

Army Announces Assignments For 7 in Green Beret Incident

Special to The New York Times

WASHINGTON, Oct. 6—The Army announced today new assignments for seven soldiers involved in the Green Beret Vietnam incident. The assignments indicated that the Pentagon would be scrupulous in treating the men as innocent of all charges.

All of the men except Col. Robert B. Rheault received assignments that appeared to be normal and routine in the progression of their military careers.

This conformed with recent statements by Defense Secretary Melvin R. Laird and Army Secretary Stanley R. Resor, proclaiming that the men—who were charged with murder and conspiracy in the alleged killing of a South Vietnamese, Thai Khac Chuyen—would be considered innocent unless proved guilty in a court of law.

During a question and answer session after his speech at the National Press Club on Sept. 25, Secretary Laird told reporters that "these men are innocent until they are convicted of a crime."

Assignments in the U. S.

He chided reporters and the public because "in reading some of the stories I see, it would seem to me that some people have convicted these gentlemen already."

And Secretary Resor commented that "the determination of guilt may be made only by a court" when he dismissed the charges against the men on Sept. 29 for lack of available C.I.A. witnesses.

All seven assignments were in the United States, and four were specifically made to military intelligence units, which is the area in which the seven men were trained.

An Army spokesman said that the other men would also probably be given military intelligence duties, but that these were not mentioned in their assignments because of a

variety of openings at the posts to which they were going.

Colonel Rheault, the only one of the eight accused men assigned to the Fifth Special Forces in Vietnam to be trained as a Green Beret at the Fort Bragg special warfare school, did not receive his new assignment, according to spokesmen, because his rank requires handling by a special colonels' section.

An Army officer said that it would be "foolish" for the Army to treat Colonel Rheault either too harshly or too gently because "a lot of people will be watching."

To Reflect Experience

The Army said his assignment would be in keeping with his education, training and experience. A spokesman implied that a staff position might be the colonel's next post.

The Pentagon said that all the men would have a chance to discuss their assignments with the Army and their duties with their new commanders.

Meanwhile, in the only other known case of a Green Beret charged in a murder in South Vietnam, the commanding general of Fort Leavenworth, Maj. Gen. John H. Hay Jr., released Capt. John J. McCarthy from confinement at the disciplinary barracks there.

Captain McCarthy was convicted by a general court-martial at Longbinh, Vietnam, in late January, 1968, of murdering Inchin Hia Lam, a Cambodian national working for the Green Berets, whom the Captain suspected of working for the enemy.

General Hay "approved deferment of confinement" under the Military Justice Act of 1968, which grants commanding generals the authority to release prisoners under their jurisdiction, while their case is under appeal.

The process, similar to bail, became effective Aug. 1, 1969, and the Army believes this is the first major application.

Green Beret Terrorism

To the Editor:

One of the most frightening aspects of the Green Beret murder case is the apathetic public reaction to the accompanying focus of attention upon the role of our Special Forces. Apparently many Americans have no difficulty in accepting the fact that we must now resort to assassination and other practices of questionable morality which we have formerly delighted in attributing to the enemy—whoever he might be.

This acceptance seems to be based on the assumption that the successes achieved by Communism are a direct result of the employment of terroristic methods and the only way we can hope to compete is by adopting the same methods ourselves.

Perhaps the question we should now be asking ourselves is just how far we can afford to go in the use of terror to defeat terror before it really won't make any difference who wins.

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