

Beret Trial May Be Held In Secrecy

By GEORGE McARTHUR

SAIGON (AP) — Military sources hinted today that if the former Green Beret commander in Vietnam is brought to trial, at least part of the hearing may be behind closed doors because cloak-and-dagger secrets are involved.

These guarded hints from ranking officers at U.S. headquarters deepened the mystery around the murder and conspiracy charges against Col. Robert B. Rheault and seven subordinates, including three intelligence specialists.

SINCE THE Army revealed the charges Wednesday, an absolute information blackout has enveloped the sensational case—the first such charges against an officer of Rheault's rank since the Uniform Code of Military Justice went into effect after World War II.

Far-out speculation was heightened by the extreme secrecy, the involvement of the elite counter-insurgency forces who specialize in clandestine warfare, and the refusal of American and South Vietnamese authorities to identify the victim apart from saying he was a Vietnamese man.

It appeared that the investigation to determine whether Rheault and his men would be brought to trial was being made by super-secret agencies. Nor-

mal military investigation agencies professed to have no knowledge of the case.

CHARGED WITH Rheault are Maj. David E. Crew, Cedar Rapids, Iowa; Maj. Thomas C. Middleton Jr., Jefferson, S.C.; Capt. Leland J. Brumley, Duncan, Okla.; Capt. Robert F. Marasco, Bloomfield, N.J.; Capt. Budge E. Williams, Athens, Ga.; CWO2 Edward M. Boyle, New York City, and Sgt. Alvin L. Smith Jr., Naples, Fla.

All the men are being held under guard at Long Binh, the big Army headquarters outside Saigon. None has made any statement.

A U.S. Army spokesman denied a rumor that the eight men had been transferred to a Green Beret base in Thailand.

Meantime, in Washington, the Pentagon announced that George Gregory of Cheraw, S. C., an attorney representing Middleton, had been cleared to examine secret documents in the case before he left yesterday for Saigon.

Defense spokesman Jerry Friedheim did not say so directly but the security clearance provided the attorney indicates that either the military command in Saigon or the Pentagon is classifying documents involved in the case.

GREGORY HAD complained earlier that he had been unable to obtain any facts about the case and the accusations against his client.

The Saigon command has said only that the slaying took place in the Vietnam coastal town of Nha Trang on June 20.

The Pentagon has been virtually unresponsive to all questions.