

2 CIA Agents to Testify In Probe of Green Berets

SAIGON — (UPI) — Two agents of the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) will testify tomorrow when an army panel resumes an investigation of eight Special Forces members suspected of murder, sources close to the case said today.

Two civilian attorneys, representing four of the Special Forces officers involved, said they expected the Army to drop all allegations and dismiss the case after tomorrow hearing.

The CIA has so far declined to allow its agents to sign any formal statements on the case, sources said,

and also has withheld its files on the case from investigators. Sources said the CIA files include the records of the victim, a South Vietnamese said to have been a double agent employed by the CIA and working for the North Vietnamese army.

The army investigation, recessed last Aug. 2 to give the eight suspects time to arrange their defense, was ordered by the Army Adjutant General for Vietnam, Col. Ed V. Hendren, to determine whether they should be court-martialed for murder and conspiracy to commit murder.

Sources close to the Special Forces, or Green Berets, said the CIA directed the Green Berets to execute the South Vietnamese when his role as a double agent was discovered, then rescinded the order after the execution had been carried out.

One of the civilian defense attorneys, Henry E. Rothblatt of New York City, said the army has failed to prove the victim ever existed, much less that he was killed.

In Washington, Army Undersecretary Thaddeus R. Beal reported in a letter to

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Rep. Peter W. Rodino (D-N.J.), that army headquarters in the Pentagon had received no confirmation of the alleged victim's death from army headquarters in Vietnam. Beal's report was in a letter dated Aug. 16

Initial Phase

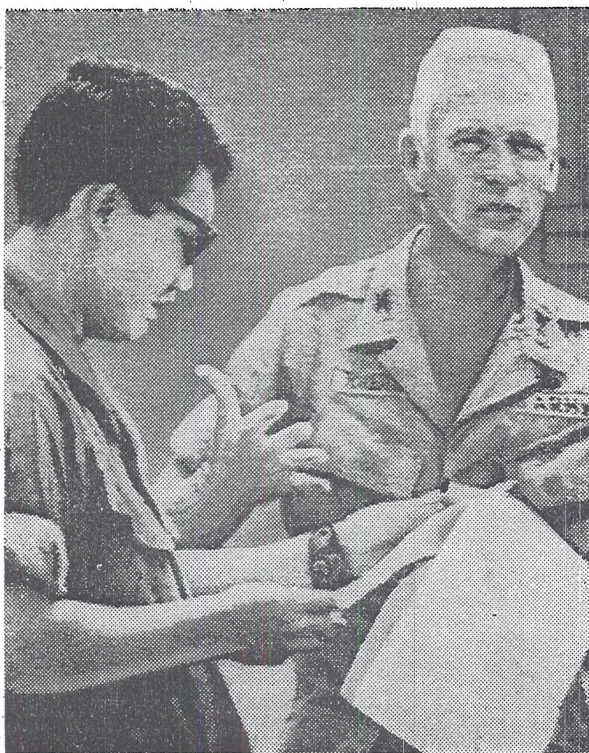
The commander of the Fifth Special Forces group in Vietnam, Col. Robert B. Rheault, 43, and seven other Green Berets were arrested

late last month and imprisoned at the army stockade at nearby Long Binh while the initial phase of the investigation was underway.

The eight stood dress inspection today for news photographers but were not allowed to discuss the murder case. Dressed in starched jungle fatigues and wearing their jaunty caps, the eight catted among themselves and with military defense counsels outside their billets while newsmen

and photographers stood in a street 100 feet away. The eight appeared in good health and spirits.

Rheault puffed a thin cigar and wore a brass Montagnard bracelet on his right wrist. Montagnard tribesmen of the central highlands area form the basis of the irregular mercenary forces recruited and trained by the Green Berets to fight Viet Cong and North Vietnamese troops.



COL. ROBERT B. RHEAULT (RIGHT)
Accused Green Beret officer talks with his attorney
—AP Photo