

GI's United Against the War
Box 543, Columbia, S.C., 29202

Communique # 1 FREE THE FT. JACKSON FOUR! March 22, 1969

Thursday night, March 20, 1969, GI's 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 their buddies, most of whom were leaning out the windows of B-14-4 to dig the discussion. Upwards of 100 or more guys took part. No violence. No disturbance. Just a big rap session.

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 because the guys were just exercising their democratic constitutional right to free speech, so they just left.

Later that night they put seven guys, all from HHD or Company B-14-4, on restriction to their barracks and some even to their rooms. The next afternoon they came and picked up four guys, Pvts. Cole, Rudder, Pulley and Chaparro. These men are now in the stockade awaiting trial on charges of "breach of the peace," "inciting to riot," and "disrespect to an officer." They have committed no crime. All they did was speak out against the dirty war in Vietnam.

We are going to defend them in every way possible. We are not going to be intimidated! We are going to continue speaking out against the war. It's the brass who act like traitors and subvert the very principals of democracy our country was founded on, but we're not going to let them get away with it.

The Ft. Jackson Four represent a cross section of all the GI's who are against the war: one is white, one black, and two are Puerto Rican. They are being victimized for exercising the rights that all GI's should have as American citizens.

The fight to free the Ft. Jackson Four is your fight. Join us in defending these men and getting them out of the stockade (by legal and legitimate means.) Let the Army know they can no longer step on GI's.

Send letters of support for the Ft. Jackson Four today, c/o GI's United, Box 543, Columbia, S.C. Send messages to the Commanding General demanding that the four enlisted men be set free immediately.

If you are against the war in Vietnam and for constitutional rights for GI's, you belong in GI's United. Which side are you on? Either you support the fight for GI rights and the end of the war, or you support the brass, the lifers, and their rotten war.

March 20, 1969

GIS UNITED AGAINST THE WAR IN VIETNAM PETITION FOR MEETING AT FT. JACKSON, S.C.

A group of antiwar GIs at Ft. Jackson, S.C. have been circulating a petition which calls upon their commanding general to provide for an open meeting on post "at which all those concerned can freely discuss the legal and moral questions related to the war in Vietnam and the civil rights of American citizens both within and outside the armed forces."

GIs United Against the War in Vietnam, originally a group of black and Puerto Rican GIs in Company B-14-4, soon spread to include white soldiers and antiwar GIs from all over the base. The GIs felt it was necessary to organize themselves in order to defend their rights and effectively work to bring all American troops home from Vietnam now.

They were certainly correct about needing an effective defense for their rights, as the brass began to trample on them almost immediately. Several Afro-American leaders have been convicted on trumped-up assault charges; one of them, Pvt. Lawrence Hart, was sentenced to 6 months at hard labor although prosecution witnesses admitted that he had not touched the person he "assaulted." Numerous GIs have been arrested and threatened while circulating their petition. Pvt. Tommie Woodfin was court-martialed on March 18 for distributing the legal petition; all of GIs United shared his victory when the military court acquitted him. A black founder of the antiwar group, Pvt. Joe Miles was given three hours to clear post and leave for Ft. Bragg. Company B-14-4 has been restricted to quarters with some regularity and for the most bizarre reasons, in an attempt to immobilize them and halt the petition drive. On March 14, Pvt. Joe Cole received notification that the Army was planning to discharge him for his political activity.

The Ft. Jackson GIs are waging an aggressive publicity campaign to combat the slurs of the brass with clear statements of the nature and purpose of GIs United. In a public statement to other GIs around the country, they set forth their position on the war in Vietnam;

"For the past half decade our country has been involved in a long, drawn-out,

costly and tragic war in Vietnam. Most Americans do not support this war--increasing numbers are demonstrating their opposition to it, including active duty GIs. It is the most unpopular war in our history. Yet the government's policy threatens to continue this tragedy for many years to come. . . .

"We, as GIs, are forced to suffer most of all in the Vietnam fiasco. Many of us were drafted into the Army against our will--nearly all of us are kept in its grasp against our will--all in order to carry out this illegal, immoral and unjust war. We are forced to fight and die in a war we did not create and in which we don't believe. . .

"While all this goes on, the Army continues to trample on our rights as well as our lives."

Representatives of GIs United attempted to present a sheaf of signed petitions at their post headquarters on Monday, March 3. The authorities refused to accept them, giving the limp excuse that the Army recognized no agent of "collective bargaining." GIs United has repeatedly explained that "collective bargaining" is only a red herring to distract attention from their constitutionally guaranteed right to petition and right of assembly.

GIs United has recently issued an appeal for support, urging GIs at other bases to circulate petitions supporting the constitutional and democratic rights of Ft. Jackson GIs and asking civilians to send telegrams and letters of protest to the commanding general of Ft. Jackson. Support messages can be sent directly to GIs United, Box 543, Columbia S.C. Funds are desperately needed in order for the GI C.L.D.C. to continue its defense of Ft. Jackson GIs.

Legal defense of GIs United has been assumed by the eminent civil liberties attorney Leonard Boudin, in collaboration with David Rein of Washington D.C. and Howard Moore of Atlanta. They will file suit in Washington next week against the Secretary of the Army and the Commanding General of Ft. Jackson. The judgment they seek would be a historic one for all Americans in uniform: it would affirm the right of GIs to hold meetings to discuss public issues and to petition government for redress of grievances.

The New York Times

SUNDAY, MARCH 16, 1969

PETITION BY G.I.'S RAISES WAR ISSUE

Authorization to Hold Parley
Sought at Fort Jackson

By MAURICE CARROLL

Special to The New York Times

COLUMBIA, S. C., March 10 —Surreptitiously, some young enlisted men are circulating through Fort Jackson's post exchanges and theaters, seeking signatures on a petition asking the Army to authorize a meeting to "freely discuss the legal and moral questions related to the war in Vietnam and the civil rights of American citizens."

One of the young activists faces a summary court-martial next Tuesday. Two of them were rebuffed last week when they tried to give the mimeographed petition to the commanding general on the colonnade front porch of the white frame post headquarters.

All of them seek to extend their movement beyond Fort Jackson's pine-shaded 52,600 acres.

They seem to be having luck in that aim. Two outside lawyers have agreed to help.

"Aren't they citizens who happen to be defending their country? Presumably they have the right to initiate a dialogue through petition," said Howard Moore of Atlanta, legal director of the Southern Legal Assistance Project. ("That's S-L-A-P—slap," said Mr. Moore.)

Constitutional Issue

He will defend Pvt. Tommy Woodfin next week against charges of passing out an "unauthorized flyer." The flyer was the petition, the soldier's friends said. "I think there's a strong First Amendment question," Mr. Moore said.

"Am I going to help these fellows? Sure," said Leonard B. Boudin, a New York lawyer whose contentious career has included the defense of Dr. Benjamin Spock, convicted last year of conspiring to counsel young men to evade the draft. Mr. Boudin said that he was not yet sure how he would seek to make the authorities accept the petition—through the courts or the upper military levels. But he said that he would try.

The youths, who call themselves G.I.'s United Against the War in Vietnam, say they represent an antiwar sentiment that is growing on military bases.

Their strength at Fort Jackson is subject to some dispute. "About half a dozen," Lieut. Col. Paul Stickel, the post information officer, said.

"About 35 guys attend all the meetings," said Pvt. Joe Cole, a rawboned, mellow-voiced 24-year-old from Atlanta who is the main organizer. "But we have 400 petitions out, with about 150 guys circulating them."

Meet in Coffeeshouse

Whatever the impact, all agree on the source of this strength—Company B, 14th Battalion, 4th Combat Support Training Brigade, where the racially integrated G.I.'s United grew from the solidarity created by a crackdown on "black power" agitation early this year.

The other center of the dissent is the UFO, a coffeeshouse that for a year has confronted the Columbia City Hall from across Main Street. It is the group's regular mail drop and the place where the Company B dissidents, kept as busy with chores as the military can devise, meet with those of similar sentiments on their free time.

The group claims no connection with the stir that followed Capt. Howard Levy's court-martial last year for refusing to give medical training to Special Forces troops. Jackson is a training base with a swiftly shifting population.

Besides, few of the current crop of activists seem to have much historical sense beyond their own experiences.

Professional Housewives

Their conversation shows the youths' trait of presuming that everything that happens has never happened before. "You get in the Army and you see how the Army is," said Pvt. Andrew Pulley, an 18-year-old from Cleveland, who was court-martialed on charges of refusing an order to go to bed.

At two tables in the UFO the other night, members of the group sat glancing at posters of Humphrey Bogart, Ho Chi Minh and Simon and Garfunkel, and talking in terms that mingled the current campus rhetoric of those newly discovering politics and the hallowed gripes of those newly suffering military discipline.

The Army, they said, is the "racist" product of a "sick society." Their group's basic aim is to stop "a war of colonialism."

The Army, they said, has shown them that "the brass and the lifers are our enemies." The chaplain and the inspector general are not sympathetic to their complaints, they said. "Buffing floors and pulling KP" was described as their daily diet. "You come in the Army and they teach you how to be a professional housewife."

I support the constitutional rights of American GIs. Please add my name as a sponsor of the GI Civil Liberties Defense Committee. I understand that sponsorship does not necessarily denote agreement with the political views of any of the defendants.

Name

Organization
(for identification purposes only)

Address

City State Zip

GI Civil Liberties Defense Committee
Box 355, Old Chelsea Station, N. Y., N. Y. 10011

DEFEND THE RIGHTS OF
FT. JACKSON GIS --
SUPPORT THE GI CIVIL
LIBERTIES DEFENSE COMMITTEE