

# Green Beret Case Is Said to Focus on Spy

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WASHINGTON, Aug. 8—Reliable sources disclosed here today that the investigation of eight Special Forces soldiers in South Vietnam centered on the mysterious disappearance of a Vietnamese spy on the American payroll who was believed to have been working for the enemy too.

Military investigators are looking into allegations that the Vietnamese was killed and his body dropped into the South China Sea.

The Special Forces, or Green Beret, soldiers are facing possible charges of murder and conspiracy to commit murder. They include Col. Robert B. Rheault, who commanded all of the Special Forces in Vietnam until he was relieved of command last month as the investigation got under way.

According to the sources, the investigation started last month after an American officer, in charge of "handling" the missing agent, reported rumors that the agent had been shot on June 20 in Nhatrang and disposed of at sea, his body wrapped in a weighted canvas sack.

On Wednesday, after having received a number of inquiries the United States command in Saigon disclosed that the Special Forces men—seven officers and one enlisted man of the Army's elite counter-entention. The investigation, it was disclosed, could lead in charges and trials by court-martial.

The Vietnamese spy, a civilian working for the Special Forces, was in charge of a team of non-American agents who worked on both sides of the Vietnamese-Cambodian border, watching trails and observing the activities of North

## A Vietnamese, Reported Missing, Is Believed to Have Aided Foe

Vietnamese and Vietcong soldiers.

ered very successful until last were killed. A Special Forces investigation turned up evidence pointing directly to the Vietnamese agent. The belief agent.

This information was brought to the attention of Colonel Rheault, who had taken command of the Special Forces on sources, permission was asked and given to "get rid" of the man.

Normally, in cases of this sort, the agent would be interrogated by the Americans and named authorities for furthering of charges, if the evidence warranted that action.

The allegation under investigation is that some of the Special Forces members now in custody interpreted Colonel Rheault's permission to "get rid" of the man as an instruction with broad latitude.

It is maintained here, however, that there is no direct evidence that the man was in fact killed. No body has been found, and an intensive search is said to be under way.

In a letter sent home from the region of Nhatrang, site of

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the Special Forces headquarters in Vietnam, a serviceman has reported the following version of the search, as he understood it:

"What are we doing here? We are looking for a body again, but this is not as a result of any sort of accident. We are looking for the body of an American official or military officer (I do not know which) who was murdered by some of his fellow Americans and then

disposed of in a canvas bag weighted down by the steel rims of truck tires and sunk in 170 feet of water with a very oozy and muddy bottom last June 22.

"Will we find him? Not likely. The search for the body would not be difficult if the water were shallower, but because of its great depth scuba-diving is prohibited and we must use hard-hat gear, which is very laborious and time-consuming and restricted in its mobility.

"We spent all day today investigating just one sonar contact and we could not find anything. The mud is so oozy that it sucks up whatever rests on the bottom. The sonar could detect the metal, but the diver using his eyes cannot. The C.I.D. [Criminal Investigation Division] wants the body to prosecute the accused men. Without a body there is no murder."

Informed sources here say that the letter writer was mistaken about the search's being for an American. They say the search is aimed at checking the allegation that the missing agent was disposed of in the Nhatrang area.

Those under investigation, besides Colonel Rheault, are Maj. Thomas C. Middleton Jr. of Jefferson, S. C.; Maj. David E. Crew of Cedar Rapids, Iowa; Capt. Leland J. Brumley of Duncan, Okla.; Capt. Budge E. Williams of Athens, Ga.; Capt. Robert F. Marasco of Bloomfield, N. J.; Chief Warrant Officer Edward M. Boyle of New York City, and Sgt. Alvin L. Smith Jr. of Naples, Fla.

### Lawyers Are Named

A Pentagon spokesman said that the eight men were under pretrial investigation on allegations of murder and conspiracy to commit murder.

Two civilian lawyers representing Major Middleton have been given security clearance to gain access to secret information to assist their client. They are George Gregory and David E. Trice of Cheraw, S. C.

The Pentagon said that three other Special Forces men in the case had also retained private counsel and that they, too, would be given necessary clearances and other assistance.

These lawyers are Guy Scott of Athens, Ga., retained by

Captain Williams; Robert McKinley of Newark, N. J., for Captain Marasco, and George Latimer Jr., for Sergeant Smith.

It is reliably understood that such clearances are necessary because details of the clandestine operations involved in the case are considered secret.

The Defense Department said that all eight men had also been assigned military counsel from the Judge Advocate General's staff and had been advised of their rights.

Government sources say that double agents are often uncovered by Special Forces men and by agents of the Central Intelligence Agency, but the sources say that except in self-defense American agents have no right to kill. If they do so, they are subject to trial for murder.

Under ordinary circumstances, the Pentagon said, military courts-martial are open to the public. But they may be closed on the ground that national security information is involved.

Several hundred Special Forces troops were sent to Vietnam in late 1961 to help the C.I.A. organize mountain tribes as a counter-guerrilla and trail-watching force. There are now about 2,500 such troops in Vietnam, under the command of the Fifth Special Forces Group at Nhatrang. About 46,000 mercenaries work for them.