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MORALE OF 'BIG RED ONE' SOLDIERS DECLINING

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The psychology of defeat, dislike of the war, and desire for peace is engulfing the life of the soldiers in the US 1st Infantry Division.

Numerous US soldiers in this "big red one" division want to return home to reunite with their families. A Japanese correspondent, through his many contacts with US soldiers of the 1st Division, has observed: "The soldiers I have met are all worried. They feel they won't win, but instead will be defeated."

A diary of a US soldier who died in the battle of Bau Bang said: "I'm unhappy here. Morale is low and my life is hanging by a thread. I am homesick and tired, don't get any letters or news, don't have any buddies, and just have things to cuss about..." One US soldier wrote his wife: "I want to get the hell out of Vietnam and the sooner the better." Another US soldier wrote: "I long for the day that I can return to you and the kids."

A chaplain of the US 1st Infantry Division said in disgust: "The realities of the war have destroyed many years of our work."

At first, when they had just come to Vietnam, the soldiers of the US 1st Infantry Division were heavily propagandized, so they were very cruel. But later, as they sustained more and more heavy losses, their fighting spirit quickly declined. From soldier to commander, all are afraid of the sudden fighting and close-quarters fighting methods of the Liberation Army. In Binh Long, US tank drivers are very afraid of the Liberation Army's anti-tank weapons and many have fled their tanks to escape danger.

When the talks between representatives of the Government of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam and representatives of the US government in Paris began, US soldiers expected peace and waited for the day they could go home. In Lai Khe, US soldiers talked about a complete withdrawal. When the Paris conference came to a standstill, US soldiers were very angry and complained about Johnson. Many US soldiers wrote on their helmets: "Don't be the last one to get killed." In an operation in the delta of Tay Ninh Province on

20 October 1968, the fighting spirit of the US soldiers fell distinctly. Having never been attacked by the Liberation Army, they were confused and worried. Many times they fled, leaving the bodies of their buddies behind, when they encountered a small unit of the People's Liberation Armed Forces.

The movement of US soldiers against the war who refuse to go out to fight and demand to return home is developing more and more vigorously and violently. Instances of many US soldiers feigning illness when they get orders to deploy are widespread. Some US soldiers hide out in the homes of our compatriots and some flee to Bien Hoa and Saigon. According to the confession of a deserter from the 1st Division, a US military police communique stated that during the first six months of 1967, there were 580 US soldiers who deserted.

The movement of US soldiers against the war is developing into violent acts such as suicide or shooting commanders who suppress them. During 1966 and 1967, tens upon tens of anti-war acts broke out from the company to the battalion level.

Since the army and people of the South opened the general offensive and simultaneous uprising, the anti-war movement against taking orders to deploy, against supporting and counterattacking, demanding to return home, and so on, has developed continuously and vigorously in the US 1st Infantry Division. The following are some of the anti-war acts:

In February 1968, in Lai Khe, over 600 US soldiers refused to go into battle and demanded to return home. They burned up their packs and military equipment. One US second lieutenant who was against the war shot and wounded a US captain. The captain shot and killed the lieutenant and immediately committed suicide.

On 9 May in Lai Khe, an entire US company refused to provide support for puppet troops in Phu Hoa Dong; US soldiers against the war violently fought with US military police from 12 noon to 2 o'clock in the afternoon. US commanders imprisoned and beat many soldiers who were against the war and transferred 45 soldiers to Bien Hoa.

On 10 May, 48 US soldiers in Lai Khe, who had completed their tour and demanded to return home, were persecuted; seven committed suicide.

Also in Lai Khe on 12 June 1968, 70 US soldiers unanimously opposed orders to deploy. The commanders had to herd each one on the plane, but all 70 of the anti-war soldiers broke down the door and jumped out. On the afternoon of 13 June, US commanders shot and killed two of them and sent the rest someplace else.

On 26 September, an entire battalion of US soldiers at Lai Khe again staged anti-war acts. The commanders captured and callously beat seven of them. Many US soldiers have picked up our leaflets and fastened them to their helmets, stuck them in their pockets, or hidden them on their person.

When the compatriots ask what the Front's leaflets say, they reply: "The Front talks about peace and the withdrawal of US troops. That's great." Many US soldiers frequently ask the compatriots how to desert to the Liberation Army or how to make contact with the Front so they can get back home. In Lai Khe, hundreds of US soldiers have deserted and are living secretly in the cities. US soldiers frequently desert when operations are coming up or after they have sustained heavy losses from the Liberation Army. One US deserter said this: "According to a circular from the military police, there were 1,550 US soldiers who deserted in the 'second field area' during the first six months of 1967. There were 570 deserters from the 1st Division alone. At times, nearly 1,000 anti-war US soldiers have been imprisoned at Long Binh."

Hating the war and ignoring the restrictions of commanders, US soldiers openly talk about the defeats of the US aggressors in the war in Vietnam. In Lai Khe, many US soldiers organized celebrations, sang, danced, and fired colored flares when they got the news that Johnson had to announce a halt in the bombing and shelling of the North. The US soldiers' anti-war wave of refusing to go to battle and demanding to return home is vigorously rising.

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