

Rebel VFW post finds little support at Dallas convention

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DALLAS — Santa Cruz' rebel vets — attending the national convention of the Veterans of Foreign Wars here — are finding little support for their controversial Central America intervention resolution.

Richard Anderson, commander of local Post 5888, told The Sentinel by telephone this morning that it "looks tough, but we're going to be heard."

Anderson — along with four other Santa Cruz vets attending the 86th annual convention — holds little hope in winning support for the resolution, which urges the Reagan administration to review its policies in Central America.

The resolution was scheduled to be heard by a national committee today. That committee is forcing open debate on the convention floor from four out of every five proposed resolutions, he said.

Such open debate is precisely what Anderson plans later this week before some 20,000 fellow delegates. "This is the real thing, the deep end of the pool," added Anderson.

A tougher resolution calling for the U.S. to quit intervening in Central American affairs brought national attention to the tiny Santa Cruz Post earlier this year. The national veterans organization kicked the post out for its rebelliousness, reinstating them only after a court

battle.

Anderson conceded they don't hold much hope for getting the resolution passed on the national level. However, "we are interested in planting seeds of peace."

He noted that persistence paid off regarding a similar resolution at the state VFW level. In June, after a two-year fight, members got a resolution passed asking the VFW to "take a good hard look" at U.S. policies in Central America.

Three other resolutions are being carried by the Santa Cruz delegation, made up of Lee Bookout, Steve Brooks, Rubin Gomez and Evelyn Schoenfeld. They include one calling

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for the federal government to charge profiteering defense contractors with treason and felonious acts. Others ask the Reagan administration to place a moratorium on the foreclosure of small farms, and to condemn South African apartheid and divest itself from investment "in the racist government" of South Africa.

Evidence of the obvious uphill battle ahead comes from a group of Wisconsin vets.

According to Anderson, the group is trying to get a resolution passed calling for support of a monument to be built in memory of women nurses in Vietnam. "They're running into a lot of opposition, showing the rift between World War II vets and Viet-

nam vets," he said.

While the local delegates believe that the national VFW was a somewhat staid, militaristic organization, nevertheless, they were unprepared for what they were met with in Dallas.

For example, a row of huge, camouflaged military hardware trucked in from an Army base in Oklahoma, sat in front of the Dallas Convention Center. Among the equipment was a 27-ton multiple rocket launcher and an eight-ton howitzer. Just inside the door of the convention center was a rocket pod with 12 anti-satellite missiles alongside.

"What's frightening," said Anderson, "is that the missiles work.

"We just weren't prepared to see these massive instruments of destruction," he added. "We'd never thought about there being any sort of physical link between the VFW and the Department of Defense. But, now it's becoming clear."

Anderson recalled that displays inside included a promotional booth for a Dallas-based aerospace and defense contractor. "It was the first time I'd ever heard a sales pitch for an anti-satellite missile," he said. "You just don't run across that many people in Santa Cruz who sell them."

A pre-convention military parade included B-52 bombers flying overhead.

"On an individual basis, we've found some support from those

we've talked to," said Anderson. "But, we've also found some re-entrenched ways of thinking. They seem to have all the answers and don't want to hear the facts. Their minds are made up about American militarism — 'we're the strongest nation on earth and we want to stay that way' type of thinking."

According to delegate Bookout, even the way the Santa Cruzans dressed was out of step.

"They wear blue suits in winter and gray suits in summer here," Bookout said, wearing his usual faded blue jeans and cowboy boots. "The only variation is the widths of their stripes."

Added Anderson: "This has to be the most conservative place on earth."

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