

4 BERETS LINKED TO A SECRET UNIT

Men in Vietnam Case Said to Have Served in Group With Ties to C.I.A.

By **JAMES P. STERBA**
Special to The New York Times

SAIGON, South Vietnam, Aug 14—Reliable sources said today that at least four of the eight Special Forces soldiers facing possible murder charges in the fatal shooting of a Vietnamese national worked in highly secret intelligence and guerrilla operations with special ties to the Central Intelligence Agency.

Informants here and in Nhatrang, the headquarters of the fifth Special Forces Group, said that several of those detained by the Army in the case were members of the "B-57 detachment" of an organization known as the Special Operations Group, or S. O. G.

The organization, the informants said, conducts clandestine operations, ranging from intelligence gathering to kidnapping, on special assignments from the United States military command in Vietnam and the Central Intelligence Agency.

Maj. Thomas C. Middleton Jr., one of those being held, was formerly head of all intelligence operations for the Fifth Special Forces Group, according to organization charts in Nhatrang.

Capt. Leland J. Brumley, another officer of the Special Forces, or Green Berets, who has been detained in the case,

Continued on Page 10, Column 1

Continued From Page 1, Col. 7

was listed on the same charts as head of the counterintelligence section under Major Middleton.

Maj. David E. Crew was reported by the informants to have been the former commander of the B-57 detachment. Sgt. Alvin L. Smith Jr. worked in the detachment under Major Crew. Others in detention are also believed to have been attached to this unit.

Besides the B-57 detachment, S.O.G. consists of at least two other detachments, labeled B-52 and B-55.

Assist Various Agencies

Although the specific details of the operations of these detachments were not available, the informants said they performed missions on assignment for high-ranking members of the United States intelligence establishment in South Vietnam. The missions included intelligence-gathering, sabotage, kidnapping and, not too infrequently, the "elimination" of certain persons in South Vietnam and the bordering countries of Laos, Cambodia and North Vietnam.

The Special Forces, along with Air Force commandos and navy, sea, air and land teams known as SEAL's perform a variety of tasks for United States military - intelligence headquarters in South Vietnam,

the Central Intelligence Agency and the National Security Agency.

The organization known as S.O.G. is said to work only on delicate assignments ordered directly by high officials. In general it works at a higher level than the intelligence-gathering units of Army divisions. The Commander of the Special Forces, now Col. Alexander Lemberes, is said to be the only colonel in South Vietnam with his own 12-button telephone. He reports directly to the staff of Gen. Creighton W. Abrams, bypassing several generals in the normal chain of command.

The Special Forces make use of aircraft supplied by the 14th Special Operations Wing of the Air Force, based in Nhatrang.

Work of the 'Black Cats'

Tucked in back of the airfield proper, there is a section used exclusively by the Special Forces. There one can see huge transport planes with black and green camouflage paint and slip-in and slip-out insignia. Usually transport planes are painted brown and green and have fixed insignia.

The clandestine Special Forces units also make use of black, unmarked helicopters piloted by Vietnamese or volunteer Air Force pilots called "black cats."

Special Forces troops employed in the secret missions are usually career men and they are said to be volunteers. They

employ a variety of weapons, ranging from tranquilizer guns and drugs to more conventional materiel.

Unlike normal Army intelligence units, the sources said, the Special Forces maintain close liaison with the military-intelligence headquarters within the Military Assistance Command of Vietnam and with the Central Intelligence Agency. Most regular Army intelligence units report to divisional commanders.

The distinct role of the Special Forces is explained in part by history. Before the big build-up of conventional ground forces in South Vietnam, the Special Forces worked almost exclusively for the C.I.A., according to one long-time member of the group. Outside South Vietnam, he said, this still remains the case.

Activities Are World-Wide

For example, the First Special Forces, based on Okinawa, maintains the 46th Special Forces Company just outside Bangkok, Thailand, for intelligence and other mission in that area.

The Eighth Special Forces is in Panama, serving intelligence and guerrilla warfare needs in Latin America.

There are four other Special Forces units in the United States. Three are stationed at Fort Bragg, S. C., and one is at Fort Devens, Mass. They are reported to be available for assignment all over the world.