

# Green Berets I

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FT. BRAGG, N.C.—A few months ago, as spring left its marks on the North Carolina hills, a little ceremony was held at the Special Warfare School here.

Its name was changed to the John F. Kennedy Center for Military Assistance, a rather bland but pompous title for the bag of tricks popularly associated with the "professional killers" of the American Army who wear Green Berets.

"The new name," explains the center's commander, Brig. Gen. Edward M. Flanagan Jr., "emphasizes the positive things we do. We are 'assisters'—a constructive force."

The center's training director, Maj. A. Lincoln German, goes a bit further.

"In a way," he says, "we're a kind of Peace Corps."

That is not the Green Beret image that has emerged from the books and stories and songs and films in which a John Wayne is running around in the jungle in a tiger

## Insight

suit, eating snakes, killing little brown men and giving lectures on the Communist peril.

Nor is it the image that has come out of South Vietnam in recent weeks as a result of the arrest of eight Green Berets who are under suspicion of assassinating a Vietnamese double agent and dumping his body in the ocean.

"They have made us look like a bunch of goddammed Mafia characters who sit around fingering people to kill," said a colonel with long experience in the Special Forces (Green Berets) in Vietnam. "And that is a damned lie. We don't have any Al Capones in this outfit."

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What they do have in "this outfit" are about 10,000 young and old men who are prepared mentally, if not in fact, to deal in very fundamental ways with real and potential "wars of liberation" throughout the world.

#### Trained Bolivians

They trained the Bolivian troops who ran Che Guevara to ground in 1967. They have been instructing troops in Ethiopia this year to deal with dissident tribesmen. They have worked with the Kurds in Iran and are even now training the Iranian gendarmerie in "counter-insurgency" tactics. They have carried out similar missions in Liberia, the Congo, and numerous Latin American countries. They have "contingency plans" for intervention in "counter-insurgency situations" throughout Asia, Africa, Central and South America.

They lend men, from time to time, to the Central Intelligence Agency for special assignments. They trained the Thai troops who are now operating in South Vietnam. They are working with Nationalist Chinese troops on Taiwan and have a training detachment in South Korea.

Above all, they are deeply

involved in the war in Vietnam. They have organized Montagnard tribesmen, Chinese and Cambodian mercenaries and Vietnamese nations into a civilian army—Civilian Irregular Defense Group—that numbers 40,000 men at the present time. Since the early 1960s, it is estimated that Special Forces troops have trained about 200,000 Southeast Asians to fight the Vietcong and North Vietnamese in various ways—as conventional soldiers, spies, saboteurs, and propagandists.

It is this mission in South Vietnam that has produced most of the literature and most of the fiction about the Green Berets. They are depicted as ruthless, World War II type commandos who divide their time between killing and love-making to the native girls.

Some of the generals in the Pentagon think of them that way and are unhappy with the whole idea of Special Forces. A general with four stars who was a prominent adviser to Presidents Kennedy and Johnson is appalled at the cost of the Special Forces and wonders vaguely whether the Army has need of them.

Whatever the answer to

that question, there is no doubt that the White House and the State Department regard the Special Forces as a crucial instrument in American foreign policy.

President Johnson's foreign policy adviser in the White House, Walt W. Rostow, put it this way in 1964: "An outsider cannot by himself win a guerrilla war; he can help create conditions in which it can be won; and he can directly assist those prepared to fight for their independence. We are determined to help destroy this international disease; that is, guerrilla war designed, initiated, supplied and led from outside an independent nation."

Here at Ft. Bragg, the Special Forces commanders are of a like mind on that issue. They are skeptical of the notion that the United States will ever again be involved in a large land war. "No more Vietnams" is one of their operating principles.

#### U.S. Intervention

They do anticipate, however, almost endless "insurgencies" in the "underdeveloped" countries of the world—from Africa to Latin America. And they are counting on American intervention in many of these situations.

"We are in an insurgency

John F. Kennedy Institute for Military Assistance intensive courses in counter-insurgency tactics. It is training all the American military advisers for ARVN units in Vietnam. It will begin this fall a new course for "military assistance" officers who are assigned around the world.

It envisions "MTTs" (Mobile Training Teams) of Green Berets operating in the bush-country of Africa, the jungles of Latin America and Asia preaching and demonstrating the doctrines of anti-guerrilla warfare, bringing "stability" to troubled lands, teaching the causes and remedies for political unrest.

#### 'Defeat the Insurgents'

"If you do an ideal job," Gen. Flanagan believes, "an insurgency can't grow. To eliminate insurgency, you must defeat the insurgents, of course. But you must also eradicate the root causes of political grievances . . . If we can get our MTTs into these situations early enough, we can do a tremendous amount of good."

This kind of interventionist thinking, combined with the peculiar nature of the Special Forces, is disturbing to people like Sen. J. W. Fulbright who, as a result of the Vietnam experience, have become obsessed with the notion of "over-commitment" and who reject any U.S. role as "policeman of the world."

Such concerns, although rarely voiced, may have been even more pertinent in the 1950s than today. At that time, the Special Forces element in the Army was a small (about 1,000 men) descendant of the office of strategic services in World War II. It was organized on the assumption that World War III would be fought in Europe between the United States and the Soviet Union and that "unconventional warfare" types—modeled after the OSS and the French Maquis—would be needed to organize uprisings and carry out sabotage oper-

ations behind enemy lines in places like Czechoslovakia.

During those years, the Special Forces attracted recruits from Eastern Europe and old-line NCOs with single-minded views about "fighting communism."

#### 'John Birch Types'

"We had an awful lot of John Birch types then," says an officer with several years experience in the Special Forces. "They thought like Joe McCarthy. They were anti-Negro."

It was not until John F. Kennedy's presidency that the "counter-insurgency" mission of the Special Forces became well-defined. Deeply concerned with Communist successes in guerrilla "wars of liberation," President Kennedy directed the Army to build up the Special Forces to deal with wars of that kind.

"Pure military skill is not enough," Mr. Kennedy wrote in 1962. "A full spectrum of military, para-military, and civil action must be blended to produce success. The enemy uses economic and political warfare, propaganda and naked military aggression in an endless combination to oppose a free choice of government, and suppress the rights of the individual by terror, by subversion and by force of arms. To win in this struggle, our officers and men must understand and combine the political, economic and civil actions with skilled military efforts in the execution of this mission."

#### Unit Expands

A rapid expansion of the Green Berets followed and with it came younger recruits—including many blacks—who brought to the operation new attitudes and new philosophies.

Today, a State Department officer assigned to the Kennedy Institute at Bragg—James Hataway—calls them "the most intellectual military men in America . . . you even find, once in a while, around here, New Left types . . . The stuff they teach is damned good."

Nevertheless, the Special Forces still evoke dark and

menacing images in the minds of many people. Individually, they are every general's ideal soldier—tough, nerveless, superbly trained. In the course of a demonstration of Special Forces techniques last week, a flabby delegation of officers from various Latin American countries cringed at the hand-to-hand combat exhibition put on for their benefit. It was too rough and too realistic for their tastes.

Another fear, sometimes expressed in the civilian community, is that the Special Forces are not susceptible to the ordinary controls and restraints on military men.

Suppose, one civilian in the government theorized last week, a Special Forces "A" Team (2 officers, 10 enlisted men) dropped into the hills of, say, Chile and organized a 1,500-man guerrilla force. "Can you imagine," he asked, "all the hell they could raise?"

#### Link With CIA

In part, fears of this kind are traced back to World War II, when the special forces operated with the CIA in the old OSS. And the suspicion remains in some quarters that a "special relationship" continues to exist between the CIA and the Green Berets.

In the current assassination case in Vietnam, there have been widespread reports of mutual involvement of CIA and Special Forces personnel.

That any "special relationship" does exist, is uniformly denied by Special Forces commanders, including Gen. Flanagan. But it is a fact that there have been and still are relationships of some kind between the two groups.

The CIA did the original recruiting and training of which the Special Forces now control. The CIA maintains a "liaison officer" at the Special Forces headquarters here at Ft. Bragg. Special Forces officers reported regularly to CIA officials for "debriefings" during the American intervention in the Dominican Republic in 1965.

era," says Gen. Flanagan, "we think that the Special Forces can do more to counteract these things than anybody else around."

Accordingly, Special Forces has gotten into the education and training business on a major scale. Besides the development of its own troops, it is offering through the center's new