{125} The Army briefed the commission that its enlisted personnel requirements had risen sixty percent between 1965 and 1969. In 1969, fifty-six percent of soldiers would be two-year draftees and half of the volunteers were draft motivated. See Memorandum, Frank E. Blazey, General Staff Executive, to Various Addressees, subj: Briefings for Presidential Commission on an All-Volunteer Armed Force, June 17, 1969. AVA/MHI.
vital to recruiting and retention. On January 9, the Secretary of the Army, Stanley Resor, met with the Thomas Gates and the commission to voice his concerns. Martin Anderson remembered the meeting as “a very heated affair,” claiming that Secretary Resor became so agitated that he could hardly express himself. The Army was not distressed by the commission’s recommendation to end the draft, but they were concerned by the commission’s assumptions, which in the Army’s opinion obscured just how difficult raising an army of volunteers would be.

The Department of Defense and its Project Volunteer group was equally dismayed by the commission’s work, particularly the June 1971 deadline, which staffers thought “impractical, if not irresponsible.” The Project Volunteer had released its final report in January, which argued that pay adjustments alone could not ensure recruitment goals. Similar to the Army, the defense officials in the Pentagon thought the commission had focused too much on entry-level pay and thus greatly underestimated overall costs. Despite these concerns, the entire Department of Defense, including the Army, was still very much in favor of ending the draft. Secretary Laird sent a

---

126 Oral History, Dr. Martin Anderson, July 13, 1983, Box 14, Folder 7, AVA/MHI.
127 Lieutenant Colonel Jack Butler and his PROVIDE staff believed that the Gates Report was erroneous in several areas. The Army concluded that the commission underestimated by 76,000 the number of new volunteers needed in the first year after ending the draft and overestimated somewhere between 27,000 and 37,000 the number of youths that would actually volunteer without the draft in place. The result was a discrepancy of almost 175,000 soldiers. See Griffith, The US Army’s Transition to the All-Volunteer Force, 36.
129 In a memo to General Westmoreland, Lieutenant General Walter Kerwin was very clear: “DoD favors the all-volunteer force objectives.” See Memorandum, Lieutenant General Walter Kerwin, Deputy Chief of Staff
memorandum to President Nixon on March 11 endorsing the “basic conclusions…that the draft be phased out,” but also called for a two-year extension of induction authority. In a veiled reference to unruly soldiers, Laird pointed out that one of the most important steps in establishing a volunteer force would be the restoration of “the sense of ‘duty-honor-country’ which should symbolize the uniform and the man in it…it is increasingly difficult to maintain morale. One of our major human goals is to enable the military serviceman to feel the highest pride in himself, his uniform, and the military profession.”

Henry Kissinger and his National Security Council (NSC) were also concerned by the June 1971 deadline and its impact on ongoing negotiations with North Vietnam. On March 25, President Nixon convened his National Security Council to determine the administration’s final position. The NSC had compiled inputs and options from the Department of Defense, Martin Anderson’s task group, and Kissinger into a decision memorandum that sought the President’s verdict on conscription extension, a selective service stand-by system, and other draft reform issues. A month later, Nixon

for Personnel, to General William Westmoreland, Chief of Staff, Army, subj: DoD Position on an All-Volunteer Armed Force, February 20, 1970. AVA/CMH.
131 Lee and Parker, Ending the Draft, 72.
announced to Congress that he “supported the basic conclusions of the Commission” and agreed, “we should move now toward ending the draft.” The President also called for an extension of induction authority past June 30, 1970 but refused to specify a specific timeframe. He also called for a twenty percent pay increase for military members with less than two years of service and six percent raise for all federal employees, which would include service-members beyond two years of service.133 Ultimately, the decision was a compromise between the Gates Commission and the Department of Defense’s recommendations. And there was perhaps another reason the President and his National Security staff wished to extend the draft; one week after his message to Congress on draft reform, US troops invaded Cambodia.

Even though the White House and the Department of Defense balked at the idea of ending the draft in 1971, there was serious consideration of another, more immediate, method of stamping down dissent in the ranks: an all-volunteer force in Vietnam. As combat refusals became public and Vietnam soldiers were participating in the antiwar rallies during the fall of 1969, the White House was considering the idea of “uncoupling the draft from the war in Vietnam.” In an amazing admission, the confidential document acknowledged, “once volunteers are fighting the war, agitation against it becomes more

difficult.” In January, Stephen Enke, a consultant the White House had used before on draft issues, passed Martin Anderson a position paper on “the desirability and feasibility of realizing in 1970 an All-Volunteer Force in Vietnam (AVFV) as distinct from an All-Volunteer Force (AVAF) everywhere in 1971 or 1972.” Enke admitted that the ability of the US to “stick it out” in Vietnam was increased if every soldier was there voluntarily. In early 1971, Henry Kissinger interrupted a meeting with Secretary Laird to demand information on the feasibility of only using volunteers in Vietnam. The Department of Defense, however, never warmed to the idea. In August of 1970, Secretary Laird prepared a memorandum for President Nixon which argued that an all-volunteer combat force would prevent DoD from meeting manpower requirements, increase draft calls, and set a dangerous precedent of bifurcating the Army into those who have to serve in combat and those who do not. For sure, there were political reasons that the idea gained traction in the administration; by decoupling the war from the draft, they hoped to undercut critics of the war. But the proposed policy was also a direct reflection of the impact dissenting soldiers were having on policy.

136 Memorandum for Record, Phil Odeen, subj: Vietnamization Meeting with Secretary Laird, April 8, 1971. Folder 280, Spector-CMH.
As the Army and Department of Defense learned about the contents of the Gates Commission report in early January, the soldier movement in Fayetteville was struggling to overcome tragedy. During the late hours of December 31, Dean Holland, the young soldier from Nebraska whose initial plea for help had brought the Quakers to Fayetteville, was driving back to North Carolina from Florida. He had finally received his conscientious objector status and was thrilled about devoting his life to helping other soldiers achieve the same. On a lonely stretch of Highway 17, just south of Savannah, Georgia, Holland pulled into the left lane to pass a long line of slow-moving vehicles. Moments later, Holland and passengers Kaye Lindsay and George Johnson slammed into an oncoming automobile. Dean and Kaye died instantly; both were in their early twenties. Two young lives were extinguished, and the Quaker House had lost its director and catalyst. As the Quakers in Fayetteville struggled to make sense of the loss, Wood Bouldin, who had served as the original director of the house, returned to Fayetteville to salvage the movement’s momentum.138

The GIs United were facing their own leadership void as Dave Shulman separated from the Army to return to graduate school. The movement at Bragg had become legendary for its ability to withstand turbulence in its leadership; Joes Miles had given way to Dave Shulman and Richard Yahr, and now Shulman and Yahr gave way to

---

Bill Carothers, Dave O’Brien, and John Vail. Just like the Quaker House, the GIs United mission would go on. In January, soldier representatives went to Columbia, South Carolina, to protest the closing of the UFO coffeehouse. In February, a GIs United alum started a new chapter of the organization in Okinawa, Japan after the Army transferred him away from Bragg. Shortly thereafter, Carothers led one of the largest petition drives of the GI dissent movement. All over Fort Bragg, copies of a petition demanding a forty-hour workweek, a federal minimum wage, and a maximum eight-hour shift suddenly began to appear. Within a month, the soldiers claimed over a thousand signatures on a petition that Carothers vowed to send the Congress in May.\textsuperscript{139}

As the movement expanded, GIs United and the Quaker House continued to face heavy resistance from Fort Bragg leadership. In March, as Carothers and another G.I. passed around their petition outside the US Army Training Center, two squad cars and two jeeps filled with military police roared into the parking lot. The agents seized the petitions and arrested the two G.I.s for distributing illegal literature and wearing improper uniforms. Realizing their lack of solid legal footing, the military police eventually returned the petitions and released both men.\textsuperscript{140} The new Quaker House staff was constantly afraid of military intelligence agents or local police planting narcotics on

\textsuperscript{140} Vol. 3, No. 1 \textit{Bragg Briefs}, April 1970.

200
the property, even going so far to search the exterior of house frequently.141 Their fears were perhaps well placed. In later years, through Freedom of Information requests, the Quaker House learned that the house was under constant surveillance. For example, on the night of January 28, 1970, four military intelligence agents from the 111th Military Intelligence Group at Bragg conducted surveillance outside the home while two others infiltrated the GIs United meeting inside. The agents copied license plate numbers of parked cars and traced them to G.I.s inside. The agents surreptitiously followed several members of the group into the downtown area as they distributed the February issue of Bragg Briefs. In late April, military informants gained access to another GIs United meeting and reported back with disturbing news. The G.I. group was planning a rally in conjunction with the upcoming Armed Forces Day. The report read: “It was mentioned that a parade to the rally site, Rowan Street Park, Fayetteville, would have to develop on its own, but that a march on Fort Bragg would be more effective.”142

As Armed Forces Day approached in May 1970, the New Mobilization Committee to End the War in Vietnam established a “GI Task Force” in hopes of appropriating the upcoming military commemoration into the first nationwide GI antiwar protest. They were successful. At over forty military bases, several with no prior history of large-scale dissent, military members renamed the event Armed Farces Day,
took to the streets in protest, and gave the GI dissent movement unprecedented national attention. At over twenty military installations, local commanders, concerned about the size of protests, closed their gates and canceled their displays of tanks, jets, and bombers.\textsuperscript{143} Thanks to GIs United, the Quaker House, and a group of North Carolina college students calling themselves the M-16 Civilian Coalition, four thousand people, including a thousand G.I.s, crowded into Rowan Park on May 16, the largest Armed Farces rally in the country.\textsuperscript{144}

The May \textit{Bragg Briefs} advertised the upcoming rally and issued a challenge to Bragg soldiers. The editors argued, “by being a obedient soldier you have formed for Nixon…a mindless body of men that can be mobilized and capriciously sent anywhere on the globe.”\textsuperscript{145} For over a month, the Quaker House staff had been working with students from ten North Carolina college campuses to drum up support for the upcoming rally.\textsuperscript{146} A big draw in Fayetteville that day would be actress and antiwar activist Jane Fonda. Fonda had been campaigning at military bases throughout the spring, having recently been kicked out of and barred for life from Fort Hood, Texas. As Catherine Lutz has pointed out, every Fayetteville native during the era seems to

\begin{flushleft}
\textsuperscript{145} \textit{Bragg Briefs}, Vol. 3, no. 3 May 1970. Guilford-QH.
\textsuperscript{146} Newsletter, “Quaker House News,” May 1970. Guilford-QH.
\end{flushleft}
remember when Jane Fonda came to town. Rennie Davis, a member of the Chicago 8, and folk singer Barbara Dane joined the actress in Fayetteville. The Bragg Briefs staff flaunted the juxtaposition of the weaponry displays and antiwar protests when they wrote, “While the brass shows off its weapons, medals, and misadventures, you can act can as America’s conscience.”

It did not take long for the Fort Bragg and Pope Air Force Base leadership to realize that the G.I.s had successfully sabotaged their open house. On Friday, military officials from both installations cancelled the martial celebrations on post, claiming they were “concerned for the safety of visitors should planned anti war activity in the open house area possibly develop into injurious action.” That same day, at a press conference outside the Quaker House, a GI’s United spokesman proclaimed victory, claiming that the brass’ decision was a clear “concession to our stated demand that worship of the war machine be ended.” Sitting on the steps of the peace center, Fonda bristled when a passerby shouted “Barbarella!” The actress, who had received threatening phone calls at her hotel, shouted back, “I’m not here as a movie actress but as a US citizen who is political.” A special edition of Bragg Briefs proclaimed that the “closed mouth, closed mind image of GI Joe must be shattered.” Meanwhile, police chief

---

147 Lutz, Homefront, 285.
L.F. Worrell and Sheriff W.G. Clark organized extra platoons of police officers.150 As night fell that Friday, the small southern town with the largest military post in America prepared for the largest antiwar demonstration in North Carolina history.

By early Saturday afternoon, Rowan Park was filled to capacity with G.I.s, students, and Fayetteville locals sprawled on blankets on the grassy slope that rose away from the dais. Protestors held signs emblazoned with “Impeach Nixon,” “Is this the American Way?” and “War is bad for Babies.” A huge sign, which served as a crude stage backdrop, wished “Freedom and peace for all those thousands that wish to view armed forces day at Ft Bragg and Pope AFB.” Shortly before the festivities began, Michael George, a young Fayetteville resident, caused a stir when he walked through the crowd draped in an American flag before being hustled way by police.151 Fonda took to the stage and encouraged the G.I.s in the crowd to stay in the Army and revolt from within, shouting that “Nixon can’t ignore the sounds of troops marching against his policies.” Rennie Davis ensured the crowd that “promoting disaffection is an act of loyalty,” not betrayal. John Vail, a Bragg G.I. who had assumed the leadership mantle in GIs United after Yahr and Shulman left the Army, encouraged soldiers to strike together

on July 1st.152 Throughout the rally, the crowd shouted “Right On!” as they waved their raised hands back and forth chanting “Peace Now! Peace Now!”

Even though Bragg leadership had cancelled its open house, Fonda and the other rally leaders were insistent on demonstrating on post. As the protest ended, she encouraged the crowd to join her at Fort Bragg to hand out leaflets and encourage G.I.s to speak out. A long caravan of sports cars, trucks, and motorcycles snaked its way along the ten miles between downtown and the military post. As Fonda stood outside the US Army Training Center handing out literature, an army major approached her and asked, “I take it you are familiar with the Army regulations about leaflets.” Fonda replied that she was, but considered the rule unconstitutional.153 The troops on post did not seem to care if the protest was legal or not. One soldier told a reporter, “This is fun, I feel like I’m around friends again.” Soldiers driving jeeps and trucks past the demonstrators held up the peace symbol, while another soldier complained that senior leaders had threatened G.I.s with legal punishment if they were caught talking to one of the protestors.154 Fonda was eventually led away to Bragg’s police center where she was handed a letter barring her from the installation for life. Reporters hurriedly snapped photos of two Army Criminal Investigation agents escorting her off post. Fonda

152 “Jane Fonda Pronounces Demonstration Day Success,” Fayetteville Observer, May 18, 1970. FO, Protestors Sent Off Base Following Peaceful Rally
153 Reese and Prather, “Protestors Sent Off Base Following Peaceful Rally.”
returned to the Quaker House where protest organizers and G.I.s celebrated victory through the night.

Not all of Fayetteville’s citizens, however, were thrilled about their town’s transformation into an antiwar carnival. During the rally, fifteen local citizens that supported the US involvement in Vietnam demanded a seat on the stage. Leading up to the rally, hundreds of local North Carolinians signed petitions supporting President Nixon’s policy in Vietnam and Cambodia. The young wife of a G.I. deployed to Vietnam drove through town urging support for American policy overseas. Dave Nowlan, the chairman of the Young Americans for Freedom at Duke University, issued a statement: “We resent the outside agitation that took place and deplore the actions of Jane Fonda which have disrupted order and discipline at Fort Bragg and Pope AFB.”\textsuperscript{155} An anonymous letter to the editor blasted the “bunch of bearded and loathsome looking so-called students and the ones who call themselves the GIs United…They are united all right! They all smell the same!”\textsuperscript{156} By 1970, the vitriol between antiwar protestors and those that supported the effort in Vietnam was commonplace, but in Fayetteville, it soon took a more sinister turn.

\textsuperscript{155} Pat Reese, “Citizens Show Discontent Over Demonstrations Here,”\textit{ Fayetteville Observer}, May 17, 1970.

\textsuperscript{156} The writer continued: “We do spend 68 percent of our budget for defense. A portion of it went to pay those boobs who belong to GIs United. It is paying the tuition of some veterans who are attending college and now are in the ranks of the anti-war protestors. It is mainly keeping the Communist armies out of your backyards.” Letter to the Editor,\textit{ Fayetteville Observer}, May 31, 1970.
In the early morning hours of May 20, just days after the rally in Rowan Park, smoke filled the Quaker House. Downstairs in the living room, Michael Ralston, a young man from California who had just been discharged from the Air Force, lay sleeping. Hours earlier, the Quaker House staff had held their largest meeting, the house overflowing with G.I.s and supporters after the momentum-building protest over the weekend. By the time Ralston awoke, the smoke had gotten so thick that he flung himself out the nearest window. The commotion awoke the two permanent staff members who were asleep upstairs, Gary Horvitz and JC Honeycutt, and they rushed outside. Two days prior, they had received a cryptic phone call with a whispery voice asking if the insurance on the house had been paid, but the two staffers thought little of it. Firefighters extinguished the fire quickly, but the blaze had already done three thousand dollars worth of damage.\(^{157}\) Investigators found that two fires had been set beneath the house during those early morning hours, but no one was ever brought to justice for the arson. Years later, Quaker House staffers, determined to find the culprit, obtained an internal FBI memo on the fire through the Freedom of Information Act. The entire document was redacted, covered in black strikethroughs.\(^{158}\)

When the city refused to allow the Quakers to repair the house, claiming it was not being used as a residence, things looked dire for the movement. In the next issue of


\(^{158}\) See McCallum, Quaker House, 28 and Lutz, Homefront, 165.
Bragg Briefs, however, both the GIs United and the Quakers vowed not to quit: “Quaker House will find a new home. GI dissent will mount. And we will win.” A Quaker House flyer announced that the rally on May 16 had “frightened the right-wing element in Fayetteville.” The arsonist had surely had the blessing of the “lifers at Fort Bragg who have good reason to be scared, and to want us out of Fayetteville.” Bracketed by peace symbols, “We will win” was scrawled across the bottom of the handbill. Two officers from Fort Bragg penned a letter to the Fayetteville Observer comparing the violent attack on the Quaker House to the peaceful rally in Rowan Park. Despite the plethora of police and Bragg’s cancelling of the open house due to concerns over violence, “the raw tactics of violence and destruction are the lifestyle of those who oppose the peace movement.” The group had difficulty finding a new house to stage their operations. A member of the center’s board lamented, “When we went to investigate about buying or renting a house, it would suddenly not be for sale or for rent, because of the feeling in the city towards the Quaker House. And some members were afraid the house might be burned again if we opened up.” Until the group found a suitable home in October, the group held their meetings on the lawn in front of the ruined house. Bob Gwyn described those outside meetings as almost mystical: “It was particularly moving, sitting on chairs

160 Handbill, “Fire at Quaker House.” Guilford-QH.
162 Lutz, Homefront, 146.
outside the burned out building, watching the army intelligence across the street in unmarked cars taking notes. So you really felt like you were in the belly of the beast.”163

By the end of the summer, the G.I.s at Fort Bragg would have another sanctuary beyond the watchful eye of the brass. After the Summer of Support initiative in 1968, the coffeehouse movement that spread across the country had floundered to some degree. Coffeehouses outside Fort Lewis, Washington, and Fort Campbell, Kentucky, had continuously battled with local officials since opening, and the original G.I. coffeehouse in Columbia, South Carolina, had shuttered in January. Organizers in Fayetteville, however, would not be discouraged. Activists and G.I.s celebrated the grand opening of the Haymarket Square coffeehouse, located in the heart of downtown at the corner of Bragg Boulevard and Hay Street, at the beginning of August. Two hundred G.I.s filled the building to capacity to hear Susan Schnall, the naval officer famous for her leaflet-bombing run in California, and Donald Duncan blast the war and military hierarchy. The proprietors of the establishment introduced the coffeehouse as a friendly alternative to the strip joints, pawn shops, and dive bars littered around town that catered to, and often took advantage of, soldiers.164

Despite the Quaker House fire and the brass’s intimidation tactics on post, the movement in Fayetteville was on solid footing in the summer and fall of 1970. The new

---

163 McCallum, Quaker House, 30.
coffeehouse had joined the Quaker House as a base of operations, and GIs United were more organized than ever. The group had established committees for the Bragg Briefs publication, legal cases, education, congressional petitions, and special projects. The soldier movement that the Army had initially deemed “very small and very poorly organized” had grown to one of the most active centers of the GI movement. GIs United, which began with a handful of soldiers, was now able to rally a thousand soldiers in Rowan Park. The movement at Fort Bragg was one of the primary reasons that senior Army leadership decided to take a bold stand on the volunteer army in the fall of 1970.

Due to the Army’s reaction to the Gates Commission report, there were individuals in the White House, particularly Martin Anderson, who still believed that the Army was dragging its feet on the volunteer force, or worse, actively sabotaging the effort. The dissonance between the two groups stemmed from two incidents in August of 1970. During a meeting with President Nixon on August 18, Westmoreland was blunt about the Army’s manpower issues. He reminded the President that the Army received the bulk of its combat forces from the draft, and even with conscription, the service was still short 70,000 trained men. There were over 400,000 troops remaining in Vietnam, and as Westmoreland pointed out, the Army simply was not getting many volunteers for combat positions. With an active shooting war and manpower deficits, the Army had no
immediate alternative but to request an extension of the draft, and Westmoreland felt compelled to inform the Commander-in-Chief.165

This was not an outlandish position; President Nixon himself had asked Congress to extend the draft following his study of the Gates report. But when Martin Anderson learned of Westmoreland’s comments to the President, he was incensed and accused the army general of trying to reopen debate on the draft. Later in the month, when William K. Brehm, the Assistant Secretary of the Army for Manpower and Reserve Affairs, echoed Westmoreland’s sentiments during a speech before the Armed Forces Management Association it only put more strain on the relationship.166 Martin Anderson later recalled that he recommended the President send word to Melvin Laird that Westmoreland “could be Chief of Staff of the Army in support of an all-volunteer force or the ex-Chief of Staff of the Army in opposition to the AVF.”167 The Secretary of Defense denied Anderson’s account, claiming that “this idea that Martin…in some of his lectures that Westmoreland was somehow disloyal to this order is unfair.”168

Regardless of Martin Anderson’s personal feelings towards the top Army general, there is no dispute that the Army was not moving with speed on the volunteer force. In fact, just days before the meeting with President Nixon that so riled Anderson,  

165 Memorandum for Record, General William Westmoreland, “Notes for JCS Discussion with President Nixon,” August 18, 1970. AVA/MHI.
166 William K. Brehm, “The Volunteer Army,” Armed Forces Management Association meeting, August 21, 1970. AVA/MHI.
167 Oral History, Dr. Martin Anderson, July 13, 1983, Box 14, Folder 7, AVA/MHI.
168 Oral History, Melvin Laird, March 31, 1983, Box 14, Folder 7, AVA/MHI.
General Westmoreland established the All-Volunteer Division on the Army staff to “affirm the high priority of actions to reduce reliance on the draft.” The Division would “furnish the central direction necessary to coordinate the multiple activities associated with reduced reliance on the draft and movement toward an all-volunteer army.” After all, the Army had a great deal of motivation to reduce its reliance on the draft; the G.I. dissent movement was continuing to create havoc inside the ranks.

In June, the New York Times published a front-page exposé on soldier dissent after reporters visited four Army bases, including Fort Bragg. Relying on interviews with dozens of G.I.s, the report claimed, “hard core dissidents are involving the Army in an internal conflict that may be without parallel in its history.” One reporter came across three Green Beret trainees who claimed, “there’s only one person in our class who wants to go to Vietnam to kill.” By September of 1970, things were only getting worse for Army leadership. General Ralph Haines, commander of all Army troops in the Pacific, sent a confidential message to General Westmoreland and General Abrams, lamenting the “general decline in discipline, the erosion of standards of dress and appearance, and even expressions of unwillingness to lead or engage in combat.” In effect, Haines blamed the draft for the problems inside the ranks, arguing, “With an increasing segment of the nation opposed to our Vietnam policies, it would be unusual if similar

169 Chief of Staff Memorandum 70-289, Major General Warren K. Bennett, Secretary of the General Staff, to Heads of Army Staff Agencies, sub: All-Volunteer Army Division, August 12, 1970. AVA/CMH.
views were not held by many of our junior members.” The Army, Haines believed, would not be able to alter their views in such a short period of time.171

Two weeks later in Washington, DC, twenty-eight commissioned officers publicly denounced the war. The group claimed that they represented nearly 250 other officers who had banded together to form the Concerned Officers Movement. Announcing that they were “morally and politically opposed to the war,” the group encouraged other officers to speak out against the war.172 In the previous five months, a thousand soldiers had protested the war in Fayetteville, combat troops in Vietnam were more disenchanted with the war effort, and now some in the officer corps were turning against the US effort in Vietnam. Only a bold move by the Army could turn the tide.

On October 13, at the annual luncheon of the Association of the US Army, General Westmoreland announced an “all-out effort in working toward a zero draft – a volunteer force.” The top-ranking Army general challenged his subordinates to “attack this problem with all the vigor, imagination, and dedication we can muster.” In a nod to the rampant dissent in the ranks, the four-star stressed that that the Army must strive to reduce irritants and unattractive features of Army life. Westmoreland wasted no time on this front, announcing that commanders should immediately reduce inspections, avoid unrealistic training, and avoid giving soldiers duty on Saturdays. Keenly aware of the

generation gap between younger soldiers and their superiors, the general warned, “to ignore the social mores of this younger group is to blind ourselves to reality. Their values and attitudes need not necessarily be endorsed by Army leadership...yet we must recognize that they do exist.” Westmoreland had called Senator John Stennis, Chairman of the Senate Armed Services Committee, and asked for his assistance in making the volunteer army a reality. It was a shocking speech to many, especially those who had accused the Army of dragging its feet.

Westmoreland also included another major announcement that afternoon; he was appointing a senior Army general as special project manager to personally steer the service toward a volunteer force. Lieutenant General George Forsythe had commanded the Army’s first airmobile division, the 1st Calvary Division, in Vietnam and was known throughout the Army as a freethinker and problem solver. Forsythe let Westmoreland know from the beginning that he had no intention of being “a 3-star recruiter” and demanded an active role in reforming the Army. On October 31, Westmoreland formally established the position of Special Assistant for the Modern Volunteer Army (SAMVA), granting the position direct access to the Secretary of the Army and the Chief of Staff. In the position’s charter, the Secretary of the Army instructed Forsythe to reduce

174 Record of Chief of Staff Fonecon, Subject: AUSA Address, October 12, 1970, Box 26, Folder 457B. Westmoreland-NARA.
175 Griffith, The U.S. Army’s Transition to the All-Volunteer Force, 53
“as rapidly as possible prime reliance on the draft as a means for producing forces for the active Army.”

Forsythe and his staff would spend the next three years striving to do just that.

Soon after assuming the position, Forsythe launched the Modern Volunteer Army (MVA) program, designed “to create a professionally challenging and personally rewarding Army,” which would also attract volunteers. In other words, rather than simply adjusting recruiting budgets, the Army set out to make foundational changes. To test its ideas and programs for this new volunteer army, the SAMVA office created a program known as Project Volunteer Army, or as it quickly became known, Project VOLAR. The posts selected, not coincidentally, for these early experiments were also the installations experiencing the most difficulty with dissent. Through this program, one can better understand the Army’s vision of the volunteer army and the connection to G.I dissent. Rather than focusing on methods to attract new recruits, the Army knew it had to first find a way to eliminate the catalysts for dissent that threatened to destroy the service from the inside. Fort Bragg was one of the first locations selected.

176 Chief of Staff Memorandum 70-392, Major General Warren K. Bennett, Secretary of the General Staff, to Heads of Army Staff Agencies, sub: Special Assistant for the Modern Volunteer Army (SAMVA), October 31, 1970. Record Group 319, “Background Material for MVA Monographs,” Box 15, Folder 42, NARA. Hereafter cited as Background Material-NARA.

177 “Master Program for the Modern Volunteer Program,” Office of the Special Assistant for the Modern Volunteer Army, March 1, 1971. AVA/CMH.
Chapter Four. “They Can Have my Body for a Year, but They Can't Have my Mind”: The End of a War, the Draft, and G.I. Dissent, 1971-1975

It was Sunday afternoon and shoppers bustled along the sidewalks, streaming in and out of JC Penney, soda shops, and jewelry stores along Hay Street, the main shopping thoroughfare in Fayetteville, North Carolina. As darkness arrived that March night in 1971, a different crowd arrived to take the shoppers’ vacated parking spots. Five hundred soldiers from nearby Fort Bragg stomped into the Haymarket Square coffeehouse. Jane Fonda was in town to perform and the soldiers were rowdy. As Fonda, Dick Gregory, Donald Southerland, Barbara Dane, and others took the stage, the soldiers began to scream, “Join the GI Movement, boys, join the GI movement.” Their chant, a twist on an old labor-movement song, could be heard clear out to the street. The show on stage, sponsored by the United States Servicemen’s Fund as a counter to the Bob Hope specials broadcast from Southeast Asia, only spurred the soldiers on. Swamp Dogg, a raucous ten-piece rock band blasted “God Bless America…for What?” while Dane sang a Vietcong morale song in a folk singer’s contralto. Though the war in Vietnam raged 8,000 miles away from this small southern town, the coffeehouse was

---

fertile ground for another war – a soldier-proclaimed battle against the armed forces and a war they refused to support.2

Fonda and Donald Sutherland had formed the bawdy troupe in February for “forgotten soldiers...isolated in the military world that want peace and freedom.” Fonda claimed, “It’s been very disconcerting for many of us in Hollywood to see that Bob Hope, Martha Raye and other companies of their political ilk,” that is pro-war entertainers, “have cornered the market and are the only entertainers allowed to speak to soldiers in this country and Vietnam.” The antiwar group called themselves F.T.A., a sardonic take on the Army’s Fun, Travel, and Adventure slogan, a jingle which soldiers, after years of bloodshed in Vietnam, had re-appropriated into their own rallying cry of “Fuck The Army!”3 Over the previous year, Fonda had quickly become a leading advocate encouraging service-members to lend their voice to the antiwar movement. Two months prior to the F.T.A. show announcement, she had sponsored the Vietnam Veterans Against the War (VVAW) Winter Soldier Investigation into American War Crimes held in Detroit, Michigan.4 Fonda took great pride in the fact that she had been banned for life from four Army bases, including Fort Bragg, in the past year. As she

3 Lacey Fosburgh, “Antiwar Troupe Formed to Tour Bases,” New York Times, February 17, 1971, 20. For a video-recording of many of the show’s acts, see the film FTA which was filmed during the performers’ tour of the Pacific Rim. The movie carried the tagline, “The Show the Pentagon Couldn’t Stop.” See FTA, directed by Francine Parker (1972, New Video Group, 2008), DVD.
announced the F.T.A. tour of twenty US army bases to “show soldiers there are those of us who understand,” Fonda was adamant that Fayetteville, North Carolina, be the first stop.5

The traveling antiwar sideshow had chosen Fayetteville and Fort Bragg for several reasons. First, the small town in eastern North Carolina remained the epicenter of the G.I. dissent movement that had swept across the U.S. and Vietnam in the late sixties and early seventies. Fonda herself had been in town in May of 1970 for the largest G.I. antiwar rally in history, a protest in the local Rowan Park that featured over 1,000 soldiers on Armed Forces Day. But the actors and musicians had chosen Bragg for another reason as well. In late 1970, with the decision to end the draft all but final, General William Westmoreland, the US Army Chief of Staff, had announced the Modern Volunteer Army (MVA) program, a sweeping initiative to end dissent in the ranks by removing service irritants and improving professionalism. These steps, senior leaders assumed, would improve the Army’s discipline and performance, and at the same time, render the service more attractive to volunteers.

Unsurprisingly, Fort Bragg, the site of intense soldier protest for years, had become the focal point of the Army’s newest program. Lieutenant General John Tolson, the Fort Bragg commanding officer, became known as the “chief architect” of the Army’s

new look, eliminating reveille formation, permitting longer hair and mustaches, putting
go-go girls in service clubs, allowing beer in the post’s mess halls, and establishing
enlisted men’s councils to give young, disenchanted soldiers a voice. Fonda and
company took full advantage of the Army’s so-called new approach, declaring their
show a “new action show for a new action army.” They even went so far as to demand
the show be held on Fort Bragg proper. "If General Tolson is really serious about the
Army’s so called liberalization policy,” Dr. Howard Levy, the former draftee who had
refused to train Green Berets and several spent years in prison for his defiance, declared,
“and he believes in the Army’s ‘new mod look,’ he’ll let our show on the base. If not, he
will ban it and let the public know it’s the same old-fashioned repressive Army.”

Go-go girls in the officers’ club and beer in the mess hall notwithstanding,
General Tolson had no intention of allowing the show on post. Major Jimmie Wilson,
Tolson’s chief Information Officer, tried to convince the public that the commanding
general had merely found the script, “not so much antiwar as poorly done.” Of course,
Wilson also proclaimed that “there won’t be any spooks down there taking names, I’m
going to see it myself,” which also proved to be untrue. Ultimately, Tolson admitted that
the show, regardless of any sort of ‘new army,’ was “detrimental to the discipline and

---

8 Fosburgh, “Antiwar Troupe Formed.”
morale of military personnel” on post. In perhaps the high water mark of the G.I. movement, over 1,700 Bragg soldiers immediately signed their names to a petition demanding that Tolson reconsider. The three-star general refused. Earlier in the week, city officials had also refused to allow the soldiers to use the municipal auditorium. When a federal judge reversed the city’s decision, the town of Fayetteville demanded a $150,000 insurance policy against possible damages to the city’s facility, effectively blocking the soldiers’ efforts. And so the Haymarket Square coffeehouse in the heart of downtown Fayetteville, with its psychedelic lights and posters of Fidel Castro, Malcolm X, the Vietcong, and Spiro Agnew sporting a swastika, hosted the inaugural F.T.A. show.

As over five hundred soldiers lined up outside the coffeehouse, Army and city officials did not stand idly by. Military police snapped pictures with a long-range infrared camera from across the street as the G.I.s offered up their $2.50 entrance fee. There was even an Army photographer inside, willingly introducing himself as Lieutenant Mike Thompson, the deputy public information officer for General Tolson. Soldiers inside pointed derisively at military intelligence agents who were poorly disguised in their interpretation of hippie garb. When comedian Dick Gregory proclaimed from the stage, “The army ain’t got no intelligence,” the crowd roared and

---

10 Cortright, Soldiers in Revolt, 86 and Moser, The New Winter Soldiers, 92.
pointed in the sheepish agents’ direction.11 Major Emerson Hall, Fayetteville’s assistant chief of police had squads of men on alert while Bragg had removed over fifty jeeps and trucks from the motor pool to place them on alert. One local policeman even forced his way into the coffeehouse to declare that a bomb threat had been made against the establishment, hoping the threat would disperse the crowd. Those inside simply ignored him. Despite the intimidation tactics, the soldiers inside reveled in the audacious show, chanting “Right On!” as the performers ridiculed President Nixon, Army leadership, and the war effort. One national reporter, who had forced his way into the standing room only show, described the deafening G.I.s’ roars following a skit that featured Bragg’s 82nd Airborne Division storming the White House as a “visceral reflex that burst from 500 throats in the same instance.”12

Finding a sudden outlet for their disenchantment, the soldiers seemed to rejoice in the rebellious atmosphere. “The U.S. Army is one of the most fantastic radicalizing tools the US government has,” a young soldier shouted.13 “When I enlisted seven months ago, I was really gung-ho,” another G.I. explained, “but I feel I’m about 100 years old now.” A Vietnam returnee argued, “Only reason a lot of them [G.I.s] put up with this shit is they don’t know their rights. I’d say 90 per cent of the returnees feel this

12 Kernan, “GI Movement: A Show to Call its Own.”
way. Man, we are mad!" More importantly perhaps, the brass’s refusal to host the show and intimidation tactics during the performance highlighted to many G.I.s the hypocrisy of the Army’s new approach to dissent in the ranks. “The Army has shown that the New Modern Army is nothing more than thirteen letters on a piece of paper,” a Bragg Briefs’ writer argued in the days leading up to the show. The underground newspaper suggested that Bragg leadership save the money allotted for the new Modern Volunteer Army program to “hire crews to clean up the shit that is going to come down when Bragg blows apart from all the unvented frustrations building up. F.T.A is easily changed to F.T.M.A. with M for modern.” The Army may have hatched a new program to stem dissent and revitalize professionalism in the ranks, but as the situation in Fayetteville illustrates, the service was facing an uphill battle.

This chapter places the narrative of the Army’s final transition to a volunteer force alongside this ongoing GI dissent movement. By doing so, this section clearly illustrates how programs such as the MVA and the subsequent Volunteer Army (VOLAR) field experiments, although ostensibly touted to attract volunteers, were in actuality a direct response to the antiwar revolt inside the ranks. Leaders at the most senior levels of the Army were very clear, at least in private, that the top priority of these new initiatives was to rebuild and repair a damaged force, damage caused in large part

---

14 Kernan, “GI Movement: A Show to Call its Own.”
by unruly soldiers. When senior leaders proclaimed that the MVA and VOLAR would improve professionalism in the ranks, they were referring to dissenting soldiers. As historian Robert Griffith has argued, professionalism was the US Army’s equivalent of motherhood, a sacrosanct tenet that no one could oppose. Antiwar G.I.s were doing more than protesting a far-away war; they were challenging an institution’s long love affair with professionalism, discipline, and order. It should come as little surprise, then, that the Army’s flagship volunteer program was designed to rebuild a professional force; attracting volunteers was a secondary concern. The service chose its posts for the experimental changes carefully, focusing on installations riddled with dissent and lapses of discipline. The Army’s efforts were mostly successful. In a relatively short span, as the initiatives took hold, dissent faded, A.W.O.L.’s and desertions decreased, and soldiers reported more satisfaction with Army life at military posts that had just recently been hotbeds of antiwar sentiment.

This was not, however, the case in Fayetteville, North Carolina. This chapter continues a close examination of the soldier movement at Fort Bragg, striving to answer several questions. Why did the movement at Bragg continue well after dissent had subsided at other Army posts? Why were the Army’s volunteer army programs that were so successful elsewhere met with such animosity at Bragg? This section proposes that the answer lies in in the amorphous nature of the movement at Bragg. Beginning in

---

16 Griffith, *The U.S. Army’s Transition to the All-Volunteer Force*, 112.
1971, just as the Army was instituting its profound changes, the soldiers in Fayetteville expanded the focus of their movement beyond the single issue of Vietnam to a multifaceted approach that condemned the structural problems, such as racism, sexism, and capitalism that led to global wars in the first place. In other words, just as the Army was fielding a solution designed to placate soldiers opposed to the Vietnam War, the Bragg movement was expanding beyond that single issue. Soldiers in Fayetteville were outpacing and outflanking the Army, and the result was the longest movement of the G.I. dissent era, stretching all the way into 1975.

Senior political and military leaders, however, were ultimately successful in culling dissent from the ranks, even at Bragg, for several reasons. First, as many had predicted, volunteers were much more obedient and compliant than unruly conscripts. After the Army drafted its last man in December of 1972, the dissent movement lost its primary source of nutriments and nourishment – draftees forced into service against their will. Secondly, the American presence in the jungles of Southeast Asia had been steadily decreasing. In April of 1969, the high water mark of American involvement, there had been 543,000 troops stationed in Vietnam. Two years later, US leaders had reduced that number by 200,000. By his State of the Union address in 1972, President Nixon was able to announced a new troop ceiling of 69,000, a decrease of nearly half a million troops in just three years. With the war fading, the draft ending, and the Army removing other service irritants, the primary catalysts of dissent were evaporating. As
this chapter illustrates, senior political and military leaders always suspected that would be the case: that by eliminating the draft and its unwilling conscripts, the US military could rebuild itself. Even at Fort Bragg, where soldiers held out longest, the movement was ultimately unable to survive the military’s goal of crushing rebellion inside the ranks.

Following Secretary Laird’s zero-draft announcement on October 12, 1970 and General Westmoreland’s AUSA speech the following day, the Army became nearly frantic in its urge to begin work on an all-volunteer force. Over the span of just two weeks in early November, the Secretary of the Army sent a flurry of memorandums to the Secretary of Defense, each one revealing an increasing demand for swift action, and perhaps more importantly, funding for new initiatives. “It is imperative we begin at once,” Secretary Resor implored Secretary Laird at the beginning of the month in a memorandum that also requested over $130 million dollars to begin implementing changes in the ranks.17 Resor’s deputy followed up with Laird just days later, assuring the Secretary of Defense that the Army was “imbued with the new attitudes needed and enthusiastic,” but warning that without proper funding, the “enthusiasm we are building up throughout the Army will turn to cynicism.18 Stanley Resor would send several more memoranda over the following days, each one with an increasingly

desperate tone, a rarity for such bureaucratic instruments. Each missive was littered with phrases such as “stress the urgency of our request,” “back our rhetoric with substance,” and the overwhelming desire to demonstrate “that we mean business.”19 Far from dragging its feet, the Army had become nearly obsessed with moving on the volunteer force. So much so in fact, that the service embarked on its own initiatives as it grew frustrated with the Department of Defense’s delays on decisions and funding.

The first of these programs became known as the Modern Volunteer Army, an overarching initiative that would guide the Army’s efforts on rebuilding the service and attracting volunteers until the end of the draft in 1973. General George Forsythe, the three-star general Westmoreland had appointed to shepherd the Army’s efforts, quickly became known as the Special Assistant for the Modern Volunteer Army, or SAMVA. The Army provided Forsythe and his new organization, appropriately named the Office of the Special Assistant for the Modern Volunteer Army (OSAMVA), with nearly twenty full-time personnel, including Major Pete Dawkins, the Army football star and Rhodes Scholar. A telling symbol of the importance placed on the task force, General Westmoreland demanded personal, bi-weekly meetings to be kept abreast of their efforts.20 The group’s first major initiatives simply formalized or expanded the Chief of

---

19 For example, see Memorandum, Stanley Resor, Secretary of the Army, to Melvin Laird, Secretary of Defense, sub: Volunteer Army Actions, November 19, 1970. AVA/CMH.
20 Memorandum, Colonel Robert M. Montague, Deputy Special Assistant for the Modern Volunteer Army, to Lieutenant General George Forsythe, Special Assistant for the Modern Volunteer Army, sub: CSA Meetings on MVA, February 1, 1971. AVA/CMH.
Staff’s initiatives from the October AUSA speech, such as eliminating unnecessary formations and weekend work, liberalizing leave and pass policies, and improving communication up and down the chain of command.21

From the very beginning of the initiative, however, it was clear that the Modern Volunteer Army program was significantly influenced, if not outright propelled, by soldier dissent and the turmoil inside the ranks. Attracting and retaining new volunteer recruits would remain a secondary concern as the Army focused on rebuilding itself. In a memorandum to all his subordinate commanders, General Ralph Haines, the four-star general in charge of all Army posts in the United States, where dissent had proven the most fractious, was blunt: “These actions are designed to meet the challenge of racial tension, drug abuse, and dissension.”22 General Forsythe was more oblique with his public comments but admitted in an early interview that the primary benchmark of the program was not to attract volunteers but instead, “to build a better Army,” a service

---

21 Memorandum, Colonel Robert M. Montague, Deputy Special Assistant for the Modern Volunteer Army, to SAMVA Points of Contact, sub: High Impact Actions Towards Achieving a Modern Volunteer Army, November 13, 1970. AVA/CMH.

22 Memorandum, General Ralph E. Haines, Jr., Commander, US Continental Army Command, to Commanding Generals, CONUSAMDW, sub: Modern Volunteer Army, December 21, 1970. AVA/CMH. Throughout his tenure as commander of all forces in the continental United States, General Haines consistently claimed that the Modern Volunteer Army program was specifically designed to eliminate dissent in the ranks. For other examples, see Report of Commanding General, CONARC, on The Modern Volunteer army Program, January 30, 1971, Box 20, Folder 62, MVA Background Material-NARA and CONARC Program for the Modern Volunteer Army, FY 1972, December 30, 1971, AVA/CMH.
that was once again “proud and well-disciplined.” Forsythe and his team soon published the MVA Master Program, a glossy document that defined this better Army as a fighting force that was “competent, motivated, and proud,” and infused with professionalism, a “willing self-discipline and a determination to do one’s job with real competence and commitment.” In an indirect, but obvious, nod to soldier dissent and the draft’s role in that dissent, the booklet, declared, “the strength of the army lies in the durable fabric of proud obedience and united purpose. That fabric is now severely strained by the tensions of modern society as well as the stress of a long and divisive war.” An anonymous senior officer referred to the publication as a “revolutionary document.” Never before had the Army been so forthright in its desire to rebuild a force nearly ripped apart by rebellion.

Behind closed doors, senior Army leadership eschewed any pretense that the new volunteer army efforts were not directly attributed to dissent in the ranks. In a backchannel message to commanders, General Westmoreland admitted that the

---

23 Forsythe’s quotes come from a photocopied article, “Decision Maker II: Army’s Lt. Gen. George Forsythe,” dated February 1971 in Martin Anderson’s personal files. The actual publication in which the article originally appeared is unknown. Box 40, Folder 2 of 4, President’s Commission on AVAF, Anderson-WHCF.
25 The Army was quite meticulous in the distribution of the MVA Master Program document, cataloguing which general officers and key civilians had received copies. Nevertheless, within days the Wall Street Journal had obtained a leaked copy and quickly went public with the Army’s plans. General Westmoreland, realizing there was no other option, ordered the publication released to members of Congress and any member of the media who requested a copy. For the article itself, see Richard J. Levine, “Gen. Westmoreland Puts Forth New Plan for Rebuilding Army,” Wall Street Journal, September 15, 1971. For the Army’s internal debate on the leak, see Talking Paper, MVA Master Program, September 16, 1971. AVA/CMA
program’s goal was to enhance motivation and placate disgruntled soldiers by eliminating irritating and unreasonable demands. During the Army’s Commanders’ Conference in late November 1970, however, where Westmoreland was shockingly candid on the Army’s true motivation, even warning his audience beforehand that he was going to be unusually frank and blunt. With every major commanding officer in attendance, the four-star general admitted that the Army was “going to take advantage of the situation to improve the quality of our officers and [enlisted] men and the professionalism of the army.” With a nod to the destructive impact of the draft, Westmoreland acknowledged that the Army was facing problems of “major magnitude,” primarily due to changes in the attitudes of the nation’s youth, now accustomed to an increased informality and personal freedom. The time had arrived, Westmoreland demanded, for the Army commander to accept his men as partners in a mutual endeavor. The old authoritarian approach that was “at the root of the many problems of retention, dissatisfaction, and dissent.” Standing before the silent attendees, the highest-ranking general in the US Army freely admitted that the problem before them was perhaps “the toughest objective the army has faced short of the challenge of the battlefield.” The only solution, Westmoreland and other senior Army leaders had

26 See the November 18, 1970 entry, “CSA Presents Volunteer Army Views to Army Commanders,” in the Center of Military History’s Study, “Chronology of Significant Actions and Decisions Relating to the Development of an All-Volunteer Army,” May 30, 1972. This chronology is the result of General Westmoreland’s 1971 task to his staff to compile a “comprehensive documentary background” to detail the Army’s efforts at establishing the All-Volunteer Force. AVA/CMH.
determined, was for “everybody to get in harness and pull together” in an all-out effort
to repair the service and achieve a volunteer force.27

The first step in this effort was an experimental outgrowth of the Modern
Volunteer Army program, a corollary initiative known as Project VOLAR (VOLAR
being a cumbersome acronym for Volunteer Army). General Forsythe described these
field experiments as a “fly before you buy” concept whereby the Army allowed select
installations to experiment, evaluate, and refine different actions and initiatives that
might improve motivation in the ranks and soldier professionalism.28 Any of these
actions that proved fruitful in subduing the turmoil inside the ranks could then be
implemented on an Army-wide basis. The initial bases chosen for VOLAR in 1971 were
not accidental. Army leadership singled out Fort Carson, Fort Ord, Fort Benning, and
Fort Bragg, all four installations that had long suffered from rampant dissent and chaos
inside the ranks. For example, General Ralph Haines, the four-star general who would
be receiving status reports from the four posts, reminded his commanders that VOLAR
evaluations must include disciplinary statistics to be “complete and meaningful,”
highlighting that Fort Carson had been chosen for having the poorest disciplinary

27 Transcript, Keynote Address by General W.C. Westmoreland, Chief of Staff, US Army, at Army
Commanders’ Conference, November 30, 1970. AVA/CMH.
Document G0311 in Rostker’s I Want You.
indicators in all of Fifth Army.\textsuperscript{29} An internal talking paper highlighted Fort Bragg as a VOLAR option for its overt dissent and highly publicized morale problems.\textsuperscript{30} The Army also proposed running a “dissent and dissatisfaction” survey during the VOLAR experiments to evaluate their impact on tamping down revolt inside the ranks.\textsuperscript{31} This effort would not come cheaply; the Army funneled over $70 million of its own money, money that had been previously earmarked for other purposes, into the experimental program.\textsuperscript{32} For the Army, however, it was money well spent. G.I. dissent was quickly becoming an existential threat, and senior leaders saw both the overarching MVA and its VOLAR outgrowth as critical in fighting this revolt from within. But even as the Army tried to implement these calming initiatives, the war in Vietnam was providing its own share of chaos.

In early January 1971, just as the Army was preparing to launch VOLAR, President Nixon publicly declared that an end to the Vietnam War was in sight.\textsuperscript{33} Less than a month after this bold, and dishonest, pronouncement, South Vietnamese troops, 

\begin{flushleft}
\textsuperscript{29} Report of Commanding General, CONARC, on The Modern Volunteer army Program, January 30, 1971, Box 20, Folder 62, MVA Background Material-NARA.
\textsuperscript{30} Talking Paper, OCSA-SAMVA, sub: Status of Consideration of a Possible Fourth VOLAR Experimental Post, January 31, 1971. Box 14, Folder 39, MVA Background Material-NARA. The Army was also considering, and eventually included, US Army Forces in Europe (USAREUR) for similar reasons.
\textsuperscript{31} Memorandum, Colonel Robert Montague, DSAMVA, to Colonel B.F. Harmon, Office of the Deputy Chief of Staff for Personnel, sub: Dissent and Dissatisfaction Study, January 8, 1971. Box 2, Folder 4, MVA Background Material-NARA.
\textsuperscript{32} Memorandum, John G. Kester, Deputy Assistant Secretary of the Army (Manpower and Reserve Affairs), to Stanley Resor, Secretary of the Army, sub: Volunteer Army Roadblocks, January 21, 1971. AVA/CMH.
\end{flushleft}
backed by extensive US airpower and artillery, invaded Laos in an attempt to sever the Ho Chi Minh Trail.\textsuperscript{34} Even though the number of military personnel in Vietnam had dropped to 326,200 from a high of 543,000 just two years earlier, Nixon’s approval rating suddenly dropped to the lowest of his presidency, and with the news of the Laos invasion, only thirty-four percent of Americans now approved of his Vietnam strategy.\textsuperscript{35}

That same month, the violence and destruction of the war came home to roost in a different way when Lieutenant William Calley was found guilty of massacring twenty-two My Lai civilians.\textsuperscript{36} Rather than an abolution of war crimes, many Americans viewed the conviction as a public and inconsequential scapegoating. Out of the sixteen military personnel eventually charged with offenses stemming from the massacre, only five were court-martialed, with Calley being the sole conviction. After Calley was initially sentenced to life in prison, the White House received over five thousand telegrams overwhelmingly in defense of the young officer.\textsuperscript{37} With the invasion of Laos and the Calley conviction as vivid reminders of the horrors of the war in Southeast Asia, the civilian antiwar movement experienced a spirited surge.

\footnotesize
\textsuperscript{34} The invasion of Laos was called Operation Lam Son 719. See Terence Smith, “U.S. B-52’s Strike Foe’s Laos Bases Around the Clock, \textit{New York Times}, February 1, 1971, 1.
After their Winter Soldier war crime investigation spectacle in Detroit at the end of January, over one thousand Vietnam Veterans descended on Washington, DC in April for Operation Dewey Canyon III.\textsuperscript{38} The demonstration ended on the steps of the US Capitol as thousands of war veterans tossed away their combat ribbons, medals, and uniforms in protest of a war in which they had once fought. A week later, in the largest peace demonstrations since the Cambodian invasion the previous May, over 200,000 protestors arrived in Washington for a rally on the national mall. A group of amputees and other war veterans in partial uniforms led the massive march from the White House to the Capitol. In San Francisco, another 175,000 demonstrators marched from the waterfront to Golden Gate Park.\textsuperscript{39} Just one month earlier, President Nixon had announced another troop withdrawal, promising Americans to reduce the American footprint in Vietnam by another 100,000 by the end of the year.\textsuperscript{40} But with the President’s outlandish claim earlier in the year on the end being near, the Laos invasion that obviously proved otherwise, and the Calley conviction, many Americans were in no

\textsuperscript{38} Dewey Canyon II was a code name for the invasion of Laos by the South Vietnamese, which had just ended the week prior. See “Week of Protests on War to Start,” \textit{New York Times}, April 19, 1971, 5; “Veterans Discard Medals in War Protest at Capital,” \textit{New York Times}, April 24, 1971, 1. According to internal memoranda, the White House had no idea how to deal with the discarded medals, finally asking the Congressional Medal of Honor Society if they would receive them. See Memorandum, John Dean, to Charles Colson, sub: VVAW Medals, April 19, 1971. Nixon Presidential Library, White House Central Files, Staff Member and Office Files, John Dean, Box 90, Folder 4 of 5, May 1971 Demonstrations. Hereafter cited as Dean-WHCF.


\textsuperscript{40} Max Frankel, “100,000 GIs Will Leave by December, Nixon Promises,” \textit{Atlanta Constitution}, April 8, 1971, A1.
mood to quietly accept a war that had stretched into a new decade. The national anger also extended to Fayetteville and Fort Bragg, a development the Army was now prepared to combat with its new MVA and VOLAR projects.

With Fort Bragg taking center stage in the G.I. antiwar movement, the post also became ground zero in the Army’s efforts to repair itself. In December of 1970, just weeks after the announcement of the MVA program, General Westmoreland himself traveled to Fayetteville, North Carolina, where he told nine hundred members of the Braxton Bragg Chapter of the Association of the US Army that he expected Fort Bragg to be “the vanguard of our efforts in creating a zero draft Army.” In his first MVA program directive, Lieutenant General A.O. Connor, the Third Army Commander and Tolson’s immediate boss, instructed the Bragg commander to take immediate actions to “enhance the discipline, morale, and motivation of our soldiers.” Tolson had seemed ill prepared to handle the expanding dissent on his installation two years earlier when he assumed command of the Army’s largest post, but now, after several demonstrations in the streets of Fayetteville, the Bragg Briefs exploding popularity, and the Armed Farces Day rally the previous spring, the three-star general had come to realize that the Army was changing. “The soldier today is smarter than 25 years ago,” Tolson told Time. “What

41 “General Westmoreland Speaks at Local AUSA Chapter Meeting,” Paraglide, December 10, 1970. Paraglide was Bragg’s official military newspaper.
worked in the Army then won’t work now, and the older guys are going to have to accept that.”43 Due to the cessation of graduate school deferments, the conscripted soldiers that Tolson encountered daily were indeed likely to be more educated than before, but as the post leadership quickly discovered, they were also more likely to oppose the war in Vietnam.

The Army-wide MVA program announced in late 1970 merely formalized a concept that General Tolson and his leadership team had been pursuing since the G.I. movement began at Bragg in the spring of 1969 with the arrival of Private Joe Miles. In General Tolson’s first MVA report to higher headquarters, the Bragg commander catalogued over a hundred initiatives he had implemented over the previous two years to placate unruly soldiers and improve discipline and morale in his units. For example, a full year prior to the MVA announcement, Bragg had become the first post in the Army to liberalize its haircut regulations, allowing soldiers to sport bangs and longer sideburns. Following the formation of the Black Brigade, an African American soldier group that complemented GIs United, Tolson organized a series of “interracial seminars” to soothe the growing racial animosity in the ranks. The three-star general proudly informed headquarters that the post’s shopping center had expanded its offerings of “Black-oriented or Black-preferred items five fold” and increased “literature concerning Blacks in the libraries and unit dayrooms.” In an effort to combat the

popularity of *Bragg Briefs*, the Haymarket coffeehouse, and the Quaker House, all outlets for soldiers to vent their frustrations, many Bragg units had already established “rap rooms” where “the commander and his troops can meet and openly discuss topics, grievances or otherwise.” The post had also expanded entertainment offerings on base in hopes that troops would stay put rather than venture downtown, where the G.I. coffeehouse and Quaker House beckoned.44

With the announcement of the MVA program, Tolson also quickly embraced the new initiatives flowing from the Pentagon. A late December edition of the *Paraglide*, the official newspaper of Fort Bragg, featured a smiling young soldier cracking open a cold beer as the looming headline declared, “Beer Comes to Bragg Mess Halls!” Mr. Robert Sheriff, the manager of the post’s shopping centers, practically gushed on how well the soldiers were responding to the newfound beer at meals. The article closed with the promise that beer in the mess halls was but one of the many changes planned in the transition to a modern, all-volunteer army.45 Inside the Christmas edition of the base paper, an advertisement wished each soldier “a Merry Christmas and a Happy Modern Volunteer Army.”46 Faced with a massive revolt inside the ranks, Tolson told the

---

46 Advertisement from *Paraglide*, December 24, 1970. Bragg leadership included several of the more clever MVA references inside the pages of the post newspaper in their January 14 report on the program. See Note 44 above.
Fayetteville-Fort Bragg Military Advisory Committee that when people asked him why the Army was changing, his reply was simple and direct: “The Army has no choice but to do so.”47

As the Army announced VOLAR, senior leaders had no choice but to include Fort Bragg. Although Fort Carson, Fort Ord, and Fort Benning were the three posts initially selected, within weeks the Secretary of the Army himself was recommending that Bragg be quickly added to the list due to its ongoing dissent and morale issues.48 Similar to the other posts in the experimental program, the Army headquarters gave General Tolson and his leadership team three million dollars, and perhaps more importantly, the freedom and autonomy to implement any changes that might improve soldiers’ quality of life. The initial Bragg VOLAR plan in early February was not audacious in its scope, but it did contain several proposals that General Tolson hoped might placate his soldiers. The post planned to hire civilians for jobs that soldiers traditionally detested, such as trash details, barracks and road repair, and what soldiers referred to as KP, or Kitchen Police (see Nancy comments on outsourcing). The list of suggestions also included new barracks furniture to improve the “bleak and austere

48 Secretary Resor’s desire to add Fort Bragg as a VOLAR installation was evident at the task group’s very first meeting. Memorandum For Record, Lieutenant General George Forsythe, sub: SA/SAMVA Meeting, January 25, 1971.
environment” that most soldiers lived in. A month later, when post leadership discovered more funds, Tolson also recommended expanding bus services on base, hiring seamstresses to provide free sewing services for soldiers, and a litany of repainting and repairing projects across the installation. The local Fayetteville paper, failing to see the connection between the turmoil on Bragg and the new program, saw the post’s selection as a source of local pride. General Tolson, however, was quite clear on the true designs of the program when he told a group of non-commissioned officers that the MVA and VOLAR initiatives would “increase discipline, state of readiness, and professionalism.” “Never forget,” the senior general warned the audience, “we need dedicated, motivated, and skilled professionals to accomplish the mission.”

Unfortunately for the brass, the Fort Bragg soldier dissent movement, which had steadily expanded since 1969, embodied a dramatically different variety of motivation and dedication than General Tolson envisioned. By late 1970, just as the Army was introducing the MVA and VOLAR programs as possible remedies, the G.I. movement in Fayetteville showed little signs of slowing. Tolson himself admitted that seven percent of his soldiers were “troublemakers” intent on fomenting dissent, an astounding 2,500

49 Memorandum, Lieutenant General John J. Tolson, Commander, XVIII Airborne Corps and Fort Bragg, to Commanding General, Third US Army, sub: Fort Bragg Plan for a Modern Volunteer Army, February 5, 1971. Box 12, Folder 36, Background Material-NARA. Tolson’s use of the term Modern Volunteer Army was incorrect, but in the early stages of the new programs, even the most senior officers had trouble delineating between MVA and VOLAR. Regardless of the confusion, the February 5th memo was clearly the “tentative plan for implementing VOLAR 71 at Fort Bragg.”
50 Reese, “Ft. Bragg is Selected for Test Army Program,”
G.I.s in a troop population of 35,000. Jane Fonda, who would make national news with her Fayetteville sojourns for Armed Forces Day and the F.T.A. lollapalooza, visited the Haymarket coffeehouse for a less publicized, more subdued event in early November 1970. In a room crowded with young soldiers, Fonda implored them to continue protesting the war, telling the eager G.I.s in attendance, the large majority of them working-class conscripts, that they were a vital link in the largely middle-class civilian peace movement. When Vice President Spiro Agnew spoke on the campus of North Carolina State University in Raleigh, over thirty members of G.I.s United caravanned to the state’s capital to chant antiwar slogans outside the coliseum. The G.I.s United organization was also expanding its influence in the North Carolina antiwar movement. In late November, the soldier group hosted a statewide peace conference at the Haymarket coffeehouse. In a shocking turnout, over sixty people, representing over a dozen protest organizations poured into the downtown coffeehouse for two days of strategizing. The peace conference was a tangible symbol of strength and confidence for the Bragg soldiers. Unlike other G.I. antiwar groups around the country, who were forced to focus on their own upkeep and maintenance in the face of intimidation and

---

52 Reich, “Bragg Reforms Fail to Offset Dissidence.”
54 Bragg Briefs, Vol. 3, no. 9, November 1970. Guilford-QH. The protesting soldiers were clearly angry when local newspapers reported that the chants originated from “non-student demonstrators” instead of naming the G.I.s United contingency.
threats from the brass, G.I.s United had grown strong enough to branch out and foster collaborative relationships with other antiwar groups.

The partnership the Bragg soldiers formed Vietnam Veterans Against the War would further set the organization apart from other G.I. groups that had been unable to maintain their initial momentum. In mid-April 1971, just as the MVA and VOLAR programs were supposedly making soldiers more docile and sated, the Fayetteville chapter of VVAW met at Haymarket for the first time. In what the VVAW called a “new twist,” many of the participants were actually active-duty soldiers. Until now the VVAW was almost exclusively a civilian organization in which war vets, finally beyond the grasp of the military brass, felt safe enough to express their opposition to the war. Not so at Fort Bragg. “Active-duty veterans of the war are now making it known,” a Bragg Briefs writer declared, “that they will not wait it out for the relative safety of civilian status before voicing their views on the war.” Bragg had long been a major center of returning Vietnam veterans with military obligation still left to serve, which only fueled the synergy between the new veterans’ group and G.I.s United. The newest chapter of the VVAA even put out its own underground paper, The Last Incursion, for soldiers still trapped in the “war machine.” And unlike elsewhere around the country,

---

57 The Last Incursion, Inaugural Issue, May 7, 1971. Guilford-QH. The masthead proclaimed, “This paper is put out by the Vietnam Vets Against the War; its members are both Active Duty G.I.s and ex-G.I.s. A letter than accompanied the first issue detailed “the urgent need to awaken the military man and woman to the facts of their bondage.
where multiple soldier groups at single locations had squabbled over the movement’s
direction, the first VVAW circular announced a joint protest with G.I.s United at the
upcoming Armed Farces Day rally.

Oblivious to the mood in the ranks, Fort Bragg leadership presented Armed
Forces Day, an event focused on the instruments of war and death, as a family friendly
adventure. "Be sure to see the Gigantic Armed Forces Display at Fort Bragg” the
Fayetteville Observer advertisement proclaimed, “it’s a most interesting display, the
entire family will enjoy!”58 This year’s antiwar rally focused on the most prominent
symbol of military discipline at Fort Bragg, Iron Mike, a fifteen-foot statue of a chiseled
airborne trooper said to be always watching, waiting, and alert. In an iconoclastic
gesture, the Bragg antiwar soldiers coined the 1971 Armed Farces Day as the “Iron Mike
Memorial March and Rally,” proclaiming the “spirit of Iron Mike is dead, a symbol of an
old Army.”59

Circumstances beyond their control, however, would upset the soldiers’ plans to
shut down the Armed Forces celebration for the second straight year. First, the city of
Fayetteville had learned its lesson from the previous year and out-maneuvered G.I.s
United before the rally. When soldiers went to reserve Rowan Park, the centrally located
site of the previous year’s protest, the city informed them that the Fayetteville

58 The Fayetteville Observer featured multiple full-page ads for the on-post military demonstrations on May
14, 1971.
59 Bragg Briefs, Vol. 4, no. 4 (May 71). Guilford-QH.
Cumberland County Youth Group had reserved the site for an ecology day. In reality, as the *Fayetteville Observer* pointed out, the city was planning to hold its own “counter-counter armed forces day rally.” As a result, the soldiers were driven to Clark Park, an isolated recreation area four miles from downtown with no water supply, no electricity and no restrooms.60 G.I.s United still managed to attract five hundred soldiers to the distant park, but torrential rains soon scattered the crowd. The event itself may not have rivaled the previous year’s rally in attendance or scope, but something equally amazing happened the morning of the rally that few would ever forget.

When Fayetteville residents picked up their copies of the *Fayetteville Observer* that cloudy Saturday morning, they were shocked to discover that twenty-nine commissioned officers from Fort Bragg and Pope Air Force base had taken out a scathing antiwar advertisement. Eschewing any shield of anonymity, each of the officers boldly printed his name, rank, and service below the visceral message:

> We the undersigned concerned officers at Bragg/Pope wish to make known our feelings about the immoral and wasteful war in which our country is embroiled. We agree with what we feel to be the majority view in this country that the war in Vietnam should end. We exercise our constitutional right to add our views to those who have already publicly spoken out. With them we demand the withdrawal of all American military personnel and advisors from the embattled land by the end of 1971.61

---

Of course, officers’ protesting of the war was not a new phenomenon. For example, twenty-eight officers had held an antiwar press conference in Washington, D.C. back in September of 1970, but those officers had come together from all over the country and from a variety of military branches. Never before, in one place, from one military installation, had so many officers come out against the war, much less in such a public forum. The Concerned Officers Movement, as they called themselves, had begun at Bragg back in September when two West Point graduates, David Vaught and Cornelius Cooper, sought to enlist “any officers who feel that dissent to this war and to abuses in the military is not unpatriotic.”62 The group quickly attracted a loyal following of disenchanted officers who met each Tuesday night at the Haymarket coffeehouse.

The fallout from the stunning newspaper message was instantaneous. Twenty-eight of the officers received a direct order to report immediately to their unit commanders. In an unprecedented step, the public information office at Fort Bragg released a statement to the national media that each officer had been offered the opportunity to resign their commission in “the interest of intellectual honesty,” since the advertisement was in clear contradiction to the commissioned oath each had sworn.63 Several of the men took the army up on their offer and immediately left the service, but others fought back on the pages of the Fayetteville Observer. “This is a clear example of

---

62 Concerned Officer Movement flyer, n.d. Guilford-QH.
the continuing attempts by the military to suppress the constitutional right of free speech,” Captain Frederick Ford, who had actually been a squadron section commander, declared in a front-page article. Not surprisingly, Colonel George Livers, his commander, immediately stripped Ford of both his job and his Top-Secret security clearance. Captain Fred Blitzer, one of the men who accepted the Army’s offer of resignation, explained, “It is my personal feeling that the Army’s reaction is trying to dampen dissent…people are afraid of the threat of intimidation.”64

But the Army’s intimidation tactics, as happened so often during the G.I. dissent movement, backfired in tremendous fashion. Across the country, other officer groups followed the example set by the Fayetteville group and began publishing their own antiwar messages. Thirteen medical corps officers at Fort Jackson, South Carolina, paid for space in The State newspaper to protest the “waging of what we believe to be a senseless war by the Armed Forces of the United States.” Thirty-nine officers at Fort Knox, Kentucky, signed a similar statement in their local paper. In the Minot Daily News, local Air Force officers demanded an end to “our cruel adventure in Southeast Asia.”65 Buoyed by the reaction across the country, the Fort Bragg officers group hatched a plan to take their antiwar message national. In early July, the group began a letter campaign to posts and bases across the country to solicit signatures on their initial

65 The Other Side, A Newsletter of the Concerned Officers Movement, Vol. 1, no. 3 (July 1971). Guilford-QH.
statement. Even for Fort Bragg, where soldiers had taken on an informal leadership role in the national movement with their initiatives and bravado, the results were amazing. On September 13, 1970, over a hundred and thirty officers from across the country put their names to a full-page ad in the Washington Post. The message’s wording was the exact same as the original Fayetteville Observer version, and in what was surely a publicity coup, the bottom right corner of the ad proudly proclaimed, “Sponsored by The Concerned Officers Movement, Fort Bragg, North Carolina.” The movement at Fort Bragg had gone national.

Political and military leaders at the most senior levels soon realized that the situation at Fort Bragg demanded their utmost attention. In early November 1970, after subordinates briefed Melvin Laird on the situation in Fayetteville, the Secretary of Defense nearly shouted, “then our military forces are really in bad shape. We just have to have adequate discipline to handle this kind of problem.” Days before General Westmoreland’s visit to Fayetteville in December, Laird paid a visit to Fort Bragg to gauge the situation for himself. Local leadership could not have been pleased when the airborne trooper demonstration at one of the post’s drop zones went awry. When General Tolson had refused to allow the F.T.A. show on post, a group of Democratic Senators and Representatives, including George McGovern (D–S.D.), attempted to

---

66 Display Ad 12, Washington Post, September 13, 1917.
67 Memorandum for Record, Phil Odeen, subj: Vietnamization Meeting with Secretary Laird, November 16, 1971, Folder 280, Spector-CMH.
intercede on behalf of G.I.s United with the Secretary of the Army. “The army cannot
justly assume the role of censor or arbiter of what a soldier may hear, read, or think,”
Congressman Bella Abzug (D–N.Y.) declared on the pages of the Washington Post.69 In
the Army’s official history for Fiscal Year 1971, a document usually free of any
controversial details, senior leaders specifically highlighted G.I.s United and the
Concerned Officers Movement newspaper ad in Fayetteville as the Army’s most
troublesome display of dissension and indiscipline.70

The Army had good reason to focus its undivided attention on the Fort Bragg
soldier movement; the service’s MVA and VOLAR programs were only exacerbating the
situation on post as soldiers realized the true intent behind the volunteer army
initiatives. “One cannot help but feel that the command structure is now trying to buy
off the men of the company” a soldier declared on the front page of the December Bragg
Briefs, just days after the announcement of the MVA program.71 Although their
leadership remained hesitant to admit it, the dissenting soldiers themselves always
understood the true intent of the new policies. “These new gratuities, these
liberalizations, they’re not gifts, not hand outs, they’re the spoils of a long shitty struggle
filled with lots of G.I. pain…waged by individual G.I.s acting out of frustration and

Fourth Class Philip Friedrich and Captain John Berk, had presented Representative Bella Abzug with the
1,7700-signature petition over the F.T.A show.
70 Annual Historical Summary, Fiscal Year 1971, Headquarters, Department of the Army, Office of the
Deputy Chief of Staff for Personnel. Folder 198, Spector-CMH.
hatred for the military,” a Bragg Brief soldier editorialized. For these soldiers who had
risked court-martials, dishonorable discharges, and jail time, the new army policies were
an insulting attempt to “buy you off with a quarter inch of hair and bottle of beer in the
barracks.”72 The pages of Bragg Briefs (see Nancy comments on # of producers/readers)
were littered with derogatory comments such as, “We are not a VOLAR project” and
“VOLAR is a crock.”73

The Bragg antiwar soldiers saw past glossy brochures that trumpeted these
programs designed to increase the Army’s professionalism and reduce service irritants.
They instinctually knew that these programs had one overarching goal: Replace
dissenting and unruly conscripts with compliant volunteers. “That’s what I see this
volunteer army coming to,” a soldier only identified by his last name, Blalock, predicted
in Bragg Briefs, “Nixon will have a whole army of people who dig the army and follow
orders.”74 In an edition of the underground paper devoted to what the soldiers had
termed the “VOLAR Hustle,” a member of G.I.s. United asserted that the program was
“nothing more than an attempt by the government to replace the reluctant, rebellious
draftees with pigs – that is, people who fight and do other immoral things for the money
they get out of it.”75 When pressed by a reporter from the Los Angeles Times, a high-
ranking member of General Tolson’s staff admitted the same: “A modern volunteer

\footnotesize
72 Fragg Briefs, Vol. 4, no. 5, June 71. Guilford-QH.
75 Bragg Briefs, Vol. 4, no. 6, August 1971. Guilford-QH.

247
Army is being created to eliminate the draft. Eventually dissidents will fade away. I can’t see dissidents in an all-volunteer Army because, if he’s got a political thing going, he’s not going to join the Army.”76

By the summer of 1971, however, after almost six months of MVA and VOLAR, Lieutenant General A.O. Connor, the Third Army commander and General Tolson’s immediate boss, warned his superiors in the Pentagon, “you can’t buy professionalism.”77 Nowhere was this truer than Fort Bragg. In January of 1972, after a full year of MVA and VOLAR, a team from the Pentagon descended on the North Carolina post to determine if the initiatives were beginning to soothe the dissent in the ranks. The results were not favorable, at least for the upper echelons of the Army.

“Things are bad at what should be our top installation,” Colonel Robert Montague, the Deputy SAMVA, reported up the chain of command. The editors of Bragg Briefs would have beamed if they could have seen the final page of the team’s report: “A comparison of Fort Bragg with other posts shows they are far behind in instilling the spirit of MVA among the troops.”78 But Bragg was not the only military installation where soldiers were still refusing to support a war they no longer believed in.

76 Reich, “Bragg Reforms Fail to Offset Dissidence.”
78 Memorandum, Sergeant Major Fred H. Bost, SAMVA Office, to Lieutenant General George Forsythe, SAMVA, sub: Visit to Fort Bragg, NC, 10-12 Jan 72, January 18 1972. Folder 261, Spector-CMH.
By the end of 1970, the national media had realized that the G.I. dissent movement was having a devastating impact on the military’s ability to wage war. “The combat forces are manned by bitter draftees,” Stewart Alsop wrote in Newsweek, “is it any wonder that those who know the score are beginning to think about pulling this non-fighting army out of Vietnam in a hurry?” Alsop also included a heart-wrenching letter from a soldier in Vietnam: “I am a combat infantryman, a draftee, a loser…I would rather shoot my commanding officer than the enemy.” 79 The Washington Post sent two reporters on a month-long tour of nearly every major military installation in Vietnam to test “a theory in civilian circles that military morale is at the crisis point,” or as one reporter described it, the notion “that the whole Army is in danger of going plumb to hell.” Just as the Army had already discovered, the Post reporters quickly realized that the primary problem lay with “too many intransigent young draftees from the Woodstock generation who fiercely resist a discipline in quieter times that they might more readily accept under fire.” (see Nancy comments) “Nobody wants to be here,” a young private from Atlanta stoically complained, “but what are you going to do?” 80 As the media grasped the extent of the problem, they also realized the extent the Army would go to deny, publicly at least, that anything was wrong. “The first commandment from the Pentagon is to protect the Army,” Jack Anderson, a Washington Post columnist

wrote, highlighting the brass’s obsession with keeping “the military image polished, to cover up embarrassments.” Anderson also highlighted how the MVA and VOLAR programs were a direct result of the collapse inside the ranks: “Gen. William Westmoreland has tried to cope with the turmoil by writing memos, expounding platitudes and allowing the GIs to grow their hair longer and drink beer in the barracks.”

Regardless of the Army’s fastidious attempts to keep the G.I. revolt out of the limelight, antiwar military members were increasingly making their presence known in very public ways. In January, five members of the Concerned Officer’s Movement, four of them from the US Army and the other a Naval officer, held a press conference in Washington, DC to announce to that they were sending personal letters to both the Secretary of the Army and the Navy requesting a court of inquiry to determine if the US had committed war crimes in Vietnam. Months later, forty young Army officers sent their own letter to President Nixon, defending the civilian antiwar protestors that spilled into the nation’s capital to protest the Laos invasion: “Many of these troublemakers at home are our younger brothers, or our friends, our girlfriends, our wives. We share many of their views. Now we are asked to lead men who are unconvinced into a war in

---

which few of us believe ourselves.” Around the same time, twenty-six officers from a Californian G.I. group crafted their own antiwar letter to Secretary of Defense Laird.\(^8\) By the summer of 1971, dissenting G.I.s had become even bolder. When General Westmoreland visited Fort McClellan for a scheduled speech, over two hundred soldiers and Women Army Corps (WACs) picketed outside the post’s gates to protest the general’s refusal to accept their signature on the People’s Peace Treaty, a document that antiwar civilians and soldiers had put together to bring about the war’s end on their own.\(^8\) When Secretary Laird attempted to attend a soldier homecoming at Fort Campbell in Kentucky, he suddenly found himself holding a peace treatise that over two hundred and fifty soldiers had signed.\(^8\) The Army was once again caught in a difficult situation; ignoring the situation might encourage more dissent, but crushing the movement would only spur more negative publicity. As had become the norm, the service would continue to quietly deal with its internal rebels with the hopes of keeping the growing mutiny away from the public eye.

Behind closed doors, however, it was clear that Army leadership clearly understood the gravity of the dissent movement and had settled on an explanation: antiwar draftees. In a confidential, eyes-only message, Lieutenant General William McCaffrey, the Deputy Commanding General of all US Army forces in Vietnam,

\(^{84}\) Nancy Miller Saunders, Combat by Trial: An Odyssey with 20th Century Winter Soldiers (Bloomington, IN, iUniverse, 2008), 177.
\(^{85}\) Cortright, Soldiers in Revolt, 86.
informed General Creighton Abrams that the Army’s troubles stemmed from a
generation of young soldiers, almost all draftees, who were “nurtured in indifference to
and or disrespect for constituted authority and established institutions.” This struggle
against unruly soldiers, General McCaffrey believed, was “the most challenging
circumstances ever faced in our Army.”

Months earlier, McCaffrey had sent another confidential backchannel message, this time to General Bruce Palmer, the Army’s Vice
Chief of Staff, acknowledging that a “revolution is under way among our youth,” and
never before, in the history of the Army, had “a US Commander has to fight the enemy
with so little popular support and such widespread opposition from the generation he
was leading into battle.” In perhaps one of the most direct indictments of the draft and
its impact on dissent in the ranks, General William Rosson, the commander of all Army
forces in the Pacific, placed blame for the Army’s dissent problems squarely at the feet of
conscription:

In addressing this topic virtually all commanders place strong emphasis
on permissiveness within American society as being a primary cause of
disciplinary breakdown. The point is made repeatedly that the young
draftee, the draft-induced enlistee and many of our junior officers have
been influenced adversely by permissive homes, permissive schools and
permissive courts...Taken together, these considerations are seen as
constituting fundamental hostility to regimentation and to enforced
standards of appearance, deportment and performance.

---

86 Message, Lieutenant General William McCaffrey, Deputy Commanding General USARV, to General
87 Message, Lieutenant General William McCaffrey, Deputy Commanding General USARV to Lieutenant
General Walter Kerwin, Deputy Chief of Staff for Personnel, sub: Life Magazine Article, October 29, 1970.
Spector-CMH.
The solution, at least to Rosson, was simple: “The unfit, dissenters, and trouble-makers must be identified and eliminated in consonance with the objective of a more professional army.”

Unfortunately for field commanders such as McCaffrey and Rosson, the internal revolt was only getting worse. A SAMVA team spent over a month in Vietnam during the spring of 1971 to better understand exactly what they were up against as they implemented the MVA and VOLAR programs. The results, carefully labeled “close-hold,” were sobering for a military service already reeling. The team found that fifty percent of the soldiers they encountered were against the war in Vietnam, an extremely high number considering that two commissioned officers were conducting the interviews in person. By this point in the war, the team found that combat refusals were occurring in almost every infantry company. That summer, General Westmoreland personally addressed the Army’s newest selectees for general officer to drive home just how serious the problems inside the ranks had become. “Our basic and overriding task is to rebuild and revitalize an organization that has experienced almost unbelievable stresses and strains in recent years,” Westmoreland informed the service’s newest crop of one-star generals, acknowledging that the “Army has had to face up to compounding

---

89 Memorandum, SAMVA Visiting Party, to Lieutenant General George Forsythe, SAMVA, sub: Visit to USARV from 7 April to 15 May 71, n.d. Folder 57, Spector-CMH.
social issues of drug abuse, racial discord, dissent and new attitudes and behavior patterns on the part of youth.” The Chief of Staff clearly blamed an American society that had begun to question many of its traditional values, a reexamination he believed was particularly dangerous to the military establishment. “Achievement of the highest standards of professionalism is our overriding concern. All else is secondary,” Westmoreland pleaded with his new generals, reminding them, “There is nothing more reprehensible or dangerous to the society that it defends than an undisciplined army.”

In several confidential messages to members of Congress, who had requested the service provide the ground truth after reading newspaper stories of dissent and indiscline, the Army was quite clear that dissent was a clear and present danger. In one such report, the Army acknowledged that all levels of the Army were keenly aware of the "problems influencing the maintenance of discipline," but elected officials should understand that the Army simply reflected the "conditions extant in the whole of American society." The Army’s insistence on pinning the blame on "American society" or a generation of soldiers "nurtured in indifference," was nothing less than the ultimate indictment of the draft. The service understood by this point that the only way to free

---

* For example, in response to Congressman Robert Sikes (D-FL) the Army’s Chief of Legislative Liaison put together a Fact Sheet entitled “Morale and Discipline in the Army.” In the document, the Army was frank that “Soldier dissidence against US policy in Southeast Asia continues,” and that “evidence exists that dissident, militant organizations have placed agitators in the Army with the express objective of fomenting dissidence.” Folder 198, Spector-CMH.
* Memorandum to Mr. George Allen, House Staffer, Rayburn Office Building. Folder 271, Spector-CMH.
itself from the grasp of society’s problems was to transition to a new generation of soldiers that came into ranks eagerly and obediently, who volunteered to serve rather than being forced into service against their will.

Two different publications over the summer and fall of 1971, however, laid bare the insurrection inside the ranks and ensured that the Army could no longer publicly deny that it faced the very real possibility of collapse from within. Colonel Robert Heinl, a US Marine Corps officer, published an exposé entitled “The Collapse of the Armed Forces” in the June issue of the Armed Forces Journal that exposed in brutal terms the combat refusals fragging, racial tension, drug use, and dissent that had steadily built inside the ranks since 1965. Heinl’s opening barrage, “the morale, discipline and battle worthiness of the US Armed Forces are, with a few salient exceptions, lower and worse than at any time in this century and possibly in the history of the United States,” remains a constant fixture in the Vietnam historiography and perhaps the most oft-quoted refrain of the G.I. dissent movement literature. For an academic article, the piece was a bombshell. Colonel Heinl’s editors even included a bold-print warning, alerting readers that what they were about to see was “strong and not altogether pleasant reading,” but that the issues it revealed were so vital to national security that they must be “faced, responsibly and eventually, by our military and civilian leaders.”

Three months later, the *Washington Post* ran a weeklong, front-page series entitled “Army in Anguish,” once again highlighting that “today’s Army is fighting its most threatening battle, a struggle for survival as an institution.”\(^94\) Day after day, Army leaders watched in horror as reporters from one of the nation’s largest newspapers exposed their open wounds to a national audience. In the sixth installment of the series, the *Post* staff came to the same conclusion that senior Army leadership and the SAMVA office already had; if you were interested in G.I. dissent, Fort Bragg was the place to go. “The Army’s going to be dead,” an anonymous soldier in Fayetteville told reporters, also calling the VOLAR program “a complete bust because nobody wants to go along with it.” Another Bragg draftee had found the perfect outlet for his fury: “The Army is so fucked up. The Army took me away from school. It took me away from a job. It put me in an environment that I don’t like.” A brigade commander admitted, after being sure his identity would be withheld, that G.I.s on post were actively sabotaging equipment to avoid duty. Another young soldier claimed that his supervisor threatened him with a court-martial for raising a moral complaint about the war. After hearing similar complaints from a myriad of disgruntled Bragg soldiers, the reporters wondered aloud: “To hear some of these soldiers is to wonder if they will ever fight again.”\(^95\)

---


The Army’s reaction to the Post series was nearly as revealing as the exposé itself. Before the series had even completed its run, General Westmoreland sent an urgent memorandum to his most senior commanding generals proclaiming that “discipline is the basic ingredient of any professional military force – it is our soul. There is no greater threat to society than that posed by an undisciplined Army.” Two days later, during a speech at the Airlie House in Virginia, Westmoreland publicly admitted for the first time that the number of young people with antiwar sentiments drafted after their college deferments expired greatly contributed to the Army’s dissent problem. For the first time as well, the chief of staff publicly recognized the “young radicals” and “highly influential, radical dissident,” and the detrimental impact both were having on the Army. Towards the end of the speech, as the general outlined the steps the Army was taking to remedy the dissent problem, Westmoreland cleaved to the MVA and VOLAR initiatives, further proof that these new programs had, at best, a tangential relationship to attracting volunteers.

As members of Congress discovered each new “Army in Anguish” segment, many of them grew increasingly frustrated with the Army. As a result, General Bruce Palmer, the Vice Chief of Staff, and Lieutenant General Walter Kerwin, the Army’s Deputy Chief of Staff for Personnel, found themselves in front of George Mahan’s (D-
TX) House Appropriations Committee for a full day of intense, and at times hostile, questioning. The two generals’ testimony from September of 1971 remains one of the frankest and most open Army acknowledgements of the problems inside ranks. General Palmer acknowledged from the very beginning that Army was experiencing the “deep wounds and scars, both physical and mental,” from the Vietnam War. As had become the trend, Palmer also blamed the Army’s dissent issues on the draft, acknowledging, “When those men [those with antiwar sentiments] were of draft age, we knew it was coming in the Army.”98

President Nixon also read the “Army in Anguish” series. In a memorandum to General Creighton Abrams and General William Rosson, the commander of all Army forces in the Pacific, Westmoreland warned the two commanders, “The President followed the series with particular interest.” Oddly, the Army Chief of Staff seemed more obsessed with several of the pictures the Post had run alongside the series than the actual articles, claiming at one point that “a hippie appearance of men in uniform damages the Army’s public image and is unacceptable.” In a tone-deaf manner bordering on the ridiculous, Westmoreland pedantically asked the two Army generals responsible for the war in Vietnam if they had received the regulations on personal appearance and wearing of the uniform. With the expansion of combat refusals,
fragging, and dissent in the jungles of Vietnam, Abrams and Rosson were surely shocked by the general’s emphasis on uniforms and personal appearance.

Westmoreland did, however, admit to larger problems in the ranks as well, acknowledging that he had seen the turmoil in the ranks himself during his visits to military posts in the US and Europe, turmoil that now required “dramatic improvement.” Following the embarrassing Washington Post series, Westmoreland actually had to be talked out of sending an open letter to the American people, defending the Army and his leadership team’s efforts to repair the service. Since Lieutenant Henry Howe’s march through the streets of El Paso in 1965, the Army had attempted to publicly downplay both the extent of dissent in the ranks and its impact on military operations. By the fall of 1971, it not longer could.

With G.I. dissent now out in the open, military leaders were becoming more likely to publicly admit the impact of the draft on the soldier antiwar movement. Roger Kelley, the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Manpower and Reserve Affairs, told the Senate Armed Services Committee that a volunteer army would solve most of the military’s ongoing problems. “An organization composed of volunteers tends to be more efficient than one that relies on forced entry,” Kelley told the assembled Senators,

echoing the Army’s belief than a volunteer force “would serve the morale and esprit of its people far more effectively than the compulsory form of organizations.” Just as Martin Anderson and Milton Friedman had argued before, the Assistant Secretary of Defense was adamant that a volunteer force would “provide better national security.”101 In what one reporter termed one of the “most candid appraisals ever made of the Army,” General Westmoreland told the House Committee on Appropriations, “dissent continues to be a troublesome problem,” and that hundreds of soldiers acting collectively had caused “grave results” for the Army.102 Shortly after his testimony, the Army Chief of Staff admitted in an interview that a “volunteer army can be a better Army. A willing soldier can be better trained and more highly motivated to service than a draftee.” Westmoreland finally came clean, publicly, on the Modern Volunteer Army initiatives, admitting that the real “driving force” behind the program was to “make a better Army,” not necessarily attract volunteers.103 After interviewing Brigadier General Robert Gard, a Pentagon specialist in disciplinary problems, and Major General John Bennett, the commander of the Army’s Fourth Infantry Division, a New York Times

102 William McGaffin, “Army Admits It Has Big Problems,” Chicago Daily News, March 21, 1971. See also Department of Defense Appropriations for 1972: Hearings Before a Subcommittee of the Comm. On Appropriation, House of Representatives, 92nd Cong, 540-553 (March 1971) for the full text of Westmoreland’s posture statement. During the general’s testimony, Representative Louis Wyman (R-N.H.) suggested that the Army “find a little corner up in North Dakota where it is nice and bleak, and assign them there for duty, and let them mix with each other, just pull them out of the various divisions and assignments where they are now.”
103 “Straight Talk from the Chief on the Modern Volunteer Army,” Army (May 1971).
reporter concluded that the Army had launched MVA and VOLAR to “increase the number of true volunteers in its ranks and thus eliminate many of its troubles” since the “troublemakers are primarily draftees.”

Slowly but surely, the Army’s volunteer force initiatives were beginning to ease the discord and dissent inside the ranks. In March of 1971, the commanding general at Fort Carson reported to the SAMVA office that his post had seen lower AWOL rates, fewer Inspector General complaints, lower Article 15 rates, and a decrease in any “discernible organized dissidence” after implementing just half of its MVA/VOLAR initiatives. Months later, Lieutenant General McCaffrey informed his superiors that seven months of MVA initiatives had “made inroads into problem areas which have fostered dissatisfaction and hostility towards the service.” For the commanding officer of all Army forces in Vietnam, the combination of initiatives both in the US and Vietnam formed the essential first steps in creating a “highly motivated, professionally oriented all-volunteer force.”

Within nine months of launching the volunteer army programs, the SAMVA office proudly reported to General Westmoreland and the Secretary of the Army that the

number of combat arms volunteers had grown from 315 in January of 1971 to 3,865 in September of 1971, a ten-fold increase. During that span of time, the Army had added over 1,800 recruiters, opened 500 new recruiting stations, and spent over ten million dollars on radio and television advertising. With the early momentum, the Army was planning to devote almost two hundred million dollars to MVA initiatives in the 1972 Fiscal Year.107

These successes clearly frustrated G.I. organizers at the VOLAR posts. The civilian proprietors of the Homefront coffeehouse outside Fort Carson lamented the “bullshit publicity” that Carson and VOLAR had received and vowed to “expose this ‘new army’ for what it is.” As a sign of the impact of the MVA and VOLAR programs they opposed, the same organizers acknowledged the difficulty in doing so since their contacts on post had suddenly diminished. The Army had gone all-in on a set of programs primarily designed to rebuild the service by eliminating what it believed to be the main drivers of dissent. The gamble was beginning to pay off.

Of course, not everyone was thrilled with the new MVA and VOLAR programs. Ironically, there were some who believed the Army’s plan to improve discipline and eliminate dissent would have the opposite impact, that the new programs would spur an ethos of permissiveness that would destroy the military’s traditional values of order and discipline. The primary spokesman of this counter-group quickly became

Representative F. Edward Hebert, a Louisiana Democrat who was the incoming chairman of the House Armed Services Committee. Hebert, who somehow managed to use the words “fearful,” “afraid,” and “frightened” in one paragraph, worried that the Army was turning into a country club. (See Nancy comments) “The military is not a democracy,” Hebert declared, arguing that MVA and VOLAR would undermine the discipline, strength, morale, and desire of the Army.108 A Washington Post cartoon featured a burly drill sergeant standing over a sleeping recruit with the caption, “General Westmoreland’s compliments, Private...after the coffee would you kindly join us at the ten-thirty reveille gathering?”109 Army leaders lamented how much media attention the introduction of beer in the barracks had garnered, telling anyone who would listen that the troops still preferred Coca Cola or milk with their meals.110 The Army also faced resistance from inside the ranks from its old-line troops who had come of age in the traditional spit-shine Army. “If they’d just let me do it my way, the way it was done to me, I could shape up this bunch of bubbleheads – fast,” claimed one grizzled master sergeant, echoing the sentiment of many of his senior peers.111 Regardless of the occasional pushback, however, the Army had committed itself to

110 As an example, see Memorandum, Lieutenant General A.O. Connor, Commander, Third US Army, to General Ralph Haines, Commander, US Continental Army Command, sub: Report on Modern Volunteer Army, January 21, 1971. Box 20, Folder 62, MVA Background Material-NARA. During General Palmer and General Kerwin’s testimony before the House Committee on Appropriations following the “Army in Anguish” series, the two generals received several pointed questions on beer in the barracks.
organizing its volunteer army programs around the easement of irritants that younger soldiers seemed to be rebelling against.

Though the MVA and VOLAR programs were proving fruitful, the Army still pined for a more immediate solution to the revolt inside the ranks. And so, in late 1970, the service opened another front against its dissenting soldiers with a rather simple, yet effective, tactic: the Army was simply going to unceremoniously dump its most troublesome soldiers. In October 1970, during a Vietnam field commander’s conference, one senior officer lamented that his new jail was already filled to capacity with unruly soldiers. “I can’t make a new jail, I just built a new one,” the general complained. The only recourse, it seemed to him, was to “get the guy out…get rid of them. So whenever there is a chance, get one of them out.” General Rosson, in charge of Army Forces in the Pacific, had already decided that the best, if not the only, course of action was to find and eliminate the Army’s troublemakers. In December 1970, the Army introduced the Qualitative Management Program to do just that. Publicly, military leaders portrayed the program as a new personnel management system that improved career progression and promotion opportunities, but in an internal staffing memorandum, the service admitted that a major portion of the initiative was “early career termination for the non-

112 Only an audiotape survived this command meeting consisting of eight to ten generals headed by Lieutenant General William McCaffrey on October 21, 1970. Ms. Stephanie Haftel transcribed the tape in June of 1983, but the speakers remain unidentified. Folder 148, Spector-CMH.

264
progressive and screenout of the non-productive.” It was, as the Army staff slyly noted, “a major step towards improved professionalism and a Modern Volunteer Army.”

By early 1971, the Army wanted to go even further by “rewarding” inductees who had served in Vietnam by excusing them from the military a full three months before their commitments officially ended. Of course, these inductees could only earn their early dismissal by behaving according to Army standards. “This policy is intended to stimulate all Vietnam returnees to perform well,” the SAMVA office admitted, highlighting that only those who behaved in a “highly professional manner and have made positive contributions to their units” would allowed to leave the Army early.

It was the ultimate carrot; a soldier could earn his freedom simply by staying in step with the army’s vision of professionalism. By the end of 1971, the other military services had caught on to the Army’s strategy, so the Pentagon announced that any service member who had less than six months remaining could simply walk away. Eventually, the Army discarded any pretense of quality management and simply began referring to its unruly soldiers as “undesirables.”

The Army staff sent several teams out to select units to investigate the impact of these early release programs and found the initiatives to be

---

113 Memorandum, Department of the Army, to Subordinate Commands, sub: Qualitative Management Program, December, 4 1970. AVA/CMH.
114 Memorandum, Brigadier General James B. Adamson, Director of Plans, Studies, and Budget, to SAMVA, sub: Further Actions for Improving Service Attractiveness, February 16, 1971. AVA/CMH.
115 Cortright, Soldiers in Revolt, 91.
116 Memorandum, Lieutenant Colonel Oliver, to Lieutenant General Walter Kerwin, Deputy Chief of Staff for Personnel, sub: Separation of Undesirables, January 3, 1972. Spector-CMH.
an important “step toward achieving our MVA goals since we are eliminating short
timers who are non-careerists.” General Westmoreland raved in an interview that for
the “first time in history,” the Army could now discharge a recruit who was not up to
snuff. The direct result of ridding the Army of such men, Westmoreland bragged, was
that “discipline, morale, and professionalism were all on the upswing.” Even as the
volunteer army initiatives and the early-release programs took hold, the Army could not
escape the continuing chaos of the war in Vietnam. In fact, the entire US government
was soon forced to face the truth about the war in Southeast Asia.

Involvement.” This archive, which became known as the Pentagon Papers, was a Top-
Secret government-produced compendium that revealed for the first time the
dissonance between officials’ public statements on the war and the sordid reality of
covert operations and misleading war aims. Secretary of Defense Robert McNamara had
created this Vietnam Task Force four years earlier, during the summer of 1967, and
tasked the clandestine unit to compile a thorough history of the war which would, he

117 Memorandum, Lieutenant General Walter Kerwin, Deputy Chief of Staff for Personnel, to Chief of Staff, US Army, sub: ODCSPER Field Trips Concerning Early Release Programs, January 20, 1972. AVA/CMH.
hoped, serve as a sort of cautionary tale for future generations of policy-makers. Daniel Ellsberg, a Department of Defense aide at the time, had worked on the project for several months in 1967 and then gained access to the completed work in 1969 while an employee at the RAND Corporation, a government sponsored think-tank. Shortly after gaining access to the entirety of the project, Ellsberg, by now vehemently opposed to the war in Vietnam, provided the documents to Senator J.W. Fulbright, the Chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, but the southern Democrat from Arkansas balked at the idea of releasing the project to the public. By the spring of 1971, however, Ellsberg approached the *New York Times* with the report.

The secret documents Ellsberg turned over revealed that US administrations dating back to the 1940s had directly interfered in the internal affairs of Vietnam. The Truman Administration had provided aid to France in its colonial war against the communist-led Vietminh while the Eisenhower Administration had directly sabotaged the Geneva settlement for Indochina in 1954. During the Kennedy presidency, officials transformed a policy of “limited-risk gamble” into one of “broad commitment” and actively supported the eventual overthrow and assassination of South Vietnamese President Ngo Dinh Diem. In was during the President Johnson and Secretary

---


122 Sheehan, “Vietnam Archive.”
McNamara era, however, from which the most revolting revelations emerged. A January 1965 memorandum to President Johnson, on which McNamara penciled his approval, clearly revealed that the effort in Southeast Asia was “not to help friend, but to contain China.”123 By early 1964, the US was supporting and directing a number of covert operations: Air strikes over Laos by CIA-hired civilian pilots and by Thai flyers, South Vietnamese harassment raids along the North Vietnam coast, and U-2 reconnaissance flights over the North.124 Even as the US began its sustained aerial bombardment of North Vietnam in February of 1965 and followed those bombings with the introduction of the first combat ground troops, it was already clear that the US intelligence community doubted that the efforts would have any real impact on Hanoi’s support of the Vietcong insurgency in the South.125

The day following the Times first publication, the US Attorney General, John W. Mitchell, after first mistakenly transmitting the message to a fish company in Brooklyn,

123 “Pentagon Papers: The Secret War,” Time Magazine, June 28, 1971. A month later, Jon McNaughton, the Assistant Secretary of Defense, further revealed the true war aims, and also echoed McNamara’s fondness for numbers based analysis, by breaking down US objectives by percentage: “70% – to avoid a humiliating U.S. defeat. 20% – to keep SVN (South Vietnam) territory from Chinese hands. 10% – to permit the people of SVN to enjoy a better, freer way of life. Also – to emerge from crisis without unacceptable taint from methods used.” In a November 1965 memo, McNamara told Johnson that “The February decision to bomb North Vietnam and the July approval of Phase I deployments make sense only if they are in support of a long-run United States policy to contain Communist China.” See Draft Memorandum, Robert McNamara, Secretary of Defense, to President Lyndon Johnson, sub: Courses of Action in Vietnam, November 3, 1965. US Department of State, Office of the Historian, http://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1964-68v03/d189 (accessed May 31, 2015).
125 Sheehan, “Vietnam Archive.”
sent a telegram to the New York Times’ publisher, arguing that publication of the Top Secret papers was “directly prohibited by the provisions of the Espionage law” and “further publication of information of this character will cause irreparable injury to the defense interests of the United States.” The US government’s decision to contest the publication set off an unprecedented battle over the constitutional guarantee of freedom of the press and its relationship to national security. When the Times refused to voluntarily cease publishing the documents, the Nixon administration obtained a federal court injunction that forced the cessation. The ensuing court battle went to the Supreme Court, where on June 30, 1971, the highest court in the US decided 6-3 to lift the constraints on the press. “Only a free and unrestrained press can effectively expose deception in government,” Supreme Court Justice Hugo Black argued, “And paramount among the responsibilities of a free press is the duty to prevent any part of the government from deceiving the people and sending them off to distant lands to die of foreign fevers and foreign shot and shell.”

In addition to further alienating the many Americans who had already come to loathe the decade long war, the publication of the Pentagon Papers had other major repercussions, one of which eventually destroyed an American presidency. Shortly after the publication of the leaked documents, the Nixon administration created a covert

---

special investigation unit that became known internally as The Plumbers. The unit’s first task was to burglarize the Los Angeles office of Daniel Ellsberg’s psychiatrist in hopes of discrediting the man who had leaked the Pentagon Papers. “We had one little operation. It’s been aborted out in Los Angeles which, I think, is better that you don’t know about,” John Ehrlichman told President Nixon shortly after the break-in. Of course, the same undercover unit that began with Ellsberg and the Pentagon Papers ended almost exactly one year later when police apprehended five burglars inside the Democratic National Committee in the Watergate office complex in Washington, DC. The ensuing scandal would of course become the “long national nightmare” that forced Nixon to resign, but it also saved Daniel Ellsberg from prison. After Watergate prosecutors found a memo addressed to John Ehrlichman describing in detail the plans to burglarize the office of the psychiatrist, Judge Matthew Byrne eventually dismissed all charges against Ellsberg, effectively ending the drama surrounding one of the most fantastical press leaks in American history.

Amid all this chaos in the White House, the Nixon administration remained focused on ending the draft. At the end of 1970, Secretary Laird forwarded his final recommendations for ending conscription to Henry Kissinger, proposing that the administration request a two-year extension of the draft through June 30, 1973 and the

---

cessation of undergraduate deferments. By the end of the month, the President had decided. On January 28, 1971, President Nixon sent his second message to Congress on ending the draft, the first being shortly after the Gates Commission report in April of 1970. “I am even more strongly convinced of the rightness of these proposals,” Nixon proclaimed, requesting an additional $1.5 billion in funds to make military service more attractive to young Americans.

Both the Nixon administration and senior military leaders would have preferred to end the draft immediately, but with an active shooting war still ongoing in Vietnam, the President believed that ending the draft too suddenly would “seriously weaken our military forces and impair our ability to forestall threats to peace.” In the end, the White House adopted Laird’s recommendations almost without change, ultimately requesting a two-year extension and the end of college deferments. With the “opportunity to take historic action” at hand, the President implored Congress that ending of the draft would “demonstrate our continuing commitment to the principle of ensuring for the individual


the greatest possible measure of freedom.131 After a summer of debate, the House voted 297-108 in August to extend the draft by two years, and the Senate followed suit a month later by a vote of 55-30. One week later, President Nixon signed the Draft Extension and Military Pay Bill, declaring that he was “most hopeful that this is the last time a President signs an extension of draft induction authority.”132

With the end of the draft now firmly sight, the President also spoke of winning the war in Vietnam. Just as he had the previous January with his “end in sight” comments, Nixon projected an air of optimism during his January 1972 State of the Union address. Draft calls had fallen below 100,000 in 1971, the lowest since 1962. The President, less than a year away from a landslide re-election bid, proudly boasted of the seven troop withdrawals he had announced since taking office. In January of 1969, the troop ceiling had been 549,500. Now, Nixon proclaimed from the rostrum of the House of Representatives, the troop ceiling would fall to 69,000 by May of 1972. Combat deaths had also dropped by ninety-five percent. The US would end the war through negotiation or Vietnamization, the President declared, but either way, the US would end the conflict in a way that “fulfills our commitment to the people of South Vietnam

132 Statement of President Richard Nixon Upon Signing H.R. 6531, Draft Extension and Military Pay Bill, Into Law, September 28, 1971. The new law also nearly doubled a new recruit’s pay from $255 a month to $450 per month. AVA/CMH.
which... gives them the chance to choose their own future.” Just as he was the previous year, Nixon seemed hopeful that the end was near. This hope, however, was also soon dashed on the rocks of reality.

Just two months later, on Easter weekend, three North Vietnamese divisions swept across the demilitarized zone into South Vietnam in the largest conventional attack against US forces since Chinese forces had flooded across the Yalu River during the Korean War. The North Vietnamese struck simultaneously across three fronts and soon had over 120,000 troops inside South Vietnam. US and ARVN (the South Vietnamese Regular Army) military leaders had always suspected a counter-attack from the North in response to the invasion of Laos in early 1971, but the ferocity and size of the invasion force caught almost everyone off guard. On April 27, 1972, President Nixon addressed the nation and announced his response to the North’s audacious offensive. First, arguing that South Vietnamese troops had acquitted themselves well in blunting the invasion, Nixon announced yet another troop withdrawal of 20,000, bringing the total ground combat strength in country down to 49,000. Second, the President directed Ambassador Porter to return to the negotiating table in Paris the very next day. Finally, the US also launched the first sustained aerial bombardment of North Vietnamese targets since November 1968, in what became known as Operation Linebacker II. In

133 Text of President Nixon’s State of the Union Address, January 22, 1972. AVA/CMH.
May, Nixon went a step further by ordering the mining of all North Vietnamese ports. The government of North Vietnam referred to the decision as the “gravest step in escalation of the war to date.” One of the primary repercussions of the Easter Offensive and the US’s aggressive retaliation was a rekindling of the civilian antiwar movement. Across the nation, protests erupted in the most turbulent antiwar fervor since May of 1970. Former Senator Eugene McCarthy went so far to call for Nixon’s impeachment.\(^{135}\) Months earlier, Nixon had delivered his State of the Union in an almost triumphant tone. Now, triumph seemed a distant, if not impossible, goal.

During the chaos of the Easter Offensive and the retaliatory strikes, President Nixon had to make another important decision: Who was going to be the next Chief of Staff of the Army? General Westmoreland, who had assumed the Army’s highest position in the summer of 1968, was approaching his retirement date. After thirty-six years in uniform, it was time for the four-star general to turn over the reigns of the Army. Many in the Washington establishment, including Robert Froehlke, the new Secretary of the Army, pushed the administration to appoint a younger general in hopes that the new Chief of Staff would be open to broad reforms, and more importantly, less connected to the quagmire in Vietnam.\(^{136}\) The administration, in what was largely a symbol of support for the war in Vietnam and a reward for loyalty, went the opposite


direction when it tabbed the fifty-seven year old Creighton Abrams, who had commanded all US forces in Vietnam since 1968, for the position.

Abrams had graduated from West Point in 1936, the same year as Westmoreland, and had earned a reputation as a daring tank commander when he broke through the German lines at the Battle of the Bulge under General George Patton during World War II. Less than eight years after receiving his first star, Abrams had risen to a four-star general where he served as Vice Chief of Staff of the Army and then Deputy Commander in Vietnam before succeeding Westmoreland in 1968. Despite his age, Abrams was very much a progressive general officer. “If Abrams changes the Army even half as much as he changed the war in Vietnam, nobody will recognize it,” one military officer in Saigon commented after the announcement. Whereas Westmoreland was the ramrod-straight, political general straight from the recruiting poster, Abrams was more often defined as “rumpled, gruff, and grizzled.”137 Shortly after assuming his new position, Abrams made it clear that “there should be no let up in our drive to develop a dedicated force of professionals. The significant improvements we have initiated must be sustained to insure the attainment of the MVA goals.”138

There were many in the Pentagon, Secretary of Defense Melvin Laird included, who thought that the Nixon White House had disrespected, if not outright mistreated,

138 MVA Theme for CSA Keynote Address to Army Commanders’ Course, November 14, 1972. Box 23, Folder 70, Background Material-NARA.
General Westmoreland during his tour as the Army’s Chief of Staff. To many in the Nixon administration, Westmoreland would forever be a “Johnson man,” and a constant reminder of all that had gone awry in the far flung jungles of Vietnam. At the end of June, however, President Nixon publicly awarded Westmoreland the Distinguished Service Medal, thanking him for his “exceptional leadership and selfless dedication to duty.” Days later, the Army four-star sent the President a blunt four-page assessment of the state of the army. In rare, straightforward language, Westmoreland highlighted the Army’s shortcomings in strength and readiness created “by the stresses and strains of 7 years of war during which it [the Army] carried the major burden.” In many ways, the letter was a parting shot at the administration. The Army’s problems were not self-made, the general seemed to imply, but thrust upon it by politicians intent on keeping hundreds of thousands of ground troops in Southeast Asia. Westmoreland’s comments on the draft in this farewell letter, however, have received the most attention. Some historians have interpreted Westmoreland’s final suggestion to the President that the draft mechanism be kept in place, in standby status only, in case of national emergency as proof positive that the Army Chief of Staff was finally coming

139 Oral History, Melvin Laird, March 31, 1983, Box 14, Folder 7, AVA/MHI. In an interview with historian Robert Griffith, Laird remarked that Westmoreland “was associated so closely with the war during the Johnson period that some people over there [the White House] felt that he was a liability and people attributed certain things to Westmoreland that really weren’t fair. I get back to the Volunteer Service, I know how Westmoreland felt.”
141 General William C. Westmoreland, US Army Chief of Staff, Farewell Letter, to President Richard Nixon, June 30, 1972. Box 1, Folder 4, AVA/MHI.
clean on his opposition to ending the draft. That was simply not the case. Generals, particularly those who command ground units, have always fretted about available manpower in cases of emergencies and national mobilizations, and Westmoreland was no exception. Even as he pushed for volunteers, Westmoreland consistently favored keeping the draft’s structural support beams in place as a sort of “national insurance.”

The four-star general remained convinced that volunteers made better soldiers, proudly pointing out to Nixon that indicators of professionalism, discipline, and morale were all on the upswing after the implementation of MVA and VOLAR. Nixon’s reply, however, was curt, almost blunt, as the President informed his former general, “we will bear in mind the points you raise and your recommendations in making future decisions.”

Westmoreland had taken over the Army in 1968 when dissent first began to rip the organization apart from within, but as he departed four years later, the service seemed to have found a viable and successful methodology of suppressing that revolt inside the ranks. Even at Fort Bragg, long the stronghold of G.I. dissent, antiwar service members and activists were struggling to maintain their momentum.

One distinct advantage antiwar soldiers at Bragg had enjoyed that other G.I. groups often lacked was their cooperative relationship with the town of Fayetteville. Local residents had marched alongside soldiers through the streets of the small North

---

142 For example, see Bailey, America’s Army, 99 and Rostker, I Want You!, 168-171.
144 Letter, President Richard Nixon to General William C. Westmoreland, US Army Chief of Staff, August 8, 1972. Box 1, Folder 4, AVA/MHI.
Carolina town since 1969 and several thousand civilian activists had joined with G.I.s in Rowan Park during the 1970 Armed Forces Day rally. In the heart of downtown, the Quaker House and Haymarket coffeehouse stood alongside local businesses as antimilitaristic sanctuaries for soldiers.

Following the F.T.A. show in the spring of 1971, however, Fayetteville locals began to sour on the soldier movement in their midst. Jane Fonda, who had headlined both the Armed Forces Day rally and the troubadour show, had suddenly become the face of the local movement, at least to a national audience, rather than local Bragg soldiers and civilian activists. The result was resentment and distrust of a movement that suddenly seemed hijacked by that timeless southern enemy, the outside agitator. One local resident blasted G.I.s United in the *Fayetteville Observer*, recommending, “these proponents of G.I. individualism be ‘united’ into special battalions and offered to Hanoi on a 10 to 1 ratio, in exchange for American prisoners of war!”145 After an arsonist had set the first Quaker House ablaze, an anonymous caller told J.C. Honeycutt, who was asleep in an upstairs room when the fire erupted and barely escaped, that it was a shame she had not perished in the blaze.146 Shortly before the second Armed Forces Day rally in 1971, Federal District Judge Algernon Butler upheld the 71st High School principal’s decision to suspend students who had worn black armbands in support of the antiwar

---


278
movement, primarily on the logic that “more than one-third of the students were children of military personnel and it was reasonable to assume that many of them supported the war effort.” Not long after, vandals broke into the Haymarket coffeehouse under the cover of darkness and wreaked havoc, causing over a thousand dollars in damage. Many in Fayetteville had decided, it seemed, that they were no longer willing to embrace a central role in the antiwar movement.

This shifting dynamic in town particularly affected the Quaker House. Up until this point, the small enclave of religious activists had proven that they could have an astounding impact on the soldier movement, not just in Fayetteville, but also well beyond North Carolina. A G.I. visitor from Virginia stopped by the house on a pilgrimage of sorts in the spring of 1971, telling organizers that the Quaker House was known at military bases across the country as the quintessential model of cooperation between G.I.s and civilians. The Quaker leadership in North Carolina, however, was beginning to question this new organization that had received so much publicity. The New Garden Society of Friends from Greensboro was particularly worried about the group’s motivation. During a February 1971 overseers meeting, the Quaker leadership demanded to know: “Did the Quaker House plan to overthrow the government? Was the group pro-communist?” The overseers also began to question the house’s

149 Minutes of Quaker House Overseers Meeting, March 14, 1971. Guilford-QH.
relationship with G.I.s United. How could a soldier organization be trusted to embrace the Quaker ideology of non-violence? The Quaker House relied on the North Carolina Society of Friends Meetings almost completely for funding, so these inquiries were particularly sobering. By the end of 1971, local organizers were seriously considering shuttering the organization and moving on elsewhere, perhaps to Camp Lejeune and the massive Marine contingency near the North Carolina coast. With the Haymarket coffeehouse carving out a niche as the more radical, and more appealing, center of the local G.I. movement, the Quaker House was facing a severe identity crisis. Its days seemed numbered.

The confluence of several serendipitous events in early 1972, however, enabled the Quaker House to emerge from these doldrums with a reinvigorated vision and mission. The first was the closure of the Haymarket coffeehouse in February. When Sol Wahba, a local businessman who owned many of the shops on Hay Street, refused to renew the coffeehouse’s lease, local antiwar organizers, who were already severely strapped financially, had little choice but to close the downtown coffeehouse that had served G.I.s for the last two years. Suddenly, the Quaker House found itself once again as the sole off-post outlet for disenchanted G.I.s. The second development was the

---

150 Minutes of Quaker House Overseers Meeting, February 14, 1971. Guilford-QH.
151 One couple, Scott and Sarah Scott, who had moved to Fayetteville to take over the Quaker House abruptly left the house in limbo to join the coffeehouse staff. See Minutes of Quaker House Overseers Meeting, April 18, 1971 and September 12, 1971, both at Guilford-QH.
arrival of Ken and Ellen Arning, a married couple who had answered an advertisement in the “Friends’ Journal” in December 1971 and now found themselves in charge of the Quaker House. The young couple from New Jersey immediately set about repairing the fissure between the Quaker group and local residents. They made a conscious effort to embrace the community, inviting neighbors over for coffee and taking walks through local neighborhoods. Soon, the house was inundated with sweet potato pies and homemade vegetable soup as neighborhood women embraced the young couple.153

But the mission of the Quaker House was also changing. “We want to maintain a cooperative relationship with the antiwar movement without being merely another part of it,” Bob Gwyn, the chairman of the house’s board, explained.154 Rather than being seen as a pure political, or worse radical, organization, Quaker leadership wanted to reemphasize their religious mission, and the Arnings soon started the first regular Quaker church services in Fayetteville. The group’s new mission was to provide “an alternative to all militarism,” and the popular potluck dinners for soldiers on Thursday nights soon replaced the images of Jane Fonda holding court on the home’s front steps. These dinners were so well received by the local community that the Fayetteville Observer printed several of the more popular recipes.155 The Quaker House organizers may have softened their image, but they remained incredibly resilient and motivated. After all, as

J.C. Honeycutt declared during the group’s darkest hour, “I can’t believe those people think I’m going to leave just because they burned my house down.” Many antiwar organizations across the country had folded when their mission became more difficult to define and hostility loomed, but the Quaker House had adjusted on the fly and remained firmly entrenched in the antiwar business.

The G.I.s United group, facing its own troubles, was also forced to adapt to the changing situation on the battlefield. By the end of 1971, the soldier dissent movement writ large was struggling to maintain momentum as the Army’s MVA and VOLAR programs took hold, draft calls continued to plummet, and the troop numbers in Vietnam steadily fell. To a large extent, the single issue of the war in Southeast Asia had fueled the movement, and as the end of that conflict loomed, soldiers were less and less likely to act collectively. In November of 1971, the antiwar soldiers at Fort Bragg took an unprecedented step in the face of these changes. GIs United, along with the local VVAW chapter, a group of black soldiers, and a contingency of Women’s Army Corps soldiers, banded together to form the GI Union. “GIs United was concerned basically with ending the war and securing GI rights,” a writer for Bragg Briefs explained, noting that a union was now necessary to “broaden and more clearly define our goals.” It was, without a doubt, an astounding move. At military posts across the country, and in Vietnam, when

---

different groups of antiwar soldiers formed in one location the result was often divisiveness and disagreements over direction, not collaboration. The new G.I. Union’s demands reflected this unprecedented collectivity; the group demanded the end of sexist oppression of women and gay people in the military community, the right of black, Hispanic, and other minorities to determine their own lives free from the oppression of racist whites, the end of troops’ involvement in workers’ strikes, and even improved medical and dental care for soldiers and their families. “We know now that when the war ends, our job does not. The war has grown out of the political and economic institutions of this country,” a soldier from the 28th Civil Affairs Company explained, so “unless we change these institutions, there will be another Vietnam and another Vietnam after that.”

G.I.s United had slowly, since the middle of 1970, incorporated a working class, labor movement perspective into their antiwar stance. For instance, in October of 1970, twelve G.I.s had traveled to Washington, North Carolina, to support striking workers from a local Communication Workers of America union. One member marched with a sign that proclaimed, “Ft. Bragg G.I.s Supporter Striking Workers.” During the first half of 1971, Bragg G.I.s supported Cesar Chavez’s United Farm Workers of America and their strike against lettuce growers when the Army bought large amounts of the

---

283
leafy vegetable to offset a national boycott. With the advent of the new GI Union, soldiers embraced this ethos wholeheartedly. “The miserable conditions of Army life are very like the living conditions of all working people,” a Bragg Briefs writer declared. A GI Union flyer proclaimed, “a hundred years ago, factory workers were in the same position we are in now - the bosses had all the power.” With a vision that few soldier groups ever grasped, either during the dissent movement or in the all-volunteer era, G.I. activists claimed that they had created the new union to dispel the myths that had traditionally kept soldiers and civilians separated from each other. After all, one writer remarked, “We are trying to show that the struggle for a better life is the struggle of both and one cannot succeed without the other.”

Along with this newfound emphasis on working-class rights, the G.I. Union also incorporated a focus on racial and gender inequalities that was unparalleled in the soldier movement. When General Tolson left Fort Bragg in 1971 following his two-year command tour, he admitted that he and his officers never quite comprehended just how serious the racial issues on post really were. Black soldiers had formed their own G.I. group, the Black Brigade, in late 1969, but unlike elsewhere, black and white soldiers quickly found common ground within G.I.s United and the subsequent G.I. Union. And

---

160 For example see Bragg Briefs, Vol 3, no. 11, January 1971; Vol. 3, no. 12, February 1971; Vol. 4, no. 1, March 71. All in Guilford-QH.
161 “Join the GI Union, Fight For Human Pride” Flyer, n.d. Guilford-QH.
as the war wound down, racial discrimination became a galvanizing force for the Bragg soldiers, spurring collaboration between black and white G.I.s rather than the corrosiveness and divisiveness seen elsewhere during the movement. When a black member of the Concerned Officers Movement tried to rent a home off base in 1970, the landlord scornfully told him, “I didn’t know they let niggers go to West Point.” When base officials refused to investigate the off-post housing discrimination, soldiers blasted their leadership for being, “with few exceptions…white southerners.”

The power of racial discrimination to unite, rather than divide, Bragg antiwar soldiers reached a crescendo in late 1971 when over a hundred and thirty black G.I.s and WACs were caught up in a massive military police sting at Fort McClellan, Alabama. In one of the first acts of the new G.I. Union, over a hundred black and white G.I.s once again took to the streets of Fayetteville as a show of support for their fellow soldiers, carrying placards that read, "Free the McClellan 138,” “Racism: Tool of the Brass,” and “G.I.s Unite Against War, Racism, Sexism.” The marching soldiers demanded that the McClellan G.I.s be released, an immediate investigation to the racist practices on Fort Bragg, and an end to pre-trial confinement, a practice where the Army could incarcerate G.I.s as they awaited their court martials. The mass of soldiers began their march at Rowan Park and slowly made their way to the old slave market that anchored the downtown area, a brick structure that stood, for the soldiers, as “a racist civil war

monument of this community.” 165 As had become common practice by this point, two Army intelligence agents copied down license plate numbers of the soldiers’ cars as they parked at Rowan Park. In what turned out to be one the last G.I. gatherings at the Haymarket coffeehouse, the soldiers rallied after the march where several speakers talked about the importance of soldiers inside the ranks organizing against racism in the military. Never before during the soldier dissent movement had soldiers staged such a public protest centered on an issue outside the immediate concerns of the war in Vietnam.

The issue of gender inequality and the plight of WACs at Fort Bragg was also quickly becoming a central issue in the new G.I. Union. Male G.I.s had begun to refer to this objectification as often as their feminist counterparts. Nora Sayre, the dissident American writer and film critic, who visited with G.I.s at the Haymarket Square, was shocked by the male soldiers’ rejection of the masculinity ethos:

One huge, crop-headed G.I., just back from Vietnam, said, ‘Macho is still the army’s biggest card for enlistment – it’s even more powerful than patriotism or opportunism...There’s got to be a way for young men to learn that they don’t need the army to make them feel worthwhile...So I think civilians and women’s liberation groups can help G.I.s a lot: by continuing to expose the absurdity of the male role.’ ‘Right on!’ came from the G.I.s in earshot... 166

Of course, these same soldiers often developed their own bonds that excluded women, including ritual handshakes, calling each other ‘brother,” and a vernacular peppered with expletives that prevented women from comfortably participating. But by 1971, G.I.s United had begun holding co-meetings with their WAC counterparts, and as the G.I. Union sprung to life, female soldiers were a major part of the organization.

Soon thereafter, revelatory articles on the conditions of WAC soldiers began appearing in the Bragg Briefs. In almost every other locale, the dissent movement had remained a movement of men, but such was not the case in Fayetteville. There were nearly two hundred and fifty WAC soldiers at Bragg, and they used the pages of the underground newspaper to publicize their squalid living conditions. “Living in these barracks doesn’t make anyone feel good about being in the Army,” one female soldier declared after describing the roach-infested, condemned buildings with barely suitable shower facilities that were reserved for the WACs. Outside of the G.I. Union, the women encountered male soldiers that treated them “like some kind of special toys to keep them amused.”\(^\text{167}\) The WACs faced constant intimidation from the Army’s Criminal Investigation Division (CID), an organization that seemed obsessed over the women’s sexuality. “The military is making a special effort to separate gay WACs because the Army knows if they can get together around their gayness, they can get together against the military,” remarked one female soldier. An allegation of lesbianism from a single

soldier was enough to initiate a court-martial, so Army investigators used threats and intimidation to turn the female soldiers against one another. In a heart-breaking article in *Bragg Briefs*, one female soldier lamented, “it gets pretty lonely here when you can’t even be close friends with other WACs for fear of being labeled gay.” The women at Bragg, however, refused to cower: “If the Army doesn’t stop hassling the WACs here at Bragg, they are all going to get it together – gay and straight alike, and then the CID will have something to worry about,” a female soldier proclaimed.

The other antiwar G.I.s at Bragg rallied to their compatriots’ sides in their war against the brass. The January 1971 *Bragg Briefs* included a manifesto on sexual self-determination, reminding “the straight (non-homosexual) community” that there could be “no revolution if there are alienated factions of brothers and sisters…we are all fighting the same enemy.” The Quaker House joined in the struggle as well when J.C. Honeycutt and Bill Carothers established a women’s collective for WACs and G.I.’s wives. Both the Quaker House and the men of G.I.s United understood that their female counterparts needed a place where they could, for once, feel safe from the brass’s investigative glare. The alternative was often tragic. One WAC explained, “some women dislike the Army so much that they can’t function, and they are pushed into things like

---

going AWOL, getting pregnant, or using drugs, just to escape from it."171 Just as black and white soldiers had come together to combat the dehumanizing military machine, antiwar men and women at Bragg also locked arms in a battle they seemed intent on fighting until the bitter end.

By the summer of 1972, the war in Vietnam had once again slunk into an extended stalemate. Even though over 140,000 North Vietnamese troops remained in the south following the Easter Offensive, the invasion had failed to achieve its overarching goal of toppling the South Vietnamese government. And although the US had flown over 9,000 sorties in the retaliatory bombing of North Vietnam, the CIA reported, “The bombing and mining program probably will not, of itself, pose unmanageable difficulties to the North Vietnamese regime – either now or through 1973.”172 Both sides, however, were feeling pressure to end the conflict. The North had suffered over 100,000 casualties, mostly due to American airpower, during the spring invasion, and was ill suited to amount another offensive. And with the 1972 presidential election approaching, the Nixon administration craved an end to the fighting as well. In May, US military and political officials had decommissioned the headquarters of Army forces in Vietnam. And then in August, with little fanfare, the last American ground combat troops left Vietnam. In Danang, the same place where the first combat troops had landed

171 Bragg Briefs, Vol. 5, no. 2, May 1972, Guilford-QH.
172 Jeffrey Kimball, Nixon’s Vietnam War (Kansas, University of Kansas Press, 1998), 325.
seven years earlier, Major General H.H. Cooksey delivered some short remarks, pinned various medals on select soldiers, and then furled the colors of Third Battalion, 21st Infantry Division. Around 43,500 men, mainly service personnel, administrative, and supply jobs remained, but the American involvement in ground combat was finished.\textsuperscript{173}

By the fall of 1972, Henry Kissinger had resumed talks with the North’s Le Duc Tho, and the two parties seemed very close to striking a deal. By this point, the Nixon Administration had given up hope of getting the North Vietnamese troops to completely abandon their position in the South, and the communist negotiators had finally dropped their insistence on the removal of Nguyen Van Thieu and the formation of a coalition government. By October, a deal had been struck. The US would leave within sixty days of the ceasefire, all prisoners of war would be released, North Vietnamese forces would be allowed to keep their territory in the south, and the government of South Vietnam would remain in place. The US had suddenly obtained a much better deal than it originally expected, and an ebullient Kissinger returned to Washington to offer his president the prize of peace. Unfortunately, Kissinger had made his peace accord without consulting Thieu, and Nixon insisted the South Vietnamese leader be brought on board to avoid any appearance of “a shotgun wedding.”\textsuperscript{174} Thieu, of course, was furious when informed of the deal the Americans had struck without his consent or


counsel. When Kissinger returned to Paris with sixty-nine amendments that Thieu and his government had added to the previously agreed upon accord, Le Du Tho felt betrayed and refused to cooperate, even going so far to retract parts of the earlier agreement.

Shortly thereafter, Nixon won his second term with sixty percent of the vote, but with peace still beyond his grasp and Watergate beginning to metastasize, the President was in a foul mood. Even Secretary Laird, with the backing of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, implored the President to end the fighting. The newly elected President claimed he desired the same thing, but instead of returning the negotiating table in Paris, he returned American B-52 bombers to the skies over North Vietnam. Nixon barked at his Chairman of the Joint Chiefs, Admiral Thomas Moorer, “I don’t want anymore of this crap about the fact that we couldn’t hit this target or that one. This is your chance to use military power effectively to win the war, and if you don’t, I’ll consider you responsible.”\(^\text{175}\) On December 18, the US Air Force commenced the “Christmas Bombings,” dropping over 20,000 tons of bombs on the city of Hanoi and Haiphong. The US lost fifteen of its giant bombers during the bombing campaign that lasted until December 29, while thousands of Vietnamese civilians perished. Tom Wicker, for the *New York Times*, scornfully wrote, “There is no peace. There is shame on earth, an American shame, perhaps enduring, surely personal and immediate and inescapable…It

\(^{175}\) Ibid, 734.
is we who have loosed the holocaust."\textsuperscript{176} Pope Paul the VI called the bombing “the object of daily grief.” Nixon seemed nonplussed by the intense repudiation, writing in his diary the day before Christmas, “It is God’s great gift to me to have the opportunity to exert leadership not only for America but on the world scene.”\textsuperscript{177}

Once the bombing stopped, a final peace accord was soon at hand. By January 11, Kissinger returned from Paris to Key Biscayne where Nixon was vacationing to inform the President that the war was nearly over. Nixon had always promised “peace with honor,” but the agreement he announced to the nation on the night of January 23 offered neither peace nor honor. Since taking office in January of 1969, Nixon had orchestrated a war that left 15,315 Americans, 107,504 South Vietnamese, and an estimated 400,000 North Vietnamese/NLF soldiers dead. And the four additional years of spilt blood and lost treasure had gained the US very little. There were more North Vietnamese soldiers in the South in 1973 than 1969, and though the North had dropped its demand that Thieu resign, the Americans had been forced to acknowledge the legitimacy of the Provisional Revolutionary Government of South Vietnam.\textsuperscript{178} As one Vietnamese neutralist observed, “After thirty years of sacrifice and suffering, of rivers of

\textsuperscript{177} Nixon, RN: \textit{The Memoirs}, 739.
blood and mountains of corpses, there is really nothing to toast.” On January 27th, representatives of the United States, North and South Vietnam, and the Vietcong signed the peace agreement, officially ending America’s involvement in the Vietnam War. Eleven hours before the peace accord went into effect, Lieutenant Colonel William Nolde died when an artillery shell exploded near the village of An Loc. The forty-three old former schoolteacher and father of five was the last American killed in combat during the Vietnam War. When his daughter, then sixteen, saw the official green car pull up in front of her house, she thought it meant her dad had finally returned home from war. On hearing the truth, that her father was the last American killed in those faraway jungles, she fled, screaming, through the small town of Mount Pleasant, Michigan. The war had officially ended, but for many, it would never be over.

The same day the signatories gathered in Paris to end the war, the Secretary of Defense announced the end of the draft. “The Armed Forces henceforth will depend exclusively on volunteer soldiers, sailors, airmen, and Marines. Use of the draft has ended,” Melvin Laird announced in a public message to the military service secretaries and the Joint Chiefs of Staff. Four years prior, the armed forces had drafted 300,000 men in one year. Now, the Department of Defense and the Army had beaten the all-

---


volunteer force target date by five months. Still, the 83,000 draftees and 400,000 enlistees who had entered military service under threat of the draft were to remain in the ranks until their commitment was complete. For good measure, in March of 1973, the new Secretary of Defense, Eliot L. Richardson, announced at the US Air Force Academy that the administration had officially informed the Chairmen of the Armed Services Committees in the Senate and House of Representatives that it would not be necessary to extend the draft past its expiration date, even on a standby basis.

At two o’clock on June 30, 1973, just hours before the legal authority for conscription expired, Dwight Elliot Stone became the last American draftee to enter the ranks, joining the seventeen million other young men that had preceded him over a century of warfare. Stone took that ritualistic step forward at the Armed Forces Entrance and Examination Station in Oakland, California. In a fitting bit of irony, Stone, a Sacramento native, was facing indictment for four counts of failing to show up for two previous induction notifications. First drafted in 1969, he had failed his physical following a car accident. When Sacramento’s local board No. 23 tried again in 1970, the young plumber’s apprentice decided to fight. At first, he tried and failed to concoct a student deferment, and when that failed, he simply hid. "A lot of guys couldn’t afford to go to Canada or to pay their way out" through a college deferment, Stone explained years later, "I ain’t no Rockefeller, and I wasn’t going to Canada." Finally, rather than go to trial, and possibly jail, he accepted his induction. Despite his unwillingness to enter
the service, Stone adjusted well to military life. He won a promotion and a sharpshooter’s badge at basic training, went through advanced training at Fort Jackson, South Carolina, and radio school at Fort Monmouth, New Jersey. He finally landed at Fort Ritchie, Maryland, where he served as a radio repairman in a unit that handled communications for the Pentagon’s nuclear war command bunker in the Maryland mountains. In November 1974, with no real explanation, the Army discharged Stone back into civilian life after only seventeen months of duty. It only took those seventeen months of duty, however, for Stone to learn the ultimate lesson ingrained in the fabric of the new volunteer force, telling reporters once his term of service was over, “personally we all need discipline in some form or another.”

Down at Fort Bragg, after three years of steady organizing, protest rallies, and the prolific Bragg Briefs, the G.I. movement was slowly withering. Even as the momentum slipped, those soldiers who remained committed to the cause tried valiantly to reinvigorate the spirit that had once brought over a thousand soldiers into the streets. After the Haymarket coffeehouse closed, soldiers opened a “G.I. Center” out in Spring Lake, North Carolina, the small town outside of the Bragg gates. The small space included a non-profit bookstore, a reading area, a meeting room, and an office. Once city officials realized the purpose of the space, they dragged their heels on the business

---

license required for the sale of books. The new G.I. Union met on Tuesdays at 7:30 in the space, and every Thursday, organizers offered up a new film. A new G.I. wives group also used the center to meet on Tuesday and Thursday afternoons. George Smith, a former prisoner of war who turned against the war, was the guest speaker at the grand opening on March 24, 1972. The tiny crowd was a far cry from the hundreds of soldiers who had gathered at the Haymarket coffeehouse grand opening during the summer of 1970 to hear Susan Schnall, the naval officer famous for her leaflet-bombing run in California, and Donald Duncan blast the war and military hierarchy. Two months later, during the third Armed Forces Day rally, only one hundred and fifty soldiers joined the counter demonstration. The Bragg Briefs writers struggled to sound a note of confidence, declaring, “there will be a good many Armed Forces Days to come.” Instead, it was the last.

As far as back as late 1971, the cracks in the Bragg movement had begun to show, particularly inside the pages of the Bragg Briefs. The first sign of trouble was not any lack of antiwar spirit, but a lack of funds. The November 1971 issue of Bragg Briefs featured an emotional plea for contributions, urging soldiers to send in five or ten dollars if they could manage. Each issue of the underground paper cost between two and three hundred dollars to produce, the editors explained, and by this point, almost all of that

184 G.I. Union printed ephemera. Guilford-QH.
money was coming from local donations or out of the pockets of the G.I. leadership.\textsuperscript{186}

As the national soldier movement lagged by 1972, funding from organizations such as the United States Serviceman Fund (USSF) dried up almost entirely. The Bragg movement was also weakened by the Army’s initiatives to release troublemakers and Vietnam veterans from the service before their service commitment was complete. The September 1972 edition of \textit{Bragg Briefs} admitted that the new policies had obliterated their staff. The combination of a scarcity of funding and willing participants crippled the once proud circular. From its first edition on mimeographed paper in July of 1969, G.I.s at Bragg had produced a new issue of the underground every month, and at times, two issues during months with special events such as Armed Forces Day, all the way through December of 1971. The astonishing publishing run of over thirty editions, made \textit{Bragg Briefs} by far the most frequently and regularly published underground newspaper of the era.

But by 1972, that production momentum had slowed to a trickle; soldiers only published four editions the entire year. Following the end of the draft and the war in Vietnam, G.I.s managed to publish only five more additional papers, two each in 1973 and 1974, with the final edition appearing in 1975. The last edition carried no warning or message that this would the finale, the end of the road for a once proud newspaper. Instead, the only note of nostalgia came in the form of a letter from a founder of the

\textsuperscript{186} \textit{Bragg Briefs}, Vol. 4, no. 7, November 1971. Guilford-QH.
original G.I.s United organization, identifying himself only by the initials H.N. Recalling the “many good memories of the work I did for the movement in Fayetteville,” the former G.I. wanted to know “if there is any GI organizing still going on at Ft. Bragg?”

Just as the Army had hoped in the volunteer era, the answer was a resounding no. Whether H.N. ever got an answer is unknown, but the Bragg Briefs was finished. And after the sparsely attended Armed Forces Day rally in May of 1972, Bragg soldiers never again returned to the streets of Fayetteville. The formation of the G.I. Union and its focus on black and feminist liberation ensured that the Bragg movement outlived every other soldier-led protest of its kind, but even it could not survive in the all-volunteer era.

The Quaker House still exists to this day, the lone remaining edifice of the Bragg G.I. movement, but in 1973 organizers immediately realized the movement had changed after the ending of the draft and the war in Vietnam. By August of 1973, the steady stream of G.I.s that once flocked to the house had stopped. “I have always thought that our talent lay more in one-to-one counseling with G.I.s rather than organizing large groups of people,” Ellen Arning told the Fayetteville Observer as a way of rationalizing the house’s new role in the diminished movement. By early 1975, Stan and Diane Rodabaugh, the Indiana couple who replaced the Arnings in 1974 as proprietors of the house, noted a “drastic decline” in inquiries about conscientious objector discharges.

---

The Quaker couple pointed to a dreary economic outlook and the record number of applicants to the new volunteer army, which allowed the Army “the opportunity to weed out dissatisfied soldiers,” as the catalysts for the disappearance of G.I.s looking for a way out of the Army.\(^\text{189}\) Although the Quaker House would remain, its days of serving as a focal point in the largest uprising of G.I.s in history were over.

Once the draft had formally ended in 1973, political and military officials dropped all pretenses about the primary motivation for transitioning to volunteers. Following Secretary Richard’s comments at the Air Force Academy on the Department of Defense’s decision not to request an extension of induction laws in March, Roger Kelley held a press conference in the Pentagon. “We are seeing evidence that people who are joining the military services because they want to and not because they are forced to, make better soldiers, marines, airmen, sailors than others do,” the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Manpower and Reserve Affairs admitted, finally acknowledging publicly what the Department of Defense had long stated privately.\(^\text{190}\)

After replacing Westmoreland, General Creighton Abrams had continued to push the Army toward volunteers. Only a month after the last conscript entered the Army, Abrams was already admitting, “there is a difference between men in an all-volunteer

\(^{189}\) Typed History of Quaker House, 1994. Guilford-QH.

force and men in a draft force.”191 A month later, the new Secretary of the Army, Bo Callaway, codified those differences during his keynote address at the annual convention of the Association of the United States Army (AUSA). “The Army is better today than it was at the end of the draft,” Callaway told the packed ballroom, “I can tell you without any question, today’s Army is a far better Army…I can just feel it everywhere I go. It’s in the air. Discipline is better, morale is better…The Army’s future is indeed now.”192

Toward the end of 1973, the new Vice Chief of Staff of the Army, General Frederick Weyand, went even further during an event at the Fairfax-Lee chapter of the AUSA. “In my judgment, the volunteer army is going to be the best, most professional army in our memory,” the four-star told the crowd of current and former soldiers. What set Weyand’s comments apart, however, were the fine point details on exactly why the Army was so excited about its new volunteer force:

I think this volunteer army is going to be a superior army because it has two things going for it that no draft army can ever hope to equal: professionalism and motivation. The volunteer Army is attracting the right kinds of people into its professional levels…and why is this? Well, it’s partly because we are able to be very selective, and partly because we are deliberately emphasizing the professional aspects of service in our policies and programs…And motivation, that essential drive to excel, the

desire to serve, to do the job that needs to be done – will amplify many times the ability of all our soldiers.\footnote{Excerpt from General Frederick Weyand, Vice Chief of Staff, Speech to the Fairfax-Less Chapter of the AUSA in \textit{Army News Feature}, December 17, 1973.}

The MVA and VOLAR programs had been successful. The Army had set out to end dissent in the ranks by emphasizing the professionalism and motivation of its soldiers, and the organization was now harvesting the fruits of its labor. In February of 1974, Secretary Callaway submitted a report to President Nixon entitled, “The Volunteer Army – One Year Later,” that trumpeted the improvements in quality, discipline, and professionalism in the volunteer era. Callaway also highlighted another tool, the Trainee Discharge Program, which the Army had developed in case any of its volunteers proved to be as “undesirable” as their conscripted predecessors. In effect, the new program allowed the service to discharge any recruit who demonstrated “a lack of motivation, discipline, or aptitude for Army life,” before these troublemakers’ “lack of compatibility with the Army…leads to almost inevitable anti-social behavior.”\footnote{Memorandum, Howard H. Callaway, Secretary of the Army, to President Richard Nixon, sub: Report, “The Volunteer Army – One Year Later,” February 14, 1974. AVA/CMH.} The Army had hedged its bets on ensuring that internal dissent would never rear its head again by simply withholding the right to discharge any malcontent who happened to slip past the new safeguards.

Still, not all was well inside the new Army. The pressure on recruiters to achieve their quotas and meet prescribed end strength was so intense that many of them cut
corners or outright fabricated results. During the summer of 1973, an Army audit agency found that improper recruiting practices, fraudulent enlistments, and inadequate medical examinations had resulted in more than 29,000 unsuitability discharges that cost the government over seventy-three million dollars. The recruits were dropped from the Army rolls after being found to be unfit. Recruiters were found to be coaching potential enlistees on how pass the entrance exams, overlooking police records, or fudging medical exams. But by the end of the 1974 Fiscal Year, the first full year of only accepting volunteers, the Army was calling the new force “an unqualified success.” Despite the recruiting shenanigans, the Army had accrued over a thousand more soldiers than mandated and exceeded the quality guidelines set by Congress. More importantly, the Army proudly reported, “Since the beginning of the no-draft era on 1 July 1973, the state of discipline in the Army has improved steadily.” Surely there were missteps along the way, as illustrated by the recruiting scandals, but ultimately the Army had managed to craft a professional, motivated, volunteer force where unruly conscripts and internal dissent were increasingly a thing of the past.

Nearly ten years after retiring from the Army, General Bruce Palmer, who had served as the Army’s second-highest ranking soldier during the height of the soldier dissent movement and ending of the draft, told an interviewer from the Institute of Military History that he got “great amusement out of people, civilians particularly, who

195 FY 74 Volunteer Army Highlights, July 1, 1974. AVA/CMH.
acuse the Army of dragging their feet.” He continued, “I maintain it was certainly just
the other way around in the MVA instance. The Army jumped out in front of them
(civilian leaders) and led the charge. “Then to be accused later of dragging their feet,” he
laughed, “I thought was rather ironic.” Palmer gestured back to the turmoil and chaos
caused by unruly conscripts inside the ranks: “Those were the days when the Army
would get knocked up against one side of the ring and have to bounce back off the ropes
on the other side…it was blow after blow, and we used to wonder what the hell was
going to happen next.”196 Of course, a retired four-star general who had spent nearly his
entire adult life in the ranks was apt to defend the Army’s actions. But Palmer was
merely echoing the conclusions of almost every other high-ranking individual in the
Army during the era. R. Kenly Webster, who served as the Army’s deputy general
counsel from 1969 to 1972 and helped draft the its guidance on dissent, fully admitted,
after the fact of course, that the Army hierarchy desperately sought a volunteer force
“before the draft army fell apart.”197 The Army did not drag its feet or attempt to
sabotage the volunteer force. In actuality, the complete opposite was true; the volunteer
force became a lifeline for a service nearly brought to its knees by dissenting soldiers.

By 1975, Fort Bragg leadership was trying mightily to put the tumultuous soldier
revolt behind them. Colonel Charles A. Meek, a Bragg chaplain, scoffed at the Quaker

196 Excerpts from Palmer Interview with Institute of Military History, Box 14, Folder 9, AVA/MHI.
197 Handwritten Notes, Ron Spector Interview with Kenly Webster on November 24, 1980. Folder 144,
Spector-CMH.
House’s insistence on staying open, claiming, “We don't have many people any more trying to get out because they are conscientious objectors or antimilitary, so this type of operation is almost out of business.” In 1977, a young lieutenant stationed at Bragg pointed out the ridiculousness, in his mind, of a G.I. union: “Now that the Army is all-volunteer, there’s no need for unions. The way I see it is, if you don’t like it, get out.”

And this was not just the case at Fort Bragg. The young officer was merely expressing the new attitude ingrained in the volunteer force. Disgruntled soldiers could either leave on their own accord or the Army would simply show them the door before they became a problem. In 1978, the Washington Post returned to its “Army in Anguish” series to see how things had changed in the all-volunteer era. “The change for the better has been dramatic,” Colonel Robert Wagner told the reporters. “All the indications tell us that we don’t have a bunch of soldiers in anguish today,” Brigadier General William Fitts, the Deputy Personnel Chief in Europe, proudly claimed. The Post reporters, after talking with numerous high-ranking Army generals about the “special kinds of anguish that almost shattered it [the Army] a few years ago,” concluded that the catalyst for these stunning improvements throughout the ranks was simple: “This Army is getting far less draft-resistant trouble-makers, and that has helped.”

hope when it launched its own internal battle for survival against the draft and dissenting soldiers. The gamble worked.
Conclusion. “This Prison Only Needs One Thing…Prisoners”: The Success of the All-Volunteer Force

In 1968, with its stockade literally overflowing with revolting soldiers and the situation inside the ranks only growing worse, the Fort Bragg leadership began work on a new, state-of-the-art Area Confinement Facility, a massive incarceration facility with its own chapel, library, and electronically operated doors throughout. The prison was so vast that prisoners quickly dubbed the main corridor “Interstate 95” with “Miami” on end and “Boston” on the other. There was one minor problem, however, with the otherwise pristine facility: With the advent of the all-volunteer force, the prison stood empty. By 1977, thirty-seven prison employees catered to the needs of only six prisoners. In the volunteer force, the Army could simply discharge their undesirables. “Times have changed and administrative procedures we have now allow us to get rid of many soldiers short of court martialing them and sticking them in the stockade,” Lieutenant General Volney Warner, the Fort Bragg commanding officer, boasted in an interview. Warner continued, echoing the Army’s vision of a volunteer force all along: “That’s where the significance and impact lies – the man is gone from the Army before he gets into serious trouble.” Colonel James F. Russell, provost marshal at Bragg, pointed out that the situation was not unique to Fort Bragg; throughout the Army and other military services, stockades stood empty. “It’s a rather funny situation,” Russell claimed, “Most
states have overflowing prisons, but the military stockades are empty.”201 Prisons built primarily to house unruly draftees stood empty in the age of the volunteer force, stark reminders of a bygone time when soldiers rebelled against unjust wars. This of course, was not unintentional. US military and political leaders clearly saw the volunteer force as the best way to repair a fighting force that had been ripped apart from within.

The more interesting question is why most historians have either missed or ignored the connection between G.I. dissent and the all-volunteer force. Robert Griffith, perhaps the sole historian who denies that the Army was dragged reluctantly into the volunteer era, argues that ideological opponents of the draft, and those who urged a more rapid end to inductions than was possible for an army involved in an active shooting war, perpetuated this myth.202 For example, Martin Anderson publicly criticized the Army for sabotaging the volunteer force for years, even though individuals like Melvin Laird patently disagreed with Anderson’s contentions.203 There is no doubt that the military proceeded with some caution, as any large, bureaucratic organization would. The Gates Report suggested terminating the draft in 1971, but the Department of Defense ultimately convinced the Nixon administration to request a two-year extension. As long as political leadership remained committed to the fighting in Vietnam, the Army would remain concerned with raising and maintaining an adequate number of

203 See Chapter Three for more details on the competing views, particularly Anderson and Laird, over the Army’s commitment to ending to draft.
soldiers. But one should not misconstrue the military’s caution as active opposition. As this project illustrates, particularly from the close-hold internal documents, Army leaders did not drag their feet on ending the draft. In actuality, they were often out in front of the rest of the Department of Defense and the White House. Just as General Westmoreland claimed in 1971 and the MVA and VOLAR programs proved in the eyes of senior military officials, a volunteer army would be a better army.204

Christian Appy has argued that the experiences of Vietnam veterans became “disqualified” or “illegitimate” forms of knowledge in the decades following the war.205 The same is true for the G.I. dissent movement and its impact on the future of the US military. In 2011, the town of Fayetteville organized a Heroes Homecoming event to give Vietnam War veterans “the homecoming they never received.” Anchored by Veterans Day that fall, the ten-day extravaganza featured over fifty events. The city, however, was only interested in remembering part of its history; the Quaker House was forbidden from participating. Fayetteville’s mayor at the time, Tony Chavonne, argued that the center’s antiwar message was not representative of the spirit of the celebratory event. Don Talbot, a local Army retiree who was helping organize the event, claimed that any

---

205 Christian G. Appy, Working-Class War: American Combat Soldiers and Vietnam, Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1993), 10. Appy is, of course, relying on Michel Foucault’s notion of disqualified or illegitimate forms of knowledge from Power/Knowledge, p. 78-92. In their resuscitation of draft resisters and Vietnam veterans, Foley and Appy both rely on first-hand accounts, both interviews and questionnaires, from those that experienced the Vietnam war.
Quaker House involvement would be like “throwing gas on the fire” for veterans who were supposedly still angered by the civilian antiwar movement that had allegedly betrayed them decades earlier.206 The snubbing of the Quaker House was an attempt to rewrite history, an erasure of dissenting soldiers and the antiwar civilians who supported them. Unfortunately, many historians have participated in the expurgation.

Recognizing antiwar soldiers as significant actors in the story of the All-Volunteer Force led me to internal military sources that few had consulted. Those sources make it abundantly clear just how important the revolt in the ranks was to the decision to end the draft. The historical reality is that the all-volunteer force was successful in ridding the ranks of dissent, just as the Gates Commission hoped when its members wrote, “problems raised by the forced military service of those who are unwilling or unable to adjust to military life will be largely overcome by voluntary recruiting.”207 In 1971, a senior officer at Fort Bragg was prescient: “A modern volunteer Army is being created to eliminate the draft. Eventually dissidents will fade away. I can’t see dissidents in an all-volunteer Army because, if he’s got a political thing going, he’s not going to join the Army.”208

One of the most tightly held convictions – in academia, the military, and the public – is that the volunteer force is a tale of progress and success. After all, military

208 Reich, “Bragg Reforms Fail to Offset Dissidence.”
service by consent is surely more equitable and humane than military service by compulsion. This project sought to uncover the deeper, strategic reasons for turning to a military made up solely of volunteers. And in demonstrating the driving force to be the quest to eliminate dissent, my study leaves us with a sobering question. If America’s volunteer military has been unwilling or unable to voice objections to illegitimate American military coercion since 1973, how can one label that a success? How might the United States’ war of choice in Iraq in the first decade of the twenty-first century have been different if soldiers refused to fight or took a stand against military aggression? Would hundreds of thousands have died in a war with questionable strategic benefits?

Finally, a note on why this topic means so much to me personally. In the spring of 2003, the American military granted Thomas Ricks, a Pulitzer Prize-winning reporter with the Washington Post, access to Prince Sultan Air Base to speak with U.S. Air Force Airmen stationed at the Saudi Arabian base. Colin Powell had gone before the United Nations on February 5th to make the American case for war in Iraq, and a second war on the heels of the invasion of Afghanistan seemed imminent. In an aircrew alert facility, Ricks ran across a young Air Force officer alarmed by the rush to war. As the officer, already a seasoned combat veteran at the age of 27, went public with his frustration during the interview, a senior USAF leader interrupted in a ‘watch your step’ tone. Unperturbed, the young officer continued: “We’re running back-to-back marathons. The airplanes may not be able to take it, and more importantly, the people may not. At
some point, you’ve got to say, I love my country, but I can’t stay away from my family for eight years.”\textsuperscript{209}

Over ten years of irrational war have passed since I made those remarks in that dilapidated alert facility. I was concerned with the foolhardy rush to war, but I was also frustrated with my peers, my comrades in arms, who ferociously debated me and challenged me back in the dormitory over my reservations. They implied that I was somehow less of a military officer, or worse, less of an American by voicing my concerns. My interview with Ricks was my dissension, my small challenge to illegitimate power and coercive military force. To this day, I believe Ricks included that particular quote because it followed an implicit reprimand from my commander; he knew the score based on the rank differential and what my remark meant. As an active duty Air Force officer in the All-Volunteer Force, the study of soldier dissent means a great deal to me. I fear that the people of America’s current military are either unwilling or unable to voice their objections to illegitimate American military coercion. This dissertation has sought to understand how that came to be.

References

Archival Collections:

The U.S. Army Center of Military History (CMH), Washington, DC, holds several collections that were vital to this project. The center’s All-Volunteer Army Collection is a relative cornucopia of internal Amy memoranda and messages. CMH also houses Ron Spector’s sizeable research files for an unpublished work on the Vietnam era. The collection remains classified, but due to my active security clearance, I was able to peruse the entire collection. No classified sources, however, were included in this project. Another smaller compilation is the Historical Reference Collection #250, Opposition to the Vietnam War by Servicemen. Finally, the CMH holds the “Chronology of Significant Actions and Decisions Relating to the Development of an All-Volunteer Army” document, which was the direct result of General Westmoreland’s desire to compile a comprehensive documentary background of the Army’s efforts at establishing the All-Volunteer Force.

The National Archives at College Park, Maryland maintains several collections that contributed to this project. Record Group 319, the U.S. Army Staff records, includes General William Westmoreland’s papers and Background Material for the Modern Volunteer Army Monographs. Record Group 330, the Office of the Secretary of Defense records, also contains a valuable All-Volunteer Army collection.

The U.S. Army Military History Institute (MHI), Carlisle, Pennsylvania, also maintains a large All-Volunteer Army collection, including Robert Griffith’s research files from his work on the U.S. Army’s Transition to the All-Volunteer Force.

The Nixon Presidential Library includes several collections that proved valuable. Martin Anderson and John Dean’s papers in the White House Central Files, Staff Member and Office Files were extremely useful. I was also fortunate to become the first public researcher to gain access to several boxes of Martin Anderson’s papers on the All-Volunteer Army.

The Cumberland County Library in Fayetteville, North Carolina, maintains all past issues of the Fayetteville Observer on microfilm, along with several vertical files on Fort Bragg. The library also holds an oral history collection centered on local citizens’ experience during the Vietnam War. The Fort Bragg History Office maintains past editions of the post’s official histories.
Books:


Armor, David. “Race and Gender in the U.S. Military” *Armed Forces and Society* 23 (Fall 96).


Christgau, Robert. “Military Personnel Will Not Participate in Any Activity Having to Do With Creating a Union for Enlisted Men...Oh Yeah?” *Esquire,* August 1968.


Sherry, Michael S. *In the Shadow of War: The United States Since the 1930s* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1995.


Biography

Scovill Currin is a Colonel in the US Air Force, currently commanding the 437th Operations Group at Joint Base Charleston, South Carolina. Colonel Currin was born in Charleston, South Carolina and commissioned through ROTC at The Citadel, earning a Bachelor of Arts in English. He has served operational tours at Fairchild AFB, Washington, and Charleston AFB, South Carolina, flying the KC-135 Stratotanker and C-17 Globemaster. He has served as Wing Executive Officer, Chief of Wing Aircrew Training, Squadron Assistant Director of Operations, and Chief of Squadron Standardization/Evaluations. He commanded the 379th Expeditionary Operations Support Squadron, Al Udeid Air Base, Qatar, where he led a team of Active Duty, Guard and Reserve Airmen who ensured successful combat missions for over 80 aircraft in the CENTCOM AOR. He holds a Master of Arts in Organizational Management from George Washington University and a Master of Airpower Arts and Sciences from the School of Advanced Air and Space Studies at Maxwell Air Force Base, Alabama. In 2005, he graduated from the AF Intern Program where he served in various capacities in the Pentagon. In 2008, he graduated from DoD’s Executive Leadership Development Program. A senior pilot, Colonel Currin has logged more than 2,400 hours, including more than 800 combat/combat support hours in support of Operations SOUTHERN WATCH, NORTHERN WATCH, ENDURING FREEDOM, and IRAQI FREEDOM.