

Book on U.S. Forces in Vietnam Stirs Army Ire

By HANSON W. BALDWIN

A new book about the Army's Special Forces, called "The Green Berets," has stirred an ado in Washington.

The book, which describes, ostensibly in fictional form, the activities of United States Special Forces in Vietnam, has been criticized by Pentagon and other Government agencies as violating security and as offering propaganda material to the Communist Vietcong. Some officials of the Central Intelligence Agency, which at various times has controlled some of the activities of the Special Forces in Laos and in Vietnam, are reported to have taken exception to the book.

The book takes its title from the green berets worn by the Special Forces. It is by Robin Moore, the pen name for Robert Lowell Moore Jr., the son of the chairman of the finance and executive committees, board of directors, of the Sheraton Corporation of America.

The book, published by Crown Publishers, describes various incidents in Vietnam in which Special Forces units allegedly took part, including penetration by these units into Cambodia, Laos and North Vietnam. It also deals with the leadership and support of Meo mountain tribesmen in operations against the Communist Pathet Lao in Laos by the Special Forces and the C.I.A., and some of the techniques, weapons and tactics used by the Special Forces.

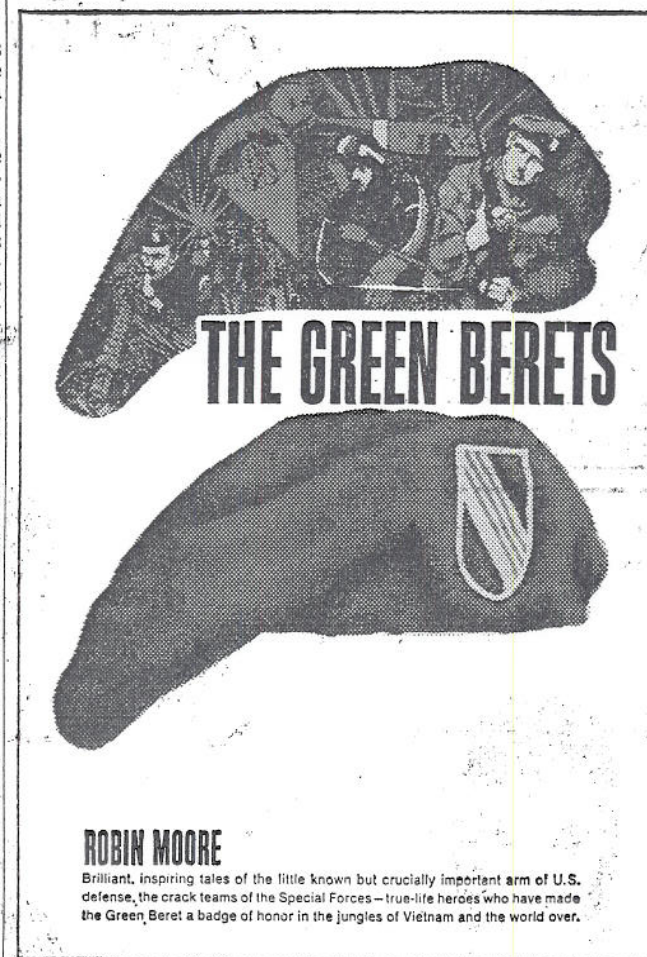
Torture Is Described

One scene describes in detail the torture of a Vietcong sympathizer by a South Vietnamese officer in a combined South Vietnamese - Special Forces camp. Throughout the book, instances of corruption, cowardice or bureaucracy in the South Vietnamese officer corps are cited, although the author also notes instances of South Vietnamese bravery and efficiency.

In his acknowledgments, the author cites the help of many Army officers in the preparation of his book, including Maj. Gen. William P. Yarborough, until recently commanding general of the Special Warfare Center at Fort Bragg, N. C.; Maj. Gen. George V. Underwood Jr., chief of public information of the United States Army, and Col. Theodore Leonard, commanding officer of the Army Special Forces, Vietnam.

The author states flatly in his first sentence that "The Green Berets is a book of truth." He says he planned "an account presenting, through a series of actual incidents, an inside informed view of the almost unknown marvelous undercover work of our Special Forces in Vietnam and countries around the world." However, he continues, he decided he "could present the truth better and more accurately in the form of fiction."

"You will find in these pages," he says, "many things that you will find hard to believe. Believe them. They happened this way. I changed de-



Original book jacket for Robin Moore's controversial novel

tails and names, but I did not change the basic truth."

Mr. Moore says the idea for the book had its genesis in August of 1962, when he met the then Vice President of the United States, Lyndon B. Johnson, in Jamaica. Mr. Moore says he told Col. William Jackson, then Mr. Johnson's military aide, that "I wanted to write my next book about Special Forces."

The author and the Army agree that he was sent to the army's jump school at Fort Benning, Ga., and, after successfully completing this course, took the unconventional (guerrilla) warfare course of the Special Forces at Fort Bragg. One of his classmates, he says, was Capt. Roger Hugh Donlon, the only man who has won a Medal of Honor in Vietnam.

Messages and letters from the Defense Department and the Army Department speeded his way to Vietnam, according to Mr. Moore, and he spent six months there — most of it visiting Special Forces units, some of them secret. He went into

too close to fact. General Underwood, who admitted "concern" about it recently, says the concern was "self-generated."

However, in New York, the author said that Arthur Sylvester, the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Public Affairs, had called Nat Wartels, president of Crown Publishers, about the book, which he had read in galley form. Later, some of Mr. Sylvester's assistants visited Crown and talked with the publishers. According to Mr. Moore, it was alleged that he had violated national security and had "taken advantage" of the Army.

The author said he had offered his manuscript for security review but had been told the Defense Department and the services did not review fiction.

According to Mr. Sylvester, he called Crown Publishers at the request of General Underwood. After Mr. Sylvester's talk with Mr. Wartels, the publisher "offered," or "agreed," according to Mr. Sylvester, to put a yellow band around the green and white dust jacket of the book. Some books that had already been distributed were recalled so that the band could be added; others were sold before the addition could be made.

The band states:

"Fiction Stranger than Fact?"

"Here, in a unique work of narration, are fictitious stories behind the factual story in Southeast Asia. Born out of a reporter's own experiences but blended by his storyteller's art, these tales of the Green Berets are a cross between Tales of the South Pacific and The Ugly American — a book bound to be widely read and hotly discussed—both pro and con."

"combat all over the country just as though I were a Special Forces trooper," the author writes.

The official objection to the book apparently is that it is