

Another Ex-C.I.A. Official Alleges Agency Failed Some Saigon Allies

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By SEYMOUR M. HERSH

A second former official of the Central Intelligence Agency who served in South Vietnam accused the agency yesterday of leaving behind its Vietnamese allies and collaborators and then covering up the evacuation failures.

John R. Stockwell, who resigned from the agency earlier this year, confirmed in an interview many of the major allegations published last week in a book by Frank Snepp, another former C.I.A. official who served in Vietnam at the fall of Saigon in April 1975.

Meanwhile, William G. Miller, staff director of the Senate Intelligence Committee, said that the committee had begun looking into the Snepp allegations. A C.I.A. official confirmed that the agency had already begun providing materials to the committee.

Confrontation Recalled

Mr. Stockwell, who spent 12 years with the C.I.A., two of them in South Vietnam, said that there had been widespread disillusionment among younger C.I.A. officers over the agency's failure to evacuate its allies and its decision not to investigate that failure.

While in Vietnam, he said, "I was in a standing and open confrontation with the chief of station over the subject of saving our locals. They were telling me that we didn't have permission from Washington and that we did not have an obligation to them and that there was nothing we could do."

"I still wake up in the middle of the night worried about them," Mr. Stockwell, who now lives in Austin, Tex., said. "We dumped them."

His feelings were so strong, Mr. Stockwell said, that he later considered refusing a special C.I.A. medal that was awarded him in mid-1975 by William E. Colby, then the Director of Central Intelligence.

Not Allowed to Refuse Medal

"I called Colby's office and asked what I should do in order to refuse the medal," Mr. Stockwell recalled. "And I was told that Colby had given an order that no one could refuse medals."

"I went there (to the awards ceremony) thinking that there could be an equal number of courts-martial instead of medals being handed out—except that the agency has no provision for courts-martial."

He was eventually given another C.I.A. assignment in Africa, Mr. Stockwell said, but before he left he was ordered to fill out a form and "air his grievances from Vietnam."

He was later told, Mr. Stockwell said, that the forms he and other Vietnam veterans had filled out were "filed" in the safe of a senior C.I.A. officer.

Congress 'Went Along'

"They made a decision that there would be no investigation" of the evacuation failures, Mr. Stockwell said of the agency's senior managers. "The Congressional committees went along with this and this made it easy for Colby to bury it inside the C.I.A."

Mr. Stockwell said he served nearly two years in South Vietnam, much of that in charge of the agency's outpost

in Tay Ninh City.

In an earlier interview, Mr. Snepp, whose book "Decent Interval," depicted the C.I.A.'s handling of the Saigon evacuation as an "institutional disgrace," also told of widespread dismay inside the agency over the failure to protect its former allies.

"Most of the young officers I knew in Vietnam were very concerned about what had taken place," Mr. Snepp said "but did not know how to register their complaints."

Many of those young officers, Mr. Snepp added, subsequently cooperated with him in his research for the book. And at least one agency veteran of Vietnam service did refuse to accept his C.I.A. medal, he said.

"It was one of those times when people would walk around and say, 'Oh My God, what happened?'" Mr. Snepp said.

In his book and in a subsequent television interview, Mr. Snepp also accused Mr. Colby of deliberately disclosing classified documents to two journalists after the fall of Saigon in an effort "to protect its image."

In a telephone interview yesterday, Mr. Colby, now in private law practice in Washington, denied the Stockwell-Snepp allegations.

"There was not a cover-up," the former director said. "We knew what had happened. It was very obvious. We knew that not all of the allies got out, but 130,00 of them did."

Mr. Colby acknowledged that some former allies "were left there," but he explained that the Government had set up three different priority categories for the evacuation: Vietnamese C.I.A. employees and, finally, Vietnamese employees of the South Vietnamese Government.

All of the Americans were evacuated, as were most of the C.I.A.'s Vietnamese employees, Mr. Colby said. He suggested that those Vietnamese left behind were in the third category.

"As I remember," Mr. Colby said, "we did conduct a post-mortem on our performance." A copy of that report is still in C.I.A. files, he said.

Mr. Colby also denied providing any classified documents to journalists after the Saigon evacuation, as Mr. Snepp alleged, but he did acknowledge: "As you well know, I've talked to a lot of journalists." He constantly sought to avoid discussing classified materials in such conversations, Mr. Colby said.

On another issue, agency officials conceded privately that the chances had dwindled for a major Justice Department intervention in an attempt to prevent distribution of the 580-page Snepp book, which was shipped to booksellers last week by Random House, its publisher.

One issue still being discussed, an official said, was the possibility of seeking some sort of monetary damages from Mr. Snepp and his publishers as a bar to publication of similar works by other ex-C.I.A. employees.

More than 800 members of the agency's clandestine services section, which has conducted covert operations against foreign governments, are in the process of being forced to resign or retire.