

Vietnam Vets Play Hooky—and Collect

By Jack Anderson
and Les Whitten

Uncle Sam has shelled out a whopping \$329.6 million to students who apparently pocketed their educational benefits, it seems, without bothering to go to school.

They are Vietnam war era veterans who have been collecting their educational benefits, it seems, without bothering to go to school.

The House Veterans Committee has quietly ordered the General Accounting Office to investigate the massive overpayments and to recommend ways to get back the misspent funds.

The veterans who have been ripping off the taxpayers, meanwhile, could be prosecuted. They have taken advantage of a lax law, which was intended to permit veterans to begin their education without waiting around for the wherewithal. Under the law, the government benefit checks must be sent out before the veterans start their classes.

Some schools, particularly community colleges, abet the culprits by permitting them to skip classes and still remain listed as students entitled to federal benefits.

In many states, it pays colleges to keep students on the rolls who don't attend classes, because the amount of state support depends upon the size of the enrollment.

In Maryland, for example, an investigation disclosed that 145 veterans at one community col-

lege never completed a single course during the 1974 spring semester. Yet 71 received full-time benefits of at least \$270 per month.

At another Maryland school, one veteran was allowed to keep signing up for classes for five semesters, although he has never completed a single course. He is still enrolled in the college and, of course, still collects his monthly government check.

Another student, according to the investigative report, was asked why he was enrolling in the same course he had taken the previous semester. "You get your money," he replied, "so why should you care how I use my entitled benefits."

What has happened in Maryland, according to other state education officials, is going on throughout the nation. The scandal may compel a return to former, tighter controls. Government enforcement officials, meanwhile, have recovered \$197.3 million of the misspent \$329.6 million.

Jackie's settlement—Jacqueline Kennedy Onassis, the toast of the jet set, may get a generous \$20.5 million settlement from her late husband's estate.

This is the amount, according to sources, which was transferred from London to New York City for the settlement.

We couldn't determine, however, whether Jackie will get the full amount. At least one source close to the negotiations doubts it. Heiress Christina

Onassis, who dislikes Jackie, "isn't about to give her anything like \$20.5 million," said the source.

The late Aristotle Onassis left no will, but left the keys to his financial empire with his daughter, Christina, according to our sources. Christina discussed a financial settlement with Jackie in London a few days ago.

Thereafter, \$20.5 million of the Onassis fortune was transferred by Chase Manhattan Bank from London to New York City, where it was put into the account of the Milbank, Tweed, Hadley and McCloy law firm, our sources say.

At this writing, less than \$900,000 has been transferred into Jacqueline's account at the First National City Bank. But Onassis executives have been conferring with bank officials, according to our sources, about a large transfer.

Jackie's attorney, Alexander Forger of the Milbank, Tweed firm, refused to discuss the details of the negotiations. We also were unable to get any formal comment from the Onassis office. Spokesmen for both Chase Manhattan and First National City banks had nothing to say.

Mr. Ford's dilemma—President Ford ordered the rescue of the merchant ship Mayaguez against the advice of his legal experts.

They cautioned him that, contrary to his public statement, the ship's capture was not piracy. Under international law, they said, Cambodia had a legal

right to seize the ship after it steamed within the 12-mile limit which Cambodia claims as its territorial waters.

The Mayaguez was only eight miles from the Cambodian islet of Pulo Wai when it was stopped.

Meanwhile, the Joint Chiefs of Staff gave President Ford their opinion that the ship could be rescued because of its isolated location off an islet some 35 miles from the Cambodian coast.

In the end, the President listened to his generals rather than his lawyers.

Puyallup Hospital—The Puyallup Indians gave up cheaply 39 acres of land in 1941 so the federal government could build an Indian hospital. Twenty years later, the government turned the hospital over not to the Indians but to Washington state for a token \$1 payment.

Now, the Puyallups want the hospital back, and the state would like to get rid of it. But the state government is insisting upon a \$1.7 million payment either from the Indians or the feds.

The federal government won't pay, and the state government won't give up the hospital without pay. "The state got at least \$10 million worth of use out of it for \$1," grumbled a Puyallup spokesman. "With a little help from the federals, we could make it count for a lot more than \$1.7 million."

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