

## Making a Mess Messier

If Secretary of the Army Stanley R. Resor really believes that the Green Beret murder-and-espionage case in Vietnam "is being properly handled by all concerned," he must be very nearly alone in his conviction. It is dismaying that he did not take advantage of the trip to Vietnam to clear up a host of questions about this tragic and messy affair.

The question of whether Col. Robert R. Rheault and the seven other Special Forces men will be court-martialed for the killing of a South Vietnamese agent is *sub judice*, but some puzzling aspects of the case could be clarified without prejudice to that decision.

Indeed, one of the most disturbing aspects of the whole episode is that—even though Secretary Resor deems it inappropriate to release any more "substantive" information at this time—nearly every other involved party is releasing or leaking what purports to be "substantive" information that tramples on the rights of the not-yet accused and bewilders the public.

Central Intelligence Agency sources, for example, have now leaked their version of events, denying that the C.I.A. ever advised the Green Berets to "terminate" the suspected double agent. Earlier leaks, obviously from Army or Special Forces sources, indicated that the C.I.A. first recommended killing the agent; then, after the event, ordered for the record that he be spared, presumably to absolve the C.I.A.

No one has yet explained why the Army, while presumably merely investigating the affair, felt it necessary to put seven of the men in solitary confinement in a maximum security prison—then wait two weeks to make it public in a release that left unclear if they were being charged with murder or not.

The fact is, *pace* Mr. Resor, that the case has been abominably handled "by all concerned," and clarification is long overdue. Has this affair been used to prosecute old feuds among the intelligence agencies? Were the Green Berets operating on too loose a rein? Has the Army tried to use the occasion to curb the Special Forces and discredit the C.I.A., or is it the other way around? Answers can be obtained without interfering with the administration of justice.

Spying is a dirty, murky—but necessary—business.

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Most Americans are still uncomfortable about having to be in it at all. But there are aspects that Congress and the country have a right to know about. The unpopularity of the Vietnam war is merely enhanced by the present evidence of interagency back stabbing