

Rep. Rodino Asks Details On Beret Case

8-14-69
By George C. Wilson
Washington Post Staff Writer

Congress became publicly embroiled in the Green Beret controversy yesterday when Rep. Peter W. Rodino (D-N.J.) announced he would demand an explanation from the Army's top command.

Rodino, as a start, said he will meet with Acting Secretary of the Army Thaddeus Beal at 10 a.m. today at the Pentagon.

At that time, the congressman is expected to demand the release of Capt. Robert F. Marasco of Bloomfield, N.J.—part of Rodino's congressional district.

Marasco and seven other Green Berets are in the Logbinh jail outside Saigon while the Army investigates the murder of a Vietnamese near Nhatrang on June 20.

The Army has said the eight Green Berets are suspected of premeditated murder and conspiracy to commit murder. But no formal hearing—such as a civilian type of arraignment—has been held yet.

Rodino plans to argue that Marasco should be released from jail, at least until the Army decides whether to lodge formal charges against the suspects.

This opens up a new front on the case which threatens to put the Army, itself, on trial along with the Green Berets.

"The evil of secrecy surrounding these soldiers' arrests must be broken in order to render justice to the accused," Rodino said in a statement yesterday. He is a former Army enlisted man who rose to the rank of captain and also is a lawyer.

The lid the Army tried to put on the whole case already has been pried partly open. Hard information has leaked out that the Vietnamese man killed had been accused of working both for the allied side and Hanoi just before he was killed.

See BERET, A21, Col. 6

THE WASHINGTON POST Thursday, Aug. 14, 1969 A 21

Explanation of Green Beret Case Sought by Soldier's Congressman

BERET, From A1

If the case goes to trial and the Green Berets testify that they were ordered to kill the double agent, the Army leadership will have a case on its hands involving some of the same legal questions raised by the Nuremberg trials after World War II.

The Army has evidence indicating that at least one of the Green Berets, under investigation believed the killing had been approved by higher military authority as well as coordinated with civilian intelligence officials.

What role the Central Intelligence Agency played in this hush-hush case of the double agent has not been spelled out. Officially, the agency confines itself to "no comment."

But sources familiar with the CIA's operations in Vietnam insist the agency was not involved in the case—an assertion disputed by some Green Beret sources.

Just what role the CIA or other intelligence operatives played, if any, in what the Army characterizes as a premeditated murder is bound to come out sooner or later. Beal probably will be asked that question today.

Another question which the Pentagon so far has refused to answer is who originated the arrest order of the eight Green Berets.

George Gregory, the attorney for Maj. Thomas C. Middleton Jr., arrested as a suspect in the killing, has told reporters in Saigon that "Gen. Abrams is personally responsible."

Gen. Creighton W. Abrams is commander of American forces in Vietnam. His boss, Gen. William C. Westmoreland, Army Chief of Staff, previously had Abrams' job. Both therefore have been directly responsible for Green Beret operations in Vietnam.

It is an open secret that

many old-time Army officers dislike the whole idea of having a special elite force like the Green Berets within the Army structure. Besides raising fundamental policy questions about Special Forces operations, the murder case is likely to fuel this in-service controversy.