

# Viet vets hit benefits in protest

By Joseph Volz

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WASHINGTON, March 29—

In an emotional Capitol Hill confrontation with Veterans Administration officials, hundreds of angry Viet Nam vets charged today that they had been shortchanged in benefits by an insensitive government.

The vets, packed into a small Senate Veterans Affairs Committee hearing room, repeatedly shouted down testimony of Odell W. Vaughan, chief VA benefits director, and himself a disabled vet. Vaughan argued that today's veterans are doing as well as their counterparts from World War II.

"Welfare people get more money than we do," one vet yelled. Michael Dempsey, president of the Richmond College Veterans Club, Staten Island, N.Y., added, "We didn't ask if it was inflationary when we went to Viet Nam."

THE NIXON administration has said that federal spending, including aid to veterans, should be limited, to help combat inflation.

The veterans were particularly perturbed that high administration officials were not available. Sen. Vance Hartke [D., Ind.], committee chairman, said VA administrator Donald Johnson had been asked to appear but pleaded "other business." VA officials said Johnson was giving a speech to an American Legion group in Waukegan, Ill.

President Nixon celebrated the day by reviewing troops at nearby Fort McNair. Warren Nagel, head of the Hunter College Veterans Association, asked: "How is he showing his interest in vets by doing what he is doing in some fort with the Army."