

# Beret Ex-Leader Quits Army

WASHINGTON (AP) — Col. Robert B. Rheault, who commanded the Green Berets in Vietnam until becoming involved in the controversial South Vietnamese murder case, is retiring from the Army effective today, the Pentagon announced.

Officials characterized Rheault's decision to leave the Army as a "personal decision on his part."

The 43-year-old officer had been on leave in this country while considering a choice of new Army assignments. The Pentagon did not say what those choices were.

JERRY FRIEDHEIM, a defense spokes-

man, said Rheault, who lives in Brookline, Mass., told the Army three days ago of his decision and already has undergone his retirement physical examination and other administrative processing necessary to leave the service.

The retirement was approved late yesterday.

Rheault was graduated from West Point in 1946. He will draw retirement pay based on 23 years' service.

He is the second of eight of the Special Forces men originally charged with murder and conspiracy in the alleged killing

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of a South Vietnamese spy to leave the Army.

EARLIER THIS MONTH, Capt. Robert F. Marasco, who was identified in the charges as the so-called trigger man in the case, received at his request an honorable discharge for personal reasons.

The six other men involved have been given new assignments, several in the intelligence field.

The Army dropped charges against the men last month after the Central Intelligence Agency decided it could not afford to let its agents testify during court-martial proceedings.

Although Rheault was not accused in the actual killing, he was named in the murder and conspiracy charges which grew out of the alleged drugging and shooting of a South Vietnamese man who supposedly was discovered to be associated with the North

Vietnamese.

RHEAULT WAS REMOVED from the command of the Fifth Special Forces when the case broke last August. He had been in charge of the Green Berets in Vietnam for only seven weeks.

Friedheim was asked about the rapid action of Army headquarters in approving Rheault's retirement request. He replied that Rheault's case was not a typical retirement.

"I think it is obvious there has been special attention directed to the careers of these officers," Friedheim said.

He noted that Secretary of Defense Melvin R. Laird and Secretary of the Army Stanley R. Resor had promised that the eight men would be given every consideration as far as their future careers were concerned.

The Pentagon said it does not know Rheault's future plans.