

Vietnam Veterans Against the War-Winter Soldier Organization

NEWSLETTER

number 32



Dec. 9, 74

General Information

National Steering Committee Meeting

The St. Louis National Steering Committee Meeting is rapidly approaching and is set for Dec. 27-31. The St. Louis chapter has sent out the first mailing regarding this meeting and regional offices should have received this mailing by now. If not, contact either the St. Louis chapter or the National Office and the information will be sent to you. People should begin registering immediately. Registration is \$10 per delegate and since St. Louis has to prepay the majority of their costs, they have asked that registration also be prepaid so the bills can be met. So, regions should fill out the forms sent out by St. Louis and return them to: VVAW/WSO, 1023 Allen Ave., St. Louis, MO 63104 as soon as possible.

St. Louis has also asked that people let them know how many children will be requiring child care and they need this information by Dec. 15th. So, even if your registration is not sent in by then, information regarding child care is needed immediately.

Agenda items should also be sent to St. Louis prior to the meeting. They will be sending out a tentative agenda with their next mailing, so regions should send in agenda topics as soon as possible. The only agenda item that we have received is one regarding the holding of a workshop concerning the National Alliance Against Racist and Political Repression. If there are other suggestions for workshops or new business items, let St. Louis know right away.

Everyone should be aware that this up-coming NSCM is going to be a very important meeting and there are many major questions that will be discussed. We will be continuing discussions around the nature and focus of VVAW/WSO and we hope to move further ahead in resolving this major struggle. We also hope to spend a lot of time discussing the practical work of VVAW/WSO, past and future. The steering committee will also be dealing with the initial portions of the political defense manual that is being prepared and we will be going over the completed portions of this manual in St. Louis. Another major question that we will be discussing

is the program for our organizational GI work, which was worked out by the recent GI weekend workshop.

Items of Old Business that will have to be voted on at the beginning of the meeting include objective proposals, the number of NSCMs that we should have each year, and elections of national coordinators. People should be prepared to vote on these questions during the first day of the meeting. Other questions that people need to be prepared for is ideas for up-dating and revising the Working Paper, and this discussion will include ideas for defining membership, chapters, regions, etc, as well as the number of votes that each region should have at NSCMs. The minutes from the Buffalo NSCM should be referred to for the above-listed items.

Ford Veto of GI Bill Overturned; Vets Still on Short End of Stick -

As expected, the Ford veto of the proposed increase in the GI Bill was overturned by both houses of Congress, by votes of 90-1 in the Senate and 394-10 in the House of Representatives. The increases in the GI Bill call for a raise in the monthly payment for fulltime institutional training from \$220 to \$270 for a single veteran, \$261 to \$321 for a veteran with one dependent and from \$298 to \$336 with two dependents. The rate for each dependent over two will increase from \$18 to \$22.

In addition the bill provides for increases in the amount of time to finish schooling from 36 months to 45 months. Also included in the bill is an increase in the loan program that will now enable veteran students to borrow \$600 per year if there are no other federal plans available to supplement school tuitions. These benefits plus small improvements for Reservists and National Guardsmen and women in regard to the amount of time allotted for educational benefits, are still inadequate when compared to the post World War II benefits provided to returning soldiers.

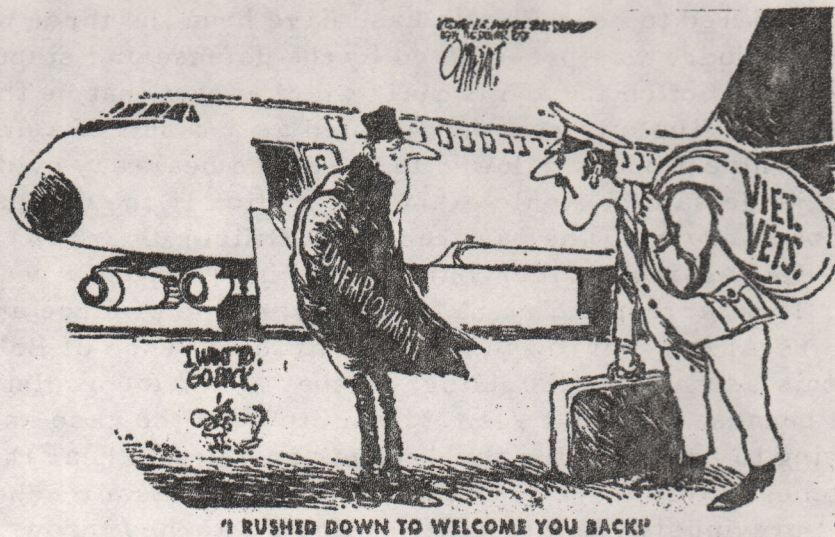
It is important in understanding the nature of Congress's overriding the Presidential veto. Initially Congress asked for much more than the 22.7% increase which was ultimately passed. Twice the GI Bill appropriations were slashed down by a total of 43% of what was originally asked for. Considering that 300% increase is necessary for an equal GI Bill, this "victory" of 22.7% increase is nominal at best. Senators and Representatives will fall over themselves explaining how they are helping the vets. But in reality they are like the VA officials themselves. It is impossible for the VA to meet the needs of veterans as the system of imperialism is decaying rapidly.

The administration will use inflation as a way in which to trick the people into believing that there can be no increases in the service provided to any American. For instance, Ford called the GI Bill "inflationary" and yet at the same time asked for \$1.252 billion in military aid for continuing the war in Vietnam. The GI Bill calls for an appropriation of \$814 million. In order to spend less on the American people the system will try to divide the working class by saying that because of increased benefits for veterans they will have to cut back the amount of VA personnel. When we fight around decent benefits for all veterans, it is important to link up this demand with the expected cutbacks of personnel by showing how the system of imperialism is responsible for the cutbacks and not the veterans.

Government Unemployment Figures

The most recent issue of Winter Soldier describes some of the ways in which the US Government makes unemployment figures look much better than they actually are in the hope of misleading the American people about the seriousness of the economic crisis. In the most recent figures given out by the Commerce Department, we are told that there are 6.5% of the work force now unemployed; and that 5.8% of the Vietnam-era veterans are unemployed. By our rough calculations that means that approximately one out of every twenty people standing in the unemployment lines is a Vietnam-era vet. And we think that figure is total nonsense; for the most part, vets are the people with some of the lowest seniority in most factories--and, with the current wave of layoffs, we suspect that a high percentage of those being laid off are vets.

While we recognize we don't have the capability to do large-scale statistical surveys, we would like those chapters who are working around unemployment offices to make some tentative surveys--for instance, out of 50 people going into the building, how many are Vietnam-era vets? The more people (who should be chosen at random) the more accurate the statistic. Again, without anticipating a highly scientific survey, we would like to get the feedback from those chapters who do ask--and it could provide a good way to talk to some people at the same time. Some states, incidentally have special days for veterans at the unemployment offices.



Lawton Trial Up-Date Enclosed

Enclosed is a four-page newsprint hand-out prepared by the Riverside Political Prisoners Defense Committee on the status of the Lawton trial. These were mailed to some VVAW/WSO offices by the RPPDC, but we felt it important to make sure that all chapters have this hand-out. Both the RPPDC and the National Office have numerous copies of these trial up-dates available for bulk orders. Chapters can buy them for 2¢ a piece (with a minimum of 50 copies ordered) and all money will go for Gary's defense.

Also enclosed is a copy of a hand-out called "Let's Set the Record Straight." This four-page leaflet includes a copy of Gary Lawton's letter to Angela Davis, the response of the National Alliance Against Racist and Political Repression to Gary's letter and a run-down of the relationship between the RPPDC and the Alliance since

Gary was arrested in 1971. This hand-out is the response of the RPPDC to the National Alliance's letter which was sent out to VVAW/WSO chapters around the country. More copies of this hand-out are also available to chapters for 2¢ each (with a minimum order of 25) and can be ordered either from the National Office or from Riverside.

The RPPDC also has buttons which read "Free Gary Lawton," with white lettering on a black background. For chapters wanting copies of these buttons, they cost 15¢ and should be obtained from Riverside. Along with buttons, copies of the 16-page hand-out on the history of the Lawton trial are available for 15¢ each. All materials can be obtained from: RPPDC, P. O. Box 244, Riverside, CA 92502.

Bob Hood Trial Begins

The trial of Bob Hood began on December 2nd, but thus far, not much progress has been made. Bob is a member of VVAW/WSO in Oakland, CA and was formerly a sub-regional coordinator from northern California. Hood was attacked and brutally beaten by Officer Ted Burrows of the Oakland Police Dept. on Feb. 6th and then arrested for assaulting Burrows with a deadly weapon (a 3" pocket knife that was found in Bob's pocket after he had been handcuffed).

Though the trial began officially, the defense has already rejected two judges and is presently attempting to get rid of the third one. Not surprisingly, the judges that have appeared to hear Hood's case have been the three worst judges in the county. The first judge was pre-empted by the defense and stepped down. The second judge granted a motion for a mistrial, which meant that he then stepped down from hearing the case. The mistrial was granted as a result of a defense motion asking that the government not be allowed to introduce hear-say evidence concerning the SLA. The judge said he would grant that motion if the defense would not introduce information concerning the past record of Officer Burrows. (11 citizen complaints have been filed against Officer Burrows during the past 4 years. One for rudeness, two for false arrest and eight for the overt use of force and violence). Since information regarding Burrows is crucial to the defense of Bob, the defense could not accept this second judge's ruling, so they asked for a mistrial -- which the judge granted because he didn't seem to want to hear the case anyway. So, now the defense is trying to deal with the third judge appointed to hear this trial. The defense has challenged this judge for cause because he was a teacher at a California university and previously attempted to get Bob's attorney thrown out of law school and keep him from getting barred. This third judge has refused to step aside, so an appeals court is now deciding whether or not they will hear this challenge for cause. If the appeals court refuses to hear this motion, or denies it, then Hood will go to trial before the present judge. Regardless of which judge hears this case, it looks as though the government will be allowed to introduce hear-say evidence concerning the SLA -- a tactic which will whip up all sorts of hysteria within the community and would highly prejudice a jury against Hood.

Exactly when the actual trial will get underway is not now known. There could be more delays as the defense tries to get a decent judge, or the trial and jury selection could begin this week. We will continue to keep chapters posted on the situation in Oakland as things develop. For more information, people can contact: VVAW/WSO, 4919 Telegraph Ave., Oakland, CA 94609. (415) 658-7806.

Cincinnati 7 Update

The seven people in Cincinnati, Ohio, attacked by the police and then charged with a variety of charges including "assault and battery on a police officer" now are expecting their trial to begin around the 6th of January. Charges of "disorderly conduct" filed against several of the defendants were dropped as a result of police foul-ups of paperwork--yet despite the inability of police officers to fill out a charge sheet correctly, juries still tend to take the word of a police officer over the word of the defendant.

Shea Stadium Attack

Assault and battery charges against Danny Friedman of the New York City chapter of VVAW/WSO were dropped; this means that the state has finally dropped the last of the charges against the 6 VVAW/WSO members who were attacked during Vietnam Veterans Day celebrations at Shea Stadium. The NYC chapter and other anti-imperialist forces in New York City have been building support for that trial, another clear example of police brutality against the people.

Steve Grossman Returns to Toronto After Tour -

Steve Grossman, an American draft resister, living in Toronto, Canada recently toured throughout the northeast to challenge the Ford earned re-entry program. Steve spoke in New York City, Washington DC, Buffalo, Columbus, Cincinnati, Dayton, Cleveland, Akron, St. Louis, Milwaukee and Chicago. He also spoke at the Amnesty Conference held in Louisville on November 16th. With the exception of the conference all of Steve's activities were sponsored by this organization.

While there wasn't much time for chapters to plan extensive outreach around the tour, each chapter did a fairly good job of getting speaking gigs, radio shows, TV shows, interviews. Some chapters were better able to draw people out than others. For instance, the Cincinnati Chapter, in conjunction with an amnesty coalition, drew over 120 people at two speaking gigs in Cincinnati and in Northern Kentucky. The chapter attributed some of the success to the efforts of the student-based Revolutionary Student Brigade, (a member of the coalition) with good contacts and organization on the campuses.

Steve spoke highly of all the efforts by the chapters, pointing out that the Cincinnati experience showed him that through coalition work around amnesty, the success of the tour increased. He also spoke highly of the country and western radio show that the Buffalo chapter arranged as it allowed him to reach an audience that in some cases could have been less accessible to. Another highlight of the tour was the worker's lunch hosted by the chapter in Milwaukee. This lunch gave him the opportunity to meet with workers on the late shifts who would otherwise be unable to attend a nighttime meeting.

We think that the tour was a good chance to see the approaches that chapters take to amnesty and coalition work. We believe that there are lots of lessons to be drawn from the tour, and lots of questions to be answered. We hope that each chapter will be able to give a critical summation of the day's events and send them along to the NO so that we can see what worked and what didn't. Included in the summation should be points around whether it was worthwhile, whether it can be done again, what kind of

building was involved, strengths and weaknesses of coalition work, etc. Steve would also like to hear what chapters thought of his speeches and politics. Please send these summations, along with newspaper articles, etc. as soon as possible.

On Thanksgiving Day Steve and Evangeline, his travelling companion, returned to Toronto.



Report Drugging of VA Patients Without Consent -

The following article appeared in the Chicago Sun-Times on December 4th.

"Documents published by a Senate subcommittee reveal that the Veterans Administration allows the use of behavior-control drugs and brain surgery on unwilling patients.

"The VA policy was discussed in a report on federal financial aid for behavior-control research released last week by the Senate subcommittee on constitutional rights.

"At...joint hearings, the VA indicated that it considered drug users and alcoholics as potentially violent patients, and therefore possible subjects for psychosurgery.' the report said.

"It included a May 10, 1973, letter from then VA Administrator Donald Johnson to Sen. Sam J. Ervin Jr. (D-NC), subcommittee chairman, that said: '...The VA does allow experimentation using patients in its medical facilities when there is reasonable expectation that the participating patient will benefit from the study.'

"Although patients 'must voluntarily consent and anticipated gain must exceed expected risks,' Johnson wrote, he added that at times an individual's capacity for forming sound judgments for himself is seriously impaired.

" 'Under these latter circumstances, a variety of considerations must be reviewed by the physician with the conclusion, at times, that threatment must be insisted upon despite the patient's temporary objections,' Johnson wrote."

It appears that the VA is not unlike prisons across the country. It is another attempt by the system to deal with potentially political people, by subjecting them to forms of behavior modification. We ask that chapters who have knowledge of behavior modification being used at VA hospitals please let us know about it. It would also be a good point to raise when demonstrating at VA facilities. The above article is a UPI story.

Regional Reports

Oneonta--National Guard Leafletting

Oneonta VVAW/WSO has been doing educational work at the National Guard armory in Oneonta during their training weekend. The chapter wrote an anti-imperialist leaflet detailing the history of the NG as a repressive force used by capitalists in collusion with the government during strikes and other social uprisings. Also they distributed information (CCCO pamphlets) on how to get discharges as well as free copies of WS. Their efforts have been well received. It seems that most NG members in Oneonta joined in order to escape Vietnam service in the regular army and are now just finishing out their time. In some cases, members joined because they are poor and need the money to supplement their family incomes.

While many VVAW/WSO chapters do not have an active duty military installation nearby, almost every chapter has some form of the NG or the reserves in or near their community. For people who want to work with the military, these provide a nearby substitute for active duty bases.

Eugene, Oregon Chapter Participates in Anti-Ford Demonstration

On November 1st, Gerald Ford made a journey to Portland, Oregon for the purpose of pushing the Republican party at a \$1000 a plate fund-raising dinner. The Eugene chapter of VVAW/WSO traveled to Portland to greet Ford, and participated in a demonstration of approximately 400 people who denounced Ford's economic policies and the U. S. involvement in last year's Chile coup. This action, along with the chapter's successful Veterans Day demonstration of over 80 people in Eugene, is a sign that VVAW/WSO is really coming alive and gaining strength in Oregon once again.

Denver VVAW/WSO Member Arrested at UFW Picket

On November 30th, 17 people were arrested outside Applejack Liquors in a Denver suburb for picketing the liquor store which sells Gallo wine products. The picket line was called by the United Farm Workers and they have been picketing this store for weeks as part of their nationwide boycott. Bob Hennig, VVAW/WSO member from Denver, was a participant in this picket line and was charged with felonious first-degree assault. Police say that Hennig allegedly was attempting to remove a sheriff's deputy's revolver from its holster. One other person was charged with resisting arrest, and the other 15 people were charged with violating a court order which prohibited picketing at the Applejack store. No trial date has yet been set for Bob, but we know that he is to be tried in Golden, Colorado -- a town which is owned by Adolf Coors (beer-maker), who is an overt fascist. We have not yet received details on the defense effort around Bob's arrest, but will get information out on this case as soon as we receive it. For more information, people should write Denver VVAW/WSO at P.O. Box 18591, Denver, Colorado 80218.

Maryland Chapters Participate in Forums -- Show Films

On November 7th, the Central Maryland chapter of VVAW/WSO showed the film Winter Soldier Investigation and held a brief WSI on atrocities being committed on veterans and GIs today. This was done at an all day forum held at the University of Maryland. The turn out for the forum was small, and the chapter attributes this to the poor planning the school had done and the chapters failure to do more advertising on their own. VVAW/WSO was the 12th of 15 different groups which spoke at the forum. However, the WSI went well and included a veteran in the audience who came up to testify to the harassment he received while a patient in a VA hospital. In summing up this event, the chapter agreed that they should plan more films and small WSIs, but that in the future, they should plan these events separate from other group forums and do publicity on their own.

Elsewhere in Maryland, Baltimore VVAW/WSO conducted a forum on Universal and Unconditional Amnesty at the university there. The forum was co-sponsored by the Left Study Project and included showing the films "Only the Beginning" and the "Winter Soldier Investigation." Also, VVAW/WSO provided two speakers at the event, who discussed the history of VVAW/WSO and the current program of our work.

Bellingham, Washington Chapter Holds Action with Vancouver Exiles

On November 16th, approximately 150 people from Bellingham and Vancouver Canada met at the Peace Arch (located on the Canadian border) for a demonstration and rally. Part of the reason for the joint action between Canadian exiles and people from Canada included the fact that the Indochina Peace Campaign was premiering their new film, "Introduction to the Enemy" at Western University in Bellingham. Speakers at the university activities included Jane Fonda and David Harris. The actions in Bellingham were organized by VVAW/WSO. Members of Tacoma VVAW/WSO also participated in the Peace Arch rally.

National Office Reports

Internal Funding

Three months have passed since the Buffalo NSCM when the organization voted on an internal funding procedure for helping to support the operation of the National Office (\$1 per month per member). So far, this funding procedure has been relatively ignored by the majority of chapters in the organization. Out of 17 regions, only seven have sent in any money during the past three months, for a total of just under \$400.00. Only 14 chapters have responded in those months and few chapters are consistently sending in internal funding every month.

It is important that chapters begin, in some way, to implement the funding program. The National Office is rapidly sinking into debt, and the amount of money that comes in from direct mail fund raising, the only current way the NO is fund-

ed, is diminishing. This means that the internal funding program must take on even greater importance. The full financial situation of the National Office will be reported on at the St. Louis NSCM, but for now, it can be said that the picture is bleak. Please, begin collecting those dues, or at least let us know what your chapter is capable of. The NO realizes that most chapters have financial difficulties of their own. However, each member who cannot afford the \$1 per month can sell four copies of Winter Soldier each month to raise the dollar. That is one of the functions of the newspaper and it should be utilized.

GI Workshop

A workshop on VVAW/WSO's GI organizing was held in Chicago during the Thanksgiving weekend. It was attended by about 15 people representing VVAW/WSO chapters from Tillicum, WA; Oakland, CA; Denver, St Louis, Columbus, Highway 13, MD, and the National GI Project in Chicago. The basic purpose of the workshop was to begin the process of summing up VVAW/WSO's practice in GI work to this point, struggle around our organizational politics on GI organizing and try to develop program proposals for our GI work to present to the upcoming St Louis NSCM.

By and large, the workshop was very productive and was a significant step forward in terms of beginning to resolve, or at least clarify, some of the primary political questions facing us in our GI work. The workshop began with round-robin reports on chapters' practice with GI organizing, dealt with an open letter of criticism sent to the National Office by the St. Louis chapter (regional offices will be receiving a copy of the workshop's response to this letter), discussed the National GI Conference VVAW/WSO sponsored last October and finally spent the better part of a day struggling around the primary political questions arising out of our GI organizing. In broad categories these questions were around 1) separate organizations and/or caucuses for women and 3rd World GIs--should we always seek to build them or do we set them up only as a short-run means to achieving greater unity in the long run? 2) What is our analysis of the women's question in regard to GI organizing? 3) Gay liberation--is homosexuality a positive or negative thing, do we actively organize around support for gay liberation or do we not, etc etc? 4) What is our analysis of the question of national oppression or racism in the military? 5) Are GIs workers or members of the working class or are they "special bodies of armed men" whose social role is support of the imperialist state and suppression of the working class? 6) Is the United Front Against Imperialism the correct strategy for the anti-imperialist movement?

Finally, the workshop began developing a program proposal for VVAW/WSO's GI work, based on the workshop's collective analysis of these questions to present to the St Louis National Steering Committee. The workshop did not reach unity on this program proposal however and there will be two separate reports coming out: a minority report from three of the four St Louis chapter members that attended the workshop, and a majority report that was endorsed by the rest of the workshop. Responsibility for finalizing the majority report was delegated to the National GI Project which hopes to have the proposal distributed to the organization prior to the steering committee meeting.

Since the notes of the workshop were rather extensive, it is going to take some time to shift through them and prepare them for distribution to the organization. Once compiled, they will be sent out to all regional offices and to all VVAW/WSO chapters doing active GI organizing.

GI ARE NOT STRIKEBREAKERS



OR RIOT COPS!

GI NEWS

We are sending out the latest issue of GI News with this newsletter. In order to make the paper as useful and effective an organizing tool as possible, we need feedback on it. We actively encourage chapters and regions to send in pertinent comments and criticisms concerning GI News to the National GI Project on a regular basis. Also, if regions are interested in ordering quantities of GI News it is important that the National GI Project be notified well in advance of its monthly printing date; which will be the 1st of each month. All copy being submitted to GI News must reach the NGIP no later than the beginning of the last week of each month or one week prior to our press deadline.

New Edition--Turning the Regs Around

Turning the Regs Around is a standard publication for working with active-duty military people. A new and improved edition has just be printed and can be obtained from Turning the Regs Around, P. O. Box 8413, San Diego, CA 92102. The cost is \$1.25 for one copy, \$1 each for 2-10 copies, 75¢ each for more than 10 copies.

Chapter List Enclosed

Enclosed with this mailing is a new chapter list. Regional offices and chapters should go over this list to make sure these are correct addresses and a true reflection of where VVAW/WSO is within your region. This list is compiled from the most recent listings that we have, but there are many regions we have not received chapter address up-dates from for several months. So, check it over and let us know if there are changes, additions or deletions as soon as possible.

Resources--Available and Not Available

We don't have much left; however, here's what we do have:

Amnesty buttons..... 10¢ each
VVAW/WSO buttons..... 10¢ each
Winning Hearts and Minds (poems by Vietnam vets)..... \$1.00 each
Free Fire Zone (short stories by Vietnam vets)..... \$1.50 each
"Enlisted People in the Army: 1756-1973"..... 10¢ each
"Women: The Recruiter's Last Resort" (a 40-page pamphlet).... 75¢ each
The U. S. Military Apparatus (a 120 booklet on the organization
of the US defense establishment written by the North Amer-
ican Congress on Latin America)..... \$1.25
"US Military and Police Operations in the Third World" (a NACLA
32-page pamphlet)..... 50¢ each

What we don't have is copies of the Amnesty Paper, and copies of "What Is VVAW/WSO?" We believe that both should be reprinted; the problem is money. Both should be revised and updated (new objectives in the "What Is" booklet, new figures in the Amnesty Pamphlet). Any contributions from chapters toward the reprinting of either of these items, clearly labelled as to the purpose of the money, will be kept until there is enough to get the pamphlets reprinted. If chapters would pay some of their overdue bills, that would also help in terms of getting the items done again.

One further item: VVAW/WSO patches; these patches cost 75¢ each, with the proceeds to go to the Riverside Political Prisoners Defense Committee.

Information Requests

Request for Knowledge of Any Canadian Goods or War Material in Indochina

We are looking for anybody that has knowledge of any Canadian goods, war materials, etc that were used by U. S. military forces in Indochina. We know that Canadian munitions and equipment were used by the U. S. in Indochina (some of it was probably the same make and model as U. S. manufactured items but made in Canada) but we need to find individuals having specific knowledge of this. We'd particularly like to find people in supply that may have seen the markings on crates, boxes, etc. The information is being sought by a Canadian documentary film group and will be used in making a television special. Anyone having knowledge of this should contact the National Office as soon as possible.

Need Information Concerning Training of Dolphins by Military

A study on dolphin communications is being prepared and the researcher has heard that dolphins were used to defend American naval installations in Vietnam by ramming NLF soldiers with weapons attached to their snouts. The researcher has asked us if we know of any veterans who did this kind of work with dolphins or whales while in the military. If you know of such people, complete confidentiality will be guaranteed by the researcher who wishes to conduct interviews with these people. If you know of anyone who did this kind of work, please contact the National Office.