

The Green Beret Murder Finale

WE PREVIOUSLY HAVE AVOIDED comment on the smelly Green Beret murder case because we did not wish to prejudge it. Now that the Army has dropped its charges, we record our continuing bewilderment that the matter was ordered to trial in the first place.

It seems almost self-evident that the accused men could not have been murderers in any ordinary sense of the word. They were soldiers, sent by the government to kill enemies in a tricky war where treacherous betrayal is one of the gravest dangers. The man killed was the worst kind of betrayer — a double espionage agent.

Our Green Berets are an elite corps, trained as experts in all kinds of special war operations. Not the least of such operations — in any war — is the catching and disposing of spies. It admittedly is a nasty business, but it is vital. One effective spy can be more dangerous than a battalion of enemy troops.

So why were these men accused and even physically abused for simply doing what they were sent to do? Eventually — through interviews or books — the whole truth will certainly become known. Meanwhile it is all too clear that bitter rivalries involving not only the Army and its Green Berets but the Central Intelligence Agency somehow exploded in a chain reaction of ill-considered decisions.

No parties in the case have come up smelling like roses, and it is improbable they ever will. The one sensible decision in the whole affair was to drop the charges. Their airing in a public trial, in all likelihood, would have proven nothing but an embarrassment to all concerned.

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