

CIA CONNECTED TO BERET CASE

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Order to 'Eliminate' Viet
Agent Reported

By RICHARD PYLE

SAIGON (AP) — A Vietnamese double agent whose death has been linked with the Green Beret murder case was ordered "eliminated with extreme prejudice" by the CIA but the order was later rescinded, sources close to the case said Friday.

The sources said the unidentified man was marked for death by the U.S. Central Intelligence Agency after secret films taken in Cambodia exposed his dual espionage activities.

It was not clear whether the execution occurred before or after the revocation of the order, but knowledgeable sources have said it was carried out as an "assigned military mission."

OFFICERS HELD

Seven U.S. Special Forces officers, including the former Green Beret commander in Vietnam and one sergeant are being held on charges of premeditated murder and conspiracy in the agent's death.

An investigation is under way

by military authorities to decide whether the eight should face court martial on the charges.

The Army has refused to divulge any details of the case beyond saying the alleged murder occurred June 20 near Nha Trang, the coastal headquarters of the Special Forces, 200 miles northeast of Saigon.

Other sources have said the man was shot, and his body dumped into the South China Sea in a weighted sack. A search for the body was abandoned several days ago.

'MORE POLITICAL'

George W. Gregory of Cheraw, S.C., civilian attorney for one of the accused Green Berets, said Thursday the case is "more political than criminal."

Gregory is awaiting an Army decision on a petition for the release from pretrial custody of his client, Maj. Thomas C. Middleton Jr., 30, of Jefferson, S.C. Middleton and the others are being held at the Army's main headquarters post stockade at Long Binh.

The pretrial investigation, which the Army says has been temporarily delayed, is expected to resume Monday. A representative of the CIA is slated to testify behind closed doors.

The informants said the film taken in Cambodia showed the agent talking with known North Vietnamese operatives.