

## Opening Statement

Scott Camil -- Pro Se

My name is Scott Camil and I am one of the defendants in this case. I am representing myself for many reasons, and one of those reasons is that I want you to know me as a human being, not a silent object of controversy.

Before you here, sit eight men who have all been charged with very serious violations of the law. During the next few weeks, the prosecution will try to make you believe that we are violent criminals who have broken the law. But we will show that, in fact, none, and I emphasize none, of the charges against us are true.

We will show that not only are the charges not true, but that they are a fabrication. The Prosecution will attempt to take a number of unrelated legal acts and a number of completely fabricated tales and try to piece them together for the purpose of silencing Vietnam Veterans Against the War.

Why does the Justice Department want to silence us? The evidence will show that this whole case is nothing more than a concerted effort by the Justice Department, and its confederates, to abuse its prosecutorial powers for political purposes. The facts will show that if there was a conspiracy, it was a conspiracy on the part of the government to maliciously attack and destroy an organization known as Vietnam Veterans Against the War, of which seven of the defendants, including myself, are all active members holding leadership positions, and that the other defendant is a supporter of the goals of this organization.

Why would the Justice Department so obviously want to violate our constitutional rights? Why would the Justice Department undertake to destroy Vietnam Veterans Against the War? The facts will show that the reason is quite evident. The Vietnam Veterans Against the War has been one of the most effective anti-war organizations in this country.

The facts will show that the reason we have been so effective is that we have been to Vietnam, so the government could not say that we weren't willing to serve our country. We have first-hand knowledge of what was really being done in Vietnam, in the name of the American people, and the government can't claim that we don't know what we are talking about because we did it. We will show that this is an attempt to discredit Vietnam Veterans Against the War in order to help cover up the criminal acts committed against the people of Indochina by the United States of America. The evidence will show that the magnitude was such that, all over the country, the leaders and members of Vietnam Veterans Against the War started getting arrested. The evidence will also show a direct correlation

between the escalation of murder in Vietnam , the escalation of our attempts to bring the truth out, and the escalation of attacks by the government against Vietnam Veterans Against the War.

The evidence will show that the seven of us, who went to Vietnam, spent a total of 111 months over there, received 57 medals and citations, and were all honorably discharged. The evidence will also show that we threw our medals away out of shame, because we knew that what they stood for was wrong. For myself, the throwing away of the medals I once cherished was the cutting of the umbilical cord between myself and the government lies, such as, "We are helping the people of Vietnam", "Our purpose is honorable", the covering-up, such as, "We are not bombing Cambodia", "We are not murdering unarmed civilians", "We are not bombing hospitals", the immorality, such as "free fire zones", where all life was fair game, to show the American people back home that we were winning the war by giving them a tool of measurement to judge, and that tool of measurement was the use of dead human beings - it was called "body count".

The facts will show that I joined the Marine Corps in 1965 and volunteered for two tours in Vietnam, and that I was wounded once each tour. I was proud I served my country. I bragged about my body count. I wrote home how I was killing all those "Commie Gooks" - and my parents wrote back saying, "We are proud of you".

The facts will show that I, as my brother defendants, changed from men of war to men of peace. Why did we change? The facts will show that I knew what was really going on in Vietnam and I knew that was not what our government was telling the people at home. I studied the war after I returned home and discovered how much we had all been lied to. I came to the realization that my life and three million other American lives had been made expendable for profit. I realized that I was a murderer. I murdered Asians under the guise of national security, while the arms companies made huge monetary profits. My buddies died in the rice paddies while the President watched the All-Star game. Asians were murdered for defending their homes and families while their only crime was their geographical place of birth. It all made me sick. I saw my buddies lying in VA hospitals without sufficient care because my government thought it was more important to pay for bombs than to pay for more medical equipment and doctors. I saw the President make a big deal out of the sacrifices of the POWs, who owed their lives to the humanity of the Vietnamese people, while not doing

anything about the sacrifices of my brothers without parts of their bodies, rotting away in VA hospitals because their sacrifices weren't politically important enough to do anything about their lack of adequate medical care.

We will show that it was for these reasons and many, many reasons that are just as comparable that Vietnam Veterans Against the War was formed.

We tried every method that was constitutionally available to us to correct this inconceivable situation. We testified at Winter Soldier Investigations all over the country to try to educate our fellow citizens to the truth. We testified before Congress with hopes of Congressional action. We went to Washington and discarded our medals to show the world that something had to be done to stop the carnage and suffering. We spoke in schools, churches, and synagogues. We voted, we worked on voter registration, we wrote our Congressmen. We visited our Congressmen. We had protest demonstrations to bring this terrible problem to the attention of the American people.

We will show that all of our efforts were non-violent, because we learned in Vietnam that you can't use violence to make people believe you. It never has worked and never will work. We will show that right here in Gainesville, Florida, in May of 1972, when Nixon mined Hai Phong Harbor, it was Vietnam Veterans Against the War who tried to stop the violence by pulling the barricades out of the streets so the cars could pass, after the police permit to block the streets expired. It was Vietnam Veterans Against the War that had a candle light march and a slide show in the Plaza, with the support of Mayor Jones and Father Michael Gannon, in order to try to stop the violent confrontations out in the streets. In fact, Vietnam Veterans Against the War has a clear history of non-violence.

The indictment charges that we were going to cause violence in Miami Beach during the Republican National Convention, but the facts will show that Vietnam Veterans Against the War was the major peace-keeping force among the non-delegates at both conventions. Our purpose was to influence the delegates to choose an honest man for President who would promise to stop the war and re-order the priorities of our country. We had waited for four years since that promise was made and broken in the 1968 election. The facts will also show that we were quite concerned about what happened in the Chicago convention in 1968 and that we did not want a repeat of that violence, so we took every precaution that we could. The facts will show that we had many,

many meeting with the police in Miami and Miami Beach. We had many meetings with the Miami Beach City Commission. We met with the city manager, the head of civil defense, the senior citizens, and the governor's task force. We even played a softball game - VVAW vs. the Miami Beach motorcycle police. We met with many of the other organizations to try to insure that there was not another Chicago. The facts will show that we even met with the most militant right-wing Cuban organizations in order to be assured of non-violence.

After all of this, the Department of Justice in Washington, D.C. sends Guy L. Goodwin, the man who was responsible for the indictments against Leslie Bacon, the Harrisburg Seven, the Camden 28, and many other such political cases, to get an indictment against members of Vietnam Veterans Against the War. But we will prove the real purpose of this prosecution is to punish us for effectively exercising our constitutional rights - for trying to uncover what the war was really about, for showing the American people that they were being deceived and lied to by the executive branch of the government. Yes, we will show that Vietnam Veterans Against the War was motivated by an extensively strong sense of justice, truth, and patriotic love for the ideals that our country was founded upon, the same motivation that caused us to all volunteer for Vietnam.

Finally, we will show that the conspiracy that exists is a conspiracy on the part of the Nixon administration to silence any person, organization, or political party whose actions do not reinforce the Nixon administration.

In the last few months, we have all learned a lot about the political conventions and all the "dirty tricks", but the government prosecution of this case is the dirtiest trick of all.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to be 'W. J. ...', written in a cursive style.