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Victim of Berets —Double Agent?

SAIGON — (AP) — The attorney for one of eight Green Berets accused of murdering a Vietnamese man charged today that the alleged victim was a double agent who worked for both the U.S. Central Intelligence Agency and the North Vietnamese.

"You will find that this agent — if they're able to prove even this much — was wrongfully entrusted with such valuable information that hundreds and thousands of lives of American agents and American fighting men were saved in the most necessary manner," said Attorney George W. Gregory of Cherau, S.C.

Gregory said his client, Maj. Thomas C. Middleton Jr., 30, of Jefferson, S.C. was being "sacrificed" for political reasons and suggested that Congress investigate the case.

The bespectacled lawyer charged without mentioning names that "certain varied and high commanders" were so afraid of international and political repercussions "that it became necessary . . . to sacrifice the life, the career of my client."

Gregory said he had filed a petition calling for freeing Middleton, who he said was confined to the stockade at Long Binh.

The petition filed with Maj. Gen. G. L. Mabry, commander of support troops in Vietnam and the convening court martial authority who called for investigation of the case, said Middleton's rights were

being violated by imprisonment before trial.

Gregory's claims followed by a few hours a report from informed U.S. military sources that the alleged murder victim was a Communist agent and his slaying was part of an assigned "military mission."

The sources suggested that the charges in the secrecy-shrouded case were brought against the eight men, seven officers and a sergeant, because of a vendetta by regular Army officers jealous of the elite Special Forces.

The accused include Col. Robert B. Rheault of Vineyard Haven, Mass., who commanded all Green Berets in Vietnam until the charges

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were brought against him last month.

Gregory spoke to newsmen after spending most of the day at the Army's Long Binh headquarters 15 miles north of Saigon, where Middleton is being held with the seven other accused men.

"Let him (Middleton) come to trial," he said. "Let's expose all the facts . . . Then you will find that whatever happened . . . the CIA was very gravely involved."

"You can't imagine how these high officers have thrown any loyalty they might have had to these people who have been loyal to them to the winds."

Congressional Probe

The attorney refused to say what officers he was refer-

ring to. He said a congressional investigation should be carried out, "the sooner the better."

There was no immediate comment from the U.S. military command. Gregory said he believed the alleged victim was a Vietnamese man in the service of the North Vietnamese army.

He said the man was feeding information to the Communists "even though the CIA thought he was exclusively theirs."

"Thank God it was discovered," he said.

Asked why the charge was brought against his client, the lawyer said: "Ask the government — I would like to know."

Murder, Conspiracy

Gregory said the charges were brought against the eight Green Berets by Col. Ed. V. Hendren, adjutant general for the U.S. Army in Vietnam.

Hendren later told a reporter: "I have no permission to make any comment on this. I have not heard any such statement by Mr. Gregory."

U.S. military officials have divulged no details of the case beyond saying that the slaying occurred June 20 near the Special Forces headquarters at Nha Trang. The eight are accused of murder and conspiracy.

Boy Lost

The body of the alleged victim has not been found and the U.S. Navy apparently has given up a search of almost a month.

Gregory said Middleton's rights were being violated.

He contended that the only legal justification for imprisoning him would be that a man might try to flee or that he would be dangerous if at large. He said neither is the case.

Gregory told newsmen:

"If it is proven that somebody reached the victim's demise, I believe you will find — as I found — that this alleged person won't be this old lady on the bicycle, but will be a dangerous Communist double agent hired by the best-financed agency of the United States of America, the CIA."