

Viet Kidnap Story By Ex-CIA Agent

Washington

During the Vietnam war U.S. intelligence agents proposed ways of kidnaping North Vietnamese leaders, but "we couldn't even identify where the North Vietnamese lived, much less kidnap them," a former CIA official said yesterday.

Frank Snapp, who spent five years in the Central Intelligence Agency's Saigon office, said in an interview on CBS' "60 Minutes" that the proposal by the CIA and the Pentagon was made in response to a request by Henry Kissinger, who then was national security adviser.

Snapp said Kissinger, frustrated in late 1971 and early 1972 in Paris negotiations with Hanoi's Le Duc Tho, asked for the intelligence contingency studies to see whether there was "some way to get those negotiations off dead center."

Snapp discussed the kidnaping study, which he said was "rather amusing," in connection with the publication of his book, "Decent Interval." The book charges that the April, 1975, American evacuation of South Vietnam was a disaster caused by major intelligence failures by U.S. officials in Vietnam and Washington.

The CIA has charged that Snapp violated his secrecy oath and

a specific promise to CIA Director Stansfield Turner that Snapp would submit his manuscript to the agency for security clearance before publication.

In his book but not in the interview, Snapp said one CIA and Pentagon proposal "called for the assassination and/or kidnaping of one or more of North Vietnam's leaders, on the theory this might precipitate such turmoil in Hanoi the survivors would be obliged to bow to U.S. demands."

But he added in the book, "Our intelligence on the life and times of the North Vietnamese was something less than perfect."

Kissinger could not be reached for comment. However, "60 Minutes" interviewer Mike Wallace said Kissinger denied any knowledge of a plan to kidnap North Vietnamese leaders.

Snapp also said Kissinger's negotiations with the North Vietnamese were so secret that the CIA first learned of their progress "from our best agent inside the Communist command."

"As a matter of fact, Kissinger so misled the South Vietnamese that on the very day of the cease-fire, President (Nguyen Van) Thieu didn't even have a complete copy of the Paris accord. He didn't know what Kissinger had negotiated for him," Snapp said.

Describing the chaos of the last days of the Thieu regime before the Americans left and the North Vietnamese took over, Snapp said U.S. embassy employees in Saigon had been ordered to burn stacks of American money.

"It almost got burned up," Snapp said, "but the fellows who were to do the burning absconded with some of the funds. They took it out under the dresses of their Vietnamese girlfriends." Snapp added that they took out \$80,000 to \$90,000.

He also said South Vietnamese officials were working to get \$220 million in gold, the remainder of their government's national treasury, out of the country.

But the gold "was never evacuated," he said, and one reason was that the man who controlled it, the economics minister in the last Saigon regime, "was working for North Vietnamese intelligence."

Snapp said that Saudi Arabia's King Faisal had agreed, before he was assassinated on March 23, 1975, to provide money to help the South Vietnamese "as a personal favor to Henry Kissinger."

Despite the assassination, the U.S. ambassador to Saigon, Graham Martin, urged Kissinger on April 17, 1975, just two weeks before the collapse of South Vietnam, to revive the idea of aid with the Saudis, Snapp said.

"As a matter of fact, the same thing was done with the Iranians," Snapp said. "We were seeking aid from the Iranians to help the South Vietnamese."

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