



national
council for
universal and
unconditional
amnesty

235 East 49th Street
New York City 10011
(212) 688 8097
Eleventh Floor

April 21, 1975

To: KEY SOUTHERN CONTACTS

Re: GERRY CONDON's SOUTHERN TOUR

Dear Friends,

Gerry Condon is now touring the south, risking arrest to explain his and other war resisters' rejection of "clemency" and our demand for total amnesty. This is to ask you to consider having Gerry come to your city or town or campus to speak. We ask you to cover the cost of his travel from the city he's in before yours, and provide his housing and food during his stay. Anything you can raise above this minimal cost can be used to cover phone calls and other expenses Gerry incurs on the tour.

Gerry is very effective at generating media interest because he is challenging the government's policy and risking arrest to do it. Also, as an ex-Green Beret and the son of a conservative Irish Catholic family of cops, he tends to counter stereotypes. He's a good speaker and has won support from almost every possible type of audience on his tour--which has in the past 11 weeks taken him to 40 cities in 15 states.

The government apparently has decided not to arrest Gerry because of his high visibility and broad support, but he is subject to arrest at any time. We therefore ask you to have a reliable, sympathetic lawyer on call who can act on his behalf in the event of arrest. Gerry met many southern lawyers at the recent National Lawyers' Guild conference in Atlanta; his story was published in the April issue of GUILD NOTES, and the Lawyers Military Defense Committee and David Addlestone of the ACLU have prepared his defense and appeals already. So all a lawyer has to do is keep track of Gerry if he's arrested, and communicate with his national lawyers.

We have so far scheduled Gerry through May 3--he will be in middle and northern Mississippi during the last week in April, in Memphis, Tenn. on May 1, and Houston, Tex. on May 3. After May 3 it is our plan that he will backtrack, starting in New Orleans on or around May 7-8; Mobile around the 9, 10 or 11; Birmingham and Atlanta the week of May 12-16. After that, depending on your schedules, we would like Gerry to either go south to Florida for a week, or north and east to the Carolinas. I'll be calling around in the next few days and will decide then if it's possible to include Florida before the Carolinas. He would then go to the Virginias in late May.

Please let me know at your earliest convenience if you would like to schedule Gerry during this tour. Please call me at 212-688-8097 (collect if necessary) between the hours of 10:00 AM and 6:00 PM (EDT) as soon as possible. Don't call person-to-person. I should be here, and if I'm not I'll return your call. Gerry's personal history is enclosed. We also have copies of AMNESTY UPDATE (the NCUUA newsletter) and AMEX/CANADA (of which Gerry is an editor, and "VIETNAMNESTY" buttons. Also glossy photos of Gerry now and when he was a green beret. Let me know what you need and when.

For total amnesty and real peace,

Dee Charles Knight
Dee Charles Knight



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GERRY CONDON: A Brief History

Gerry Condon joined the Green Berets in 1967 because he felt that "any Army typist back here in the U.S. is just as responsible for a death in Vietnam as the man pulling the trigger over there. If I was going to be responsible in an action, I wanted to be involved in it and see what was going on." That's how he described it when he explained his resignation to his hometown newspaper, in San Mateo, California, 16 months later, on August 1, 1968.

While home on leave, Gerry had prepared a statement and taken it to the San Francisco Bay Area papers. It said, in part, "After serving in the U.S. Army for 18 months and earning the heralded 'Green Beret' which I can no longer display proudly upon my head, I have decided that I shall from this time on refuse to serve in any capacity whatsoever in the United States military."

The announcement created quite a sensation, since, in addition to being a Green Beret, Gerry was the son and grandson of local police officers. Two of his uncles were still active on the San Mateo force. As a boy, Gerry attended St. Matthew's Catholic School in San Mateo, and then graduated from Serra High School there. He attended the University of San Francisco--a Jesuit College--for a year, but then enlisted in the Army, "because the draft was breathing down my neck."

While he was confused about the war, Gerry was not convinced one way or the other by either the anti-war movement or the pro-war politicians, and "I thought that to be in Vietnam as a Green Beret would help me form my own opinion," he said. But in the end it didn't take going to Vietnam to convince him, "because," as he wrote later, "the long Special Forces training gave me plenty of time to think it all over and I also had the opportunity to speak to many Vietnam veterans."

In his resignation statement, Gerry theorized that "if a nation's government decides to involve it in a 'conflict' and is unable to rally sufficient numbers from its eligible fighting men--then there is no conflict. The leaders have received the very plain and simple verdict of the people. And this is supposed to be democracy. isn't it?" He added that he found it "amazing" that the U.S. Government "would actually wage a war employing personnel opposed to it in the first place." He suggested that the "recent lack of success on the battlefield may be caused by the limitation of conscientious objector status to those who oppose all wars, and

not just one particular war."

He concluded that "the Vietnam war is cruel, bloody and immoral, takes its toll on the innocent as often as not, has stricken uncounted bodies and infected countless minds. It is a war to which no beneficial end is in sight. In short, it is a war in which I, for one, cannot participate. I would much rather lend my support, my life, to those individuals who in honesty and love refused to fight this unjust war...."

RETURNED TO ARMY

After releasing his statement, Gerry returned to the Special Forces training base at Fort Bragg, North Carolina, to tell his commanding officer of his intentions. He intended to fight for his right to resist within the confines of the military itself. He was to learn, however, that the Army could stall on his case until attention passed. Three months later, he was charged with wilful disobedience of a commanding officer's direct order and slated for a General Court Martial where he would face a possible 10 years at hard labor and a Dishonorable Discharge. His American Civil Liberties Union lawyer offered to defend him on the grounds that he had the right and responsibility, under the Nuremberg Principle, to refuse orders to go to Vietnam. But the lawyer soberly advised him that there was little chance of this argument being accepted in a military court, since the United States Supreme Court had already refused to rule on the question of the war's constitutionality.

So Gerry went AWOL in February 1969, went to Canada, and proceeded shortly thereafter to Europe, where he lived in Sweden for over two and a half years. He was active there with the American war resisters and the anti-war movement. Back in Canada since June 1972, he has been involved with the Vancouver American Exiles Association, and more recently with AMEX/Canada magazine and the Toronto American Exiles Association.

While Gerry was in exile, the military proceeded with his court martial, and in spite of the fact that his lawyer was not present or even aware of the proceedings, Gerry was convicted and sentenced to 10 years at hard labor and a Dishonorable Discharge. In 1970 his case was reviewed and the sentence was reduced to 2 years and a Bad Conduct Discharge. He also now faces a charge of desertion, since he has been absent without official leave (AWOL) since November 1968.

(END)