

Army Silent On Mass Arrest

No Action Backs Riot Probe Order

FLORENCE, S.C.—(ANP)—While the army maintained tight-lipped silence on the investigation of the mass arrest and fining of 135 Negro soldiers growing out of a troop train incident here last week, charges that Negro soldiers fired on the town from another train the following night were officially discounted.

No word of the probe ordered by the War Department has been released, and the Fourth Service Command at Atlanta, charged with making the investigation has refused to make a statement. On the other hand, Sheriff Dan Clarke of Florence County said the belief that Negro troops fired on the tense city from a passing train, seriously wounding Charles Green, Negro, must be discounted. His retraction came after Sumter police who searched the 500 men aboard reported that no weapons were to be found. Instead they said a smashed window indicated that the train had been fired upon. Green was wounded by buckshot.

Citizens Join Protest

A group of Florence citizens have protested the mass arrests, termed a deliberate attempt to terrorize the veterans, most of whom had just returned from overseas duty. Chief question concerned the conduct of Mayor R. F. Zeigler, who conducted the trial, which was held in Recorder's Court. Citizens also demanded to know how 15 to 20 officers could pick 135 men from the 250 aboard the train as taking part in the fight which lasted only five minutes.

The incident occurred when military police sought to arrest four men pointed out by train crewmen as disorderly. When the men protested their innocence, the MPs began clubbing them. At this point several companions came to their rescue. Immediately, armed railroad police, and city officers with machine guns lined up all the men on the train. They went through the group selecting 135 whom they herded through the streets under the muzzles of their guns in a mile-long march to the town's two jails.

Fined \$2,531

Most of the men, anxious to get to their homes, pleaded guilty to charges of disorderly conduct and resisting arrest. Two drew fines of \$100 each. Two others drew \$35 fines, and the rest were penalized \$17 each. The men made a pool, paying a total of \$2,531, and were released two days later.