Resist Newsletter, May 17, 1972

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An increasing number of people throughout the anti-war movement have been actively considering legal and civilly disobedient methods by which the unlawful shipment of the weapons of mass murder and destruction from the US to Indochina could be blocked. Many such actions have already been taken. Many more will begin May 30 on a widespread and sustained basis. Accordingly, Resist approved the following statement on May 14, 1972.

Resist supports the initiation of a sustained campaign beginning on Tuesday, May 30 (the traditional Memorial Day), to oppose the shipment of war supplies destined for use against Vietnam.

Nixon's speech on May 8 announcing the intensified bombardment of Indochina and the mining of North Vietnam's harbors coupled with the offer to withdraw US forces from Indochina four months after a ceasefire contained no new offer to realistically end the war and no new recognition of the realities of Indochina. It was simply a further extension of American aggression and an admission of previous failure. Vietnamization can not work because the US is committed to defending and perpetuating the power of those who have only oppressed and suppressed the Vietnamese people. A standstill cease-fire would impose responsibility on North Vietnam, or China and the Soviet Union, to stop a revolution in the American-controlled zones which 25 years of French and American military action have been unable to stop. These are the issues which the representatives of the Provisional Revolutionary Government and the Democratic Republic of Vietnam have repeatedly emphasized, and which Nixon has attempted to obscure.

The escalation of American assaults on the people of Indochina demands an escalation in the response from Americans opposed to the war. In one recent raid, B52's dropped 1700 tons of bombs on and around An Loc. Every week US planes drop the equivalent of the Hiroshima A-bomb on the people of Indochina. THIS MUST STOP.

Therefore, we support the type of actions being planned, including

1. Sailing boats into harbors from which war shipments are being made, such as the sailing of canoes into the Leonard, N.J. harbor on April 24 to oppose the shipment of explosives on the USS Nitro. During this action seven crewmen jumped overboard in an attempt to join the protestors.

2. Sit-ins at freight yards, loading platforms, or factory gates through which war materiel is being shipped, such as the blockade of outgoing shipments from the Raymond Engineering Plant in Middletown, Conn. which began on Friday May 12. The blocked shipment contains fuses for the "Snake Eye" bomb, an anti-personnel weapon.

3. De-activating war goods while en route, such as the sabotage of several hundred 500 lb. bomb casings in a freight car in the yard of the York, Pa. plant of the American Machine and Foundry Company (AMF). Resist helped to disseminate information about this action in April, 1972.

4. Campaigning for local ordinances against the shipment of dangerous explosives, toxic chemicals and the like on railroads, highways or rivers passing through a community.

Resist encourages local groups to plan appropriate actions in their own communities. When actions occur, they should be reported as quickly as possible, and with all due discretion, to Resist, 763 Mass. Ave., Cambridge, Mass. 02139 617/491-8076-7, and we will undertake to distribute news releases and photos forwarded by local groups. Resist will serve as a clearinghouse for information passing between activist groups and as a central source for information on nationwide blockade activities for the press.

For more information on the location of war-related industries near you contact:
Two weeks ago, seven sailors from the ammunition ship Nitro jumped overboard into the sea as the ship pulled out from its loading pier in New Jersey en route to Vietnam. The seven wished to dramatize their protest against the war and the unsafe conditions on the ship to which US servicemen are subjected in order to carry out that war. Their protest was observed and supported—and to some extent encouraged—by a flotilla of small boats trying, more in symbol than reality, to stop the ship.

Today, six of the seven, charged with "desertion in the face of hazardous duty" and "conspiracy" are on the ship as it heads from Hawaii toward the Philippines. Two more sailors, apparently prevented from jumping overboard, are charged with "attempted desertion." The peace movement is trying to provide lawyers and support, but communications from ships recently has been limited, and it isn't clear how much help we can actually be.

The Nitro case sharply illustrates the dilemma in which we find ourselves with respect both to the value of non-violent civil disobedience and to encouraging resistance in the military. Unlike some other actions, the flotilla and the efforts to block the ammunition loading pier had no discernible effect on the movement of these munitions to Vietnam (the ship carries enough to blow away everything within a 21-mile radius). The sailors are facing very serious charges, while the civilians, some of them, got wet or a disorderly fine.

Nevertheless, it is necessary to find the means to support and encourage resistance in the military, because the GI movement is one of the most powerful levers we have to stop the war. I would not deny the value of the Presidential campaign, nor of the need to move Congress. But November is months away and does not offer great promise; and Congress has again and again demonstrated it incapacity—or unwillingness—to act if any other prospect for ending the war (like the Presidential campaign) presents itself. Moreover, it isn't at all clear that Congress does, in fact, have the power to compel an end to the war. GI's do.

The resistance and disintegration of the army—its demoralization and unreliability—was a major factor in limiting its continued use in Vietnam. Those conditions resulted from fear, disgust, and drugs as well as from politics and rebelliousness. The army disintegrated not by accident; the nature of the war produced that fear and disgust. Guys who came back found the country didn't give them any special regard for having fought; that sense of "being had" spread back into Nam. What emerged, among other things, as the GI movement was an anti-war, anti-imperialist movement of working people.

The air war presents another kind of problem. Ground crews and most sailors don't face much personal risk. Pilots—privileged officers isolated from EM's and, on the whole, from dissent—do, but they are also isolated from any clear picture of how many are downed and lost, and what they really do to Vietnam and Laos. I would not minimize the difficulty of dealing with this situation, made tougher by the problems of communicating to men on carriers or in Thailand.

Nevertheless, with the difficulties of impeding the air war and of equalizing the risks of civilians and military personnel, we begin, not end. It seems that the GI movement has, in fact, been fairly ingenious at communicating to military people wherever they are, when there's something to communicate. The question for us is what to communicate as well as how to increase the capacity to get through to those doing the air war.

I believe that the "interdiction" campaign is a good first step through which civilians can join the resistance of GI's to the war. It underlines the variety of useful options available to those who would strike directly at the US war-making capacity—the war plants, railroad sidings, recruiting stations, air base gates which are to be found in almost everyone's neighborhood. And it may help focus nationally the increasing determination of many Americans that they will—indeed, that only they can—stop the war.