

# GUARD CRITICIZED ON DETROIT RIOTS

## Two Generals Say Men Were Trigger-Happy and Defied Orders to Unload Guns

By **NEIL SHEEHAN**

Special to The New York Times

WASHINGTON, Aug. 22—The two senior Army officers who were put in charge of suppressing the Detroit rioting testified today that Michigan National Guardsmen had been nervous and trigger-happy and had not obeyed orders to unload their weapons to prevent wild firing.

The assertions of poor discipline among the Michigan Guardsmen were made this morning by Lieut. Gen. John L. Throckmorton, commander of the 18th Airborne Corps, and Maj. Gen. Charles P. Stone, who served as General Throckmorton's deputy in Detroit.

### Order Is Denounced

They spoke before a subcommittee of the House Armed Services Committee investigating the handling of the riots.

The unfavorable testimony on the performance of the Guard, a politically powerful institution held in high regard by the Armed Services Committee members, angered a number of the Congressmen, and tempers flared several times on both sides during the two-hour open hearing.

At one point Representative Porter Hardy Jr., Democrat of Virginia, shouted at General Throckmorton that he was "casting aspersions" on the National Guard and that the general's order to guardsmen to unload their weapons had been "preposterous."

Accusing the general of need-

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lessly risking the lives of the guardsmen, Mr. Hardy said, "I don't see how you as a general officer could issue any order like that to a man working for you."

General Throckmorton, a former deputy commander of the United States forces in Vietnam, commanded the 4,800 Federal paratroopers and 2,262 Michigan guardsmen sent into Detroit last month to suppress the riot.

He first accused the guardsmen of being trigger-happy after Representative F. Edward Hébert, Democrat of Louisiana, who is chairman of the subcommittee, began questioning Under Secretary of the Army David E. McGiffert about the order to the guardsmen to unload their weapons.

Thirty-eight civilians, almost all of them Negroes, were killed in Detroit, most of them by gunfire. One was a four-year-old Negro girl in an apartment building into which National Guardsmen were firing with a heavy 50-caliber machinegun mounted on a tank.

Some of the victims may have been shot by snipers, but it is presumed that most were killed by gunfire from the police and the guardsmen. The paratroopers killed one man.

Mr. McGiffert, Mr. Hébert said, was making "self-serving" statements. Mr. Hébert said that he did not see how a guardsman could be expected to "take cover if fired upon and await the arrival of an officer."

"What comment do you have on that?" Mr. Hébert asked. "Do you want to take cover, Mr. Secretary?"

General Throckmorton had attempted to speak several times, but has not been allowed to do so by Mr. Hébert.

At this point, however, he asked the general if he wanted to "take cover, too."

His face flushed, General Throckmorton pointed his glasses at Mr. Hébert and said, "I gave those orders, sir. I don't disagree with them."

"I was confronted with a group of trigger-happy, nervous soldiers in the National Guard. I had no intention of seeing those soldiers shoot innocent civilians or children."

The general said that during a personal inspection of the riot area in Detroit Monday afternoon, July 24, he saw "nothing in that town which would justify bringing soldiers on the street with their weapons loaded."

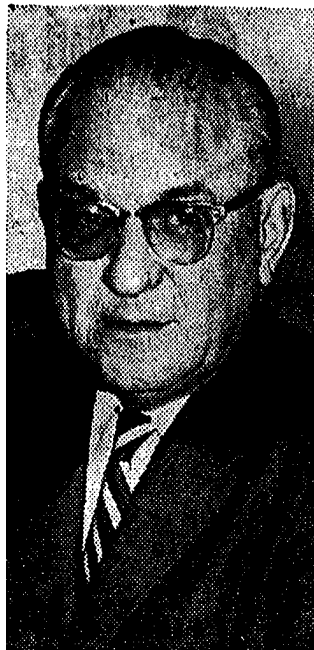
"It was not a red hot situation," he said.

He said that he had decided that the best way to deal with snipers was to have the troops unload their weapons until the snipers were located and then to fire only on command of an officer.

At the time he issued the order, the general said, he had not seen any incidents of wild firing by guardsmen but felt that the order was necessary because experience shows that green troops "going into combat for the first time tend to be nervous and trigger-happy."

He said that later, however, he had personally seen guardsmen firing unnecessarily and without authorization.

He said that he had not been worried about the paratroopers



Associated Press

**CHAIRMAN: Representative F. Edward Hébert, a Louisiana Democrat, heads House Armed Services subcommittee studying riots.**

because 35 to 40 per cent of them were Vietnam veterans. They were issued the same order, however, and obeyed it "without difficulty."

Representative Donald D. Clancy, Republican of Ohio, then began developing a line of questioning that seemed aimed at showing that National Guardsmen had been killed in Detroit because they had not been allowed to load their weapons.

General Throckmorton said that five guardsmen had been wounded and one killed by gunfire. Did the soldier who was killed, Mr. Clancy asked, have "an unloaded weapon?"

General Stone, who was sitting behind the general, stood quickly and said that he had personally checked 500 Guards-

men, and that as late as Thursday 90 per cent of them still had their weapons loaded.

General Throckmorton had testified earlier that in an effort to get his order enforced he had had National Guard officers mimeograph it and issue a copy to each of their troops on Wednesday night.

"Why didn't you have the offenders court-martialed?" Representative Hardy asked.

"You can't court-martial 90 per cent of a force," General Stone replied.

A police investigation disclosed that the one Guardsman killed in Detroit may have been shot by his own comrades while two groups of Guardsmen on both sides of a street were firing into a car driven by three white teen-agers who had not stopped when ordered to do so.