

## 3 Accused Berets and The CIA

United Press

Nha Trang,  
South Vietnam

At least three of the eight Green Berets under investigation for murder were involved in intelligence work partially financed by the Central Intelligence Agency, U.S. military sources said yesterday.

The sources identified the three as Major Thomas C. Middleton Jr., 29, of Jefferson, S. C.; Major David E. Crew, 33, of Cedar Rapids, Iowa, and Captain Leland J. Brumley, 26, of Duncan, Okla.

The four other officers and a sergeant are in custody at the U.S. Army headquarters

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stockade at long Binh, 15 miles north of Saigon, while an investigation is under way to determine whether they will face a court-martial for murder and conspiracy to commit murder.

One of the officers in custody is Colonel Robert B. Rheault, 43, of Vineyard Haven, Mass., former commander of the fifth special forces group based here.

Although details of the case and identity of the victim are closely guarded secrets, the investigation and those involved are the dominant topics of conversation.

Reliable military sources disclosed that most of the eight in custody held what they described as "critical" posts in the Green Berets before they were relieved of their duties and transferred to the stockade. Middleton, crew and Brumley in particular handled intelligence duties, they said.

Middleton was in charge of the Green Berets' nationwide

spy network in South Vietnam, they said, while Brumley worked in counter-intelligence and Crew served with a unit whose duties were described as "classified" (secret). The CIA, which was already handling counter-insurgency and intelligence operations in South Vietnam when the Green Berets first came here in 1961, continues to provide at least partial financing of their operations, the sources said.

Official sources said there has been no military investigation of the alleged murder at this Green Beret headquarters base, 188 miles north of Saigon. But the personnel files of all eight men have been removed, they said.

Offshore, two U.S. Navy vessels and divers had searched Nha-Trang Bay since July 14 for a canvas bag thought to contain the body of the supposed victim but gave up the effort yesterday.

The alleged slaying occurred June 20, three weeks after Rheault took over command of the Fifth Special Forces Group. He was relieved of his command July 21.

Rheault, a 1946 West Point graduate, is married and has three children. He has been awarded two legions of merit and the bronze star along with numerous other military decorations, and he was highly respected by the Green Berets he commanded.

"I think it is a hatchet job," said one of them yesterday. "He is taking a rap for somebody else."

Similar reaction, substantial information and rumors are floating throughout this camp. There are two theories concerning the slaying:

- The victim was a double agent, working with the Viet Cong as well as the Green Berets, and he was assassinated for betrayal.

- The Green Berets assassinated the wrong man, killing someone politically sensitive in the belief that he was a Viet Cong or double agent.

Green Beret operations are known to have included such assassinations in the past. And normally if the wrong man is killed on the first attempt, a second attempt is made to kill the right man.

The surprise expressed by many here is that a slaying should result in the commander and seven others being relieved of their duties and detained for a murder investigation. The secrecy surrounding the case adds to the mystery.

Green Beret sources said yesterday no one seemed to know anything was amiss until a staff meeting was called on July 21 and participants told that Rheault had been relieved of his command.

"It was an absolute shock," one source said. "It electrified the meeting."

At the time, there was speculation whether the colonel was in trouble or had been shifted to another assignment on a secret, emergency basis.