

“Flowers in the Killing Fields I” by Rick Spangle

Outline and First Draft of FLOWERS IN THE KILLING FIELDS I

By Rick Spangle

BACKGROUND

This is the **first volume** in the “Flowers in the Killing Fields” series.

The sequel to this book is “Flowers in the Killing Fields II” which details the covert exploits of many well known, and some lesser known figures in American history as far back as the Revolutionary War, along with detailing the abuses of the Soviet secret intelligence services attempting to retain their power from 1917 to 1939 in what was the emerging democracy of Russia. The book details many instances of the ineptitude of the CIA, and, in my mind, the greatest CIA success story ever told, along with the secret history of the NSA which will allow for a better understanding of the current abuses of the NSA and our ever unfolding, constantly degrading, socialistic totalitarian government.

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The third book in this series is “When Flowers Bloom in the Killing Fields” by Rick Spangle and Paul Reed. It details parts of our life stories, our tours in Vietnam, and our bouts with PTSD which led to other problems in our lives for many years. We also delve into how and why we are in partial control over our symptoms.

The main message of book 3 is healing, reconciliation and forgiveness, along with a few of the details of our life stories along the way to our PARTIAL therapeutic control of our PTSD. This includes occasional bouts with depression, anxiety, paranoia and mania. Paul’s portion of the book is an expansion of his book “Kontum Diary” which was published in 1995 along with his Emmy award winning documentary by the same name. Many of Paul’s intense, severe hard combat experiences are detailed in “When Flowers Bloom in the Killing Fields”.

“When Flowers Bloom” takes the bold step of telling part of the story from the point of view of several North Vietnamese soldiers fighting for the re-unification of North and South Vietnam into one country, Vietnam. One of these soldiers, Mr. Nguyen Van Nghia, was nearly mortally wounded by Paul in an intense battle for a famous hill near Kontum Vietnam. Mr. Nghia spent three weeks in an underground VC (enemy) hospital recovering from his wounds. He was nearly blind. He then spent almost 2 years walking back UP the Ho Chi Minh Trail to his home in Tien Hai, Vietnam, about 90 miles southeast of Hanoi.

My Vietnam experiences are detailed again in this book, along with part of my life story including my bouts with PTSD which led to a whole host of mental health issues.

Book 1, this book, “Flowers in the Killing Fields I”, is by me, Rick Spangle, and is divided into sixteen chapters, and is based upon my real life experiences in Vietnam, the real life experiences of several other people in Vietnam and some public information from the CIA and the US Air Force.

I will begin the introduction to this book with part of the introduction from the third book in this series, “When Flowers Bloom in the Killing Fields”.

EXCERPTS FROM THE INTRODUCTION TO BOOK 3

“WHEN FLOWERS BLOOM IN THE KILLING FIELDS”

A quick note about the title of the book. The title can mean many things to many different people. When I asked some of my Vietnam friends about the title, they all saw flowers growing in or on the battlefields that they fought on. I must say, that is what I thought of first, when Paul suggested the title.

As we discussed Paul’s interpretation of the title, Paul stated that he thought the title represented the healing of the heart that he and Mr. Nghia (the North Vietnamese soldier that Paul wounded and almost killed at the battle of Dragon’s Back, Hill 1062, (near Kontum, Vietnam) undertook and worked through as a result of Paul taking the time and making the effort to read the heartfelt poetry and prose in the small diary that Paul captured after both soldiers ran out of ammunition and engaged in ferocious, to the death, hand to hand combat. Paul’s road to healing and forgiveness of self, and reconciliation with Mr. Nghia, is an awe inspiring story that is told in this book. The Diary and the love poetry and prose written by North Vietnamese soldiers brought about a complete change of heart within Paul’s entire consciousness that is still present today in all of Paul’s thoughts, desires and actions.

The more we discussed, the more we saw that the title could have underlying meanings for a wide variety of people, myself and many others included. I could actually see myself as a flower blooming in my own killing field, a softening of my heart, and I could also see myself as a flower in the killing fields of Vietnam. If I can see that softening of my heart, so can hundreds of thousands of people in this country and around the world. I ALSO THOUGHT OF MANY PEOPLE THAT I KNEW, AND KNEW OF, THAT I CONSIDERED TO BE FLOWERS IN THE KILLING FIELDS. I WILL SPEAK MORE ABOUT THIS LATER.

So we continued our discussions and expanded the possibilities.

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The possibilities are far too numerous to discuss here, but many possibilities will be discussed in this book. “Blooming Flowers” can include almost anything from people, places, things, relationships and all kinds of esoteric, inner spiritual stuff also.

First and foremost, this book is about healing, personal forgiveness, forgiveness in general and reconciliation in all areas of our lives.

As part of the healing and reconciliation portion of the book, we will be telling the story of Mr. Nghia, the North Vietnamese soldier, his travels from the north to the south in the fight for the Cause of Unification, and his part in the battle for Dragon’s Back (Hill 1062), Kontum, Vietnam, where Paul captured the Angel’s Diary that, 26 years later, helped lead him to forgiveness, a closer relationship with God, and a partial recovery from his PTSD. Mr. Nghia was severely injured in the fight with Paul and lost most of his sight.

We will be elaborating on more of Paul’s combat experiences which is more bad shit that was, and is, difficult for both of us to re-hash and write about.

Paul came quite close to being killed several times, once in particular, from friendly artillery fire, and once, in particular, from hostile Rocket fire.

In the first encounter, Paul was on patrol and was staked out along and below a river bank, for cover. A friendly artillery round came in close whizzing overhead and exploded before it hit the ground. A huge piece of shrapnel from the shell landed and stuck in the river bank approximately 24 inches from Paul’s head. Paul reached over and touched the gigantic piece of hot jagged metal. To this day, Paul realizes that he was only inches from instant and sudden death. He thinks about the incident almost every day.

In the second incident, Paul was on patrol along side of his company commander and was carrying the radio for the commander. Suddenly a rocket shell, from an enemy 122 millimeter rocket launcher landed within 10 feet of him and his Captain. It was a “DUD”. If it had gone off, both men would have been killed instantly. The 122 millimeter rocket, manufactured in Russia, is and was, extremely efficient and reliable. Less than 3 % of all projectiles are DUDS. Paul wonders, to this day, why his was a dud...

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Paul was also granted an additional R&R because of “exceptionally hard combat”. When he got back “in country”, he found out that all of the remaining members of his platoon had been ambushed and everyone was either killed or seriously injured. He had to visit all of the members of his platoon in the 67th Medical Evacuation (MedEvac) Hospital. Most of them were missing limbs or “gut shot”. The experience still disturbs him to this day. That particular hospital was in Qui Nhon and was the same hospital that was right around the corner from where Rick was stationed during a lot of his tour.

These, along with a few more of Paul’s gripping combat experiences will be detailed in the appropriate chapters of the book.

This will give you, the readers; some background as to the seriousness of Paul’s trauma and the background behind the seriousness his PTSD, depression, anxiety, paranoia, mania and several other mental health issues. Paul was an over the road trucker for 18 years after he returned from Vietnam, and his PTSD mania resulted in quite a few “road rage incidents”. We will be describing several of those incidents in detail.

We will then tell the story of Mr. Nghia’s partial recovery in an underground VC hospital in South Vietnam and his return trip walking all the way back to his home in the north, just southeast of Hanoi. The entire process took almost 2 years and he was nearly blind. Several times he was almost eaten by tigers.

For the most part, in 1998, 15 years ago, Rick could not have gotten near being part of writing this book or anything like it.

At the time he met Paul, he was eaten up with PTSD, in total denial about it, and running from his emotions and dodging his real feelings about just about everything.

He was living with his mother in Garland, Texas and not doing well financially or in any of his attempted relationships with anyone.

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Then, just by chance, he met Paul. When he was first introduced to him, by a mutual good friend, David Read, in 1998, Rick was in treatment for his PTSD, at the Red Team at the Mental Health Section of the VA Medical Center in Dallas. He was still having recurring problems with PTSD, including nightmares, depression, anxiety, manic episodes, paranoia etc., since he returned from Vietnam in Early 1971. His first wife said he was a different person when he returned from Vietnam and slightly loud noises drove him instantaneously crazy. Flashbacks and serious nightmares were prevalent. Those subsided, but never went away over the years as some do. He was continually severely paranoid of his surroundings and he had to sit in a corner facing an entire crowded room or restaurant. He was pretty much hyper aware of everything going on around him at all times. In the mid 1980's he was still showering with a gun and had ruined several snub nose revolvers by having one in the shower with him.

Rick also has quite a few humorous experiences from Vietnam to share, and, as he stated before, humor helped him get through his traumatic experiences especially the trauma of interrogating prisoners and watching his South Vietnamese counterparts interrogate prisoners on a regular basis. Without some of his exotic intelligence training, he would not have been nearly as successful and probably would not be alive today.

In the middle of the book we take up Paul's experience of returning *The Angel's Diary* to its rightful owner in North Vietnam. This is a powerful and healing story of forgiveness and reconciliation with several North Vietnamese soldiers as told by Paul himself.

In the last chapter we present the Final Soliloquy. The Diary speaks to both Rick and Paul and they pass along the inspiration that “*The Angel's Diary*” gave to them.

They both still suffer from occasional depression, anxiety, light mania and some paranoia, but their condition is not being treated with any psychotropic drugs. They manage their symptoms with a healthy balanced diet and constructive natural supplements. They exercise every day. Rick does yoga and walks at least 20 minutes 3 times a day. Paul does a lot of yard work and both go dancing regularly. The music, along with the physical exercise, is great therapy for both.

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They have found that interacting with people on a friendly basis, with no frustration, is a great therapy for most of their mental health issues. Being alone in this world is dangerous for many personality types. Aloneness can be high trauma for many people. Human interaction is quite important in day to day life.

“To all of our friends, we sincerely appreciate all of your encouragement, well wishes, and support.”

GOOD READING....

Rick and Paul

INTRODUCTION TO FLOWERS IN THE KILLING FIELDS I

**THIS BOOK DEALS WITH RICK’S TOUR IN VIETNAM,
SEVERAL OTHER PEOPLE’S TOURS IN VIETNAM, AND THE CIA
IN VIETNAM.**

Since Rick was a Military Intelligence officer and trained in “Liaison”, he had CIA instruction on all of the intelligence branches and agencies of our government and other governments having to do with intelligence gathering. The CIA instructed him on all of their operations in Vietnam including the SOG, the DIOCC, the PRU, POLICE SPECIAL BRANCH (PSB) and several others. The Studies and Observations Group which was a SUPER TOP SECRET collection of high level covert operations being conducted in Laos, Cambodia and North Vietnam. Some people actually referred to it as the “Special Operations Group”. These operations are detailed in several books including a book by Maj. John L Plaster published in 1998. This book is called “SOG” and should be read and studied by all serious students of the war. We will be referring to parts of it in this book. An entire chapter of this book deals with “SOG”.

Rick had a real hard time reading that particular book since it was “wall to wall bad shit” and the horribly devastating results added greatly to his overall anxiety and depression. To make a long story short, “SOG” was conceived of, instituted, and run by CIA Station Chief, William Colby, before it was turned over to the Pentagon in 1965. In my mind the primary lesson involves the fallacy of attempting to run a European WWII style operation in a country completely controlled by a totalitarian socialist communist regime headed by Ho Chi Minh who was trained by the Russian and Soviet secret intelligence services in the tradition of Josef Stalin who murdered 30 million of his countrymen in order to retain power. Colby, and others under his direction and command, including Theodore (Ted) Shackley, attempted to do this, and failed on a grand scale, costing the needless loss of hundreds of American lives and the needless loss of thousands of lives of Nungs, Hmongs, Montagnards and Vietnamese.

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There are now several published books that present many facts indicating that the upper levels of the CIA management were either complicit in ORGANIZED INEPTITUDE in these operations or were just a bunch of bungling, lazy, liberal bureaucrats’ hell bent on losing the war.

According to the author of “SOG”, John Plaster, most, if not all, of the early covert operations in Laos were apparently “compromised from the start” or “discovered early in the operations” since most of the early participants, some of our best covert operatives from Korea and some from WWII, were killed or never heard from again. Enough said here. More comments from John Plaster in the book.

MOST OF THE STORIES ARE OBVIOUSLY ABOUT PEOPLE WHO WERE “FLOWERS IN THE KILLING FIELDS”.

We will also be presenting an entire chapter on the story of SGT. Harry Reese, another “Flower in the Killing Fields”. At the time, he was a young, E-5, ASA (Army Security Agency) radio signal intercept analyst who, with the assistance of his ASA TEAM, and several other ASA teams, correctly predicted the TET offensive in early 1968 but were unable to get anyone to listen. His track record as an analyst was impeccable. The entire story will be told in this book.

We will also be relating the story of one of the CIA’s top communist penetration agents in Saigon, who also attempted to tell anyone who would listen that the NLF (VC) were going to make a major offensive attack at the beginning of TET (the Vietnamese New Years’ celebration) 1968.

IT APPEARS THAT NO ONE WANTED TO HEAR THE TRUTH THAT THE ENEMY WAS PREPARING THE ATTACK THAT WOULD BREAK THE BACK OF THE AMERICANS AND TURN THE TIDE OF THE AMERICAN PEOPLE AGAINST THE WAR IN VIETNAM. THE TET INVASION SEEMED TO BRING THE AMERICAN PEOPLE TOGETHER AGAINST THE WAR.

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WE HAD TONS OF INFORMATION FROM MANY SOURCES, INCLUDING THE NSA, THAT THE INVASION WAS GOING TO HAPPEN, BUT THE “TOP BRASS”, MILITARY, CIVILIAN, AND POLITICAL, INCLUDING THE CIA AND THE NSA, ABSOLUTELY REFUSED TO PREPARE FOR THE INVASION AND THE ENSUING BATTLES THAT CHANGED THE COURSE OF THE WAR.

SOME OF US ARE STILL PISSED OFF AT THE UTTER STUPIDITY OF ALL OF THOSE SENIOR COMMANDERS AND POLITICIANS THAT REFUSED TO BE PREPARED FOR THE INVASION THAT CHANGED THE OUTCOME OF THE WAR.

THE NSA AND CIA SUPERVISORS, AT THE TIME, **ALL** DISMISSED THE REPORTS OF A PENDING TET INVASION AS FANTASY AND REFUSED TO ALLOW OUR TROOPS TO PREPARE FOR AN ENVASION. WE HAD MASSIVE AMOUNTS OF CONFIRMED INFORMATION THAT THE INVASION WAS GOING TO HAPPEN AT THE BEGINNING OF THE TET (THE VIETNAMESE NEW YEAR) CELEBRATION ON FEBRUARY 1, 1968.

Three chapters of this book will cover the Vietnam tours and personal experiences of CIA Agent and Senior Analyst, Frank Snapp III, the author of “Decent Interval” and “Irreparable Harm”. The CIA attempted to ruin his life for telling the truth about the CIA, and people within the State Department, even though he made a concerted effort to reveal no classified information or information involving national security. He only revealed the ineptitude of people in our government in not carrying out promises they made to high ranking officials in Vietnam.

Another chapter will cover the tour of Ralph McGeehee, an Officer in the CIA, who pulled two tours in Vietnam and pulled off the greatest counter intelligence coup of the war. He busted 33 communist spies in President Tieu’s inner circle and cabinet, all at one time. Other chapters will come from the books “Spies and Commandoes, How We Lost the Secret War in North Vietnam”, “SOG”, “Legacy of Ashes”, and “The Secret History of the CIA”.

Another chapter in this book will cover the tour of Paul Reed with the 173rd Airborne Brigade and will summarize his Book “Kontum Diary” and our book “When Flowers Bloom in the Killing Fields”. With this book we will be making available, at a reduced price, Paul’s 1996 Emmy award winning PBS documentary “Kontum Diary”.

Another Chapter will cover the Vietnam tour of Tom Pauken, a former candidate for Governor of Texas and a member of MY OUTFIT, the 525th Military Intelligence Group, commanded by Colonel Ransom Barber. Tom skims over and summarizes his tour in Vietnam in the first chapter of his 1995 book “30 Years War”. For this book, I will be doing a detailed interview and will be requesting him to write a Forward or a Prologue to this Book.

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The last chapter is about Eddie Joe Davis who, as a senior at Texas A&M, was the 1967 Commander of the Corps of Cadets. He went into the U.S. Army as a Second Lieutenant in the Infantry Branch and served in Vietnam, as a Captain, with the 173rd Airborne Brigade at LZ (Landing Zone) English. Upon his discharge, he went back to Texas A&M and he took his first position as an administrative assistant. He went on to become the President of the Texas A&M University Foundation in 1993 and served as Interim President of Texas A&M University in 2006 and part of 2007 when Robert Gates became the Secretary of Defense for President George W. Bush. In 2007 he returned to his position as President of the Texas A&M Foundation.

Rick spent several short parts of his tour at the same location in Vietnam as Eddie Joe, (LZ English), as a substitute case officer, running covert intelligence gathering operations in support of combat missions being conducted by the 173rd Airborne Brigade.

Each chapter of this book has its own introduction. Some of the major headings within the chapters also have their own separate introductions.

Part of this book deals with Rick’s real life personal experiences in Vietnam.

FIRST PERSON NARATIVE

I was a military intelligence officer fully schooled and trained in covert, clandestine and anti-terrorist operations by the US Army and the CIA. My Vietnam tour was quite interesting and eventful.

I was responsible for recovering a Top Secret Atomic Energy Commission (AEC) document 17 hours after it went missing and about 2 ½ hours after I was assigned the mission. I neutralized the most wanted VC enemy in central Vietnam in a joint operation with the CIA and the Vietnamese version of the FBI, the MSS (Military Security Service).

I conducted high level counterintelligence operations. In one, I accidentally found (in an unclassified burn trash area) the Top Secret cover sheet to President Nixon’s invasion plans for Cambodia. Everyone was denying that the invasion was going to happen. I also opened a top secret document control safe by systematically “guessing” the combination.

I was placed in charge of intelligence operations for Phu Cat Airbase security and performed in an exemplary manner.

I provided the intelligence for many successful B-52 air strikes, one of which netted some 20,000 enemy bodies.

I was the Battalion and Detachment scrounger during my entire tour. This included scrounging 5 unauthorized jeeps and a ¾ ton Truck. I scrounged up the use of General Hunter’s 74 ft. yacht (with a crew of 6), almost once a month, early in my tour, for “in country” R&R parties, including my promotion party to First Lieutenant. I scrounged up several cases of steaks for barbecue parties. I also scrounged up a motor pool to service and repair our vehicles.

I scrounged up many rides on airplanes and choppers to complete missions and for other purposes that suited my fancy.

I also had quite a few humorous events happen in the midst of all of the mud, the blood, and the beer.

In classified format, never to reach my 201 file, I was awarded 3 Army Commendation Medals, 2 Bronze Stars, 1 Vietnamese Military Security Service medal, one Korean medal, 2 CIA Citations and 2 Presidential Citations.

**MY TOUR IN VIETNAM,
OTHER PEOPLE’S TOURS IN VIETNAM
and
THE CIA IN VIETNAM**

INTRODUCTION

I am dedicating this section of the book to Frank Snepp, III, and including part of my email letter to him in this introduction.

Frank is a former CIA Agent and Analyst who served in Vietnam as Chief Analyst. In 1977, after the Fall of Saigon in 1976, Frank wrote a book called “Decent Interval” dealing with the ineptness of the CIA in Vietnam overall, and, in particular, at the time of the collapse of the US puppet government in Saigon. The book is written from his individual perspective and is a firsthand account. I read the book in 1995/1996.

I admired the man then and I still admire him today. He was forced to HIDE OUT and dodge the CIA for almost 30 years before he was recognized as a great CIA guy. Also, he won some kind of award for courage and fortitude in the face of severe adversity created by the CIA against what he stated in his books.

His tenacity over the years has given me the confidence and the courage to publish certain portions of this book that involve my research and analysis of the CIA in general, and specifically, the CIA IN VIETNAM.

That reminds me of my first exposure to the CIA while I was in school being trained as a Military Intelligence officer at Ft. Hollibird, Maryland. The CIA instructor began the first class by stating “No matter what you hear, read or are told, the CIA is not involved in any way in the war in Vietnam. Anyone who tells you anything different is lying. That is the official stance of the Agency and that will never change. That being said, it is my job to explain to you what the CIA is actually doing in Vietnam and how we are structured, organized and covered with plausible deniability. I will also be explaining all of our cover organizations and units both bilateral (joint operations with the South Vietnamese and unilateral (U.S. only). This will include how they are functioning with the military and augmenting the military presence in Vietnam.”

For many years, researching the CIA was part of my therapy for my PTSD, knowing that I would eventually publish a condensed version of the works of several authors who, over the years, have taken on the giants of the Intelligence world merely by telling the truth. It seems that any time someone wanted to tell the truth about the ineptitude at

many levels of the CIA, the author would be GAGGED IN THE NAME OF NATIONAL SECURITY. So it was with Frank Snepp. He took great pains not to reveal any classified sources, methods or other critical data, only the broken promises, the ineptitude, immorality and misdeeds of some of the CIA’s covert operations in Vietnam.

I was trained for a career in that world and, for some strange reason; I threw away my chance, but stayed close to the intelligence community by doing therapeutic research during all of those years.

Nearing the completion of my book with Paul Reed (book 3 of this series), I decided to contact Frank since I wanted him to review our work and furnish us with his comments and suggestions before we published my observations and conclusions.

I had been following Frank’s work for many years and recently I found that Frank had a web site under his own name, **franksnepp.com** with tons of information about him and his books.

I am re-publishing small parts of his web site and a few small parts of both of his books since it is in the public domain and the general public has the “right to know”.

His books are written in massive detail and should be read by all serious students of the war. They should be taught at the “War Colleges” and other schools educating our senior military officers, Foreign Service officers, and all students of foreign affairs and foreign operations, including our diplomats.

I took several hours to write him an email summary of the book by Paul and myself and after I sent him the email to webmaster@franksnepp.com, I waited a few minutes to see if the email came back. It did not, so I felt confident that it was delivered.

To my surprise, I was incorrect. Almost 8 ½ hours later, after the CIA had plenty of time to profile me, I got a simple delivery failure notice, and I stress SIMPLE. Unlike every other email address failure notice that I have ever received, it came back from a forward address, franksnepp@hotmail.com. I don’t want to appear paranoid, but this appears to be a strange coincidence. Se la vie.

As I said earlier, I am including the email I sent to Frank Snepp, III. Here as part of the introduction to this section of this book.

Dear Frank Snepp III:

I first read through "Decent Interval" in the mid to late 1990s while still suffering from many forms of PTSD from Vietnam and I had much respect for you way back then. I had trouble reading it because I instinctively knew the truth of what you wrote and that you were being persecuted for stating what you did, when you did. Your "Insider" revelations were monumental for the time, 1 year after the collapse of Saigon, then the capital of South Vietnam.

I actually tried contacting you back then and managed to contact your dad. I haven't yet noticed that you retain the "III" after your name. I would guess that you were protecting him while keeping your whereabouts undisclosed.

Your dad stated a couple of times that you were still "kind of in hiding" and he didn't know "exactly" where you were.

I went into "formal" treatment for MY PTSD at the VA Hospital in Dallas, TX in 1998. I was on serious psychotropic drugs for the next 7 years.

I was then granted service connected 100% disability in 2005 after much "stone walling" as to my actual stressors.

I was then on 4 or 5 more serious psychotropic drugs for the next 7 years after that. I have since cleared the drugs out of my system and I am Co-Authoring a book with a Vietnam Vet friend of mine named Paul Reed about our experiences in Vietnam, our experiences with PTSD and our healings and reconciliations that have partially occurred now, over 40 years later.

To make a long story short, at this time, "Decent Interval" is already mentioned as a source document in the introduction to our book along with "Legacy of Ashes", by Tim Weiner, "The Secret History of the CIA", by Joseph Trento, "SOG", by Major John L. Plaster, "Spies and Commandos, How We Lost the Secret War in North Vietnam", by Kenneth Conboy & Dale Andrade, and "Deadly Deceits" by Ralph McGeehee.

The working title to our book is "When Flowers Bloom in the Killing Fields" and it is partially based upon Paul's 1995 book "Kontum Diary", forwarded by William Westmoreland, and my exploits as a Military Intelligence Officer under Col. Ransom Barber, the Commanding Officer of the 525th Military Intelligence Group, in Vietnam, for quite a few years.

At the present time, it appears that our book will be "Forwarded" by an old and close friend of Paul's, Tom Pauken, who has a national presence in the Republican Party and was Chairman of the Republican Party in Texas. He just retired as Chairman of the Texas Work Force Commission and is currently running for Governor of Texas. Tom is a Vietnam Vet and was also a member of the 525th Military Intelligence Group in 1969 and did some duty with the J-2 (Joint Intelligence Staff) in Saigon. His tour in Vietnam is summarized in the first chapter of his book, "Thirty Years War".

During 1970, I was stationed in Qui Nhon and I ran at least 4 official and unofficial unilateral and bilateral covert operations in and around Phu Cat Air Base, An Nhon, Tuy Phuoc and Qui Nhon. I was most well known for finding the Atomic Energy Commission Top Secret document that went missing from the power ships in Qui Nhon Harbor in October of 1970 and for running several operations in An Nhon District, the home of Phu Cat Air base, and the famous NLF (VC) hit man and terrorist Quan (g) Vinh, who, as you probably remember, had quite a few aliases and had killed quite a few (36 to 54) Americans.

Myself and one of your guys, the An Nhon DIOCC, (District Intelligence Operations Coordination Center) chief named "Capt. Abraham", were the guys that organized the aggressive protection details that, in mid to late 1970, eventually cleaned up An Nhon District, the Phu Cat Air Base area, and finally nailed Vinh on December 3rd, 1970.

That is enough operational stuff for now.

END OF THE LETTER TO FRANK SNEPP III.

I was closely attached to most of the CIA operations in my area of Vietnam, Binh Dinh Province, An Nhon District, and Qui Nhon City. The rest will be explained later.

From the day I arrived at my unit, Detachment A, 2d Battalion, 525th Military Intelligence Group, I felt “hamstrung” by all of the rules that appeared to be set up to keep good intelligence from getting to our troops attempting to “root out” VC Cadre. These rules were put into place by the CIA going all the way back to CIA Station Chief William Colby. During my tour, Colby was the Ambassador to CORDS but, as you know, kept his fingerprint on all areas of the covert war in Vietnam. Ted Shackley helped him do that.

I will delve into Air America, the PRU, the DIOCC, the Korean Marines, and the Military Security Service (MSS), the South Vietnamese version of the FBI.

GOOD READING

Rick

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CIA Air Operations in Laos, 1955 to 1974, from the CIA'S
official web site.

COMPLETE

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featuring the experiences of SSG Harry Reese.

ABOUT 70% COMPLETE

CHAPTER 3

The Official History of Phu Cat Air Base.

COMPLETE

CHAPTER 4

Rick's early background and military experience.

40% COMPLETE

CHAPTER 5

RICK'S VIETNAM EXPERIENCES,

January to July 1970

MOSTLY COMPLETE

CHAPTER 6

RICK'S VIETNAM EXPERIENCES

AUGUST 1970 TO DECEMBER 31, 1970

MOSTLY COMPLETE

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CHAPTER 7

DECENT INTERVAL

An Insider’s Account of Saigon’s Indecent End.
As told by the CIA’s Chief Strategy Analyst in Vietnam.

by Frank Snepp

Published by Random House in 1977

This was the first real expose of the devastating ineptitude of the CIA in Vietnam and the CIA fought tooth and nail to cover up the truth of THEIR lies, their backstabbing of Frank Snepp and their overall ineptitude in their conduct of the US withdrawal from Vietnam.

COMPLETE

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CHAPTER 8

IRREPRABLE HARM

**A FIRSTHAND ACCOUNT OF HOW ONE AGENT TOOK ON THE CIA
IN AN EPIC BATTLE OVER FREE SPEECH**

By Frank Snepp III

PART 1

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IRREPRABLE HARM

By Frank Snepp III

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CHAPTER 10

DEADLY DECEITS

My 25 Years in the CIA

By Ralph W. McGeehee

This chapter details the covert operation that was probably the greatest CIA counterintelligence operation of the war.

The operation ended up discovering, rounding up, catching, interrogating, and imprisoning at least 33 communist spies inside the cabinet and the inner circle of South Vietnamese President Nguyen Van Thieu.

For this great work, Mr. McGeehee was outcast from the Agency, refused promotions time after time, and then he was exiled in disgrace before he retired.

YEA CIA.

HE IS A TRUE FLOWER IN THE KILLING FIELDS.

NOT COMPLETE

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CHAPTER 11

THE SECRET HISTORY OF THE CIA

BY JOSEPH TRENTO

AND

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BY TIM WEINER

NOT COMPLETE

CHAPTER 12

SPIES AND COMMANDOS

HOW AMERICA LOST THE SECRET WAR IN NORTH VIETNAM

BY: KENNETH CONBOY AND DALE ANDRADE.

NOT COMPLETE

In one instance the authors relate the story of an attempted penetration and "stay behind" operation. The agents were well trained for weeks and weeks. They were covertly flown in by Air America and the agents were parachuted behind enemy lines with clean weapons. The only problem was that the CIA left the US ARMY SIGNAL CORPS plates on the radios.

WAY TO GO CIA.

THIS WHOLE STORY PLUS SEVERAL MORE WILL BE TOLD IN THIS CHAPTER.

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CHAPTER Unlucky 13

THE HEARTBREAK OF THE SOG

FROM "SOG"

By Major John Plaster

**THE UNFORGETTABLE BRUTAL STORY OF THE CIA COVER
PARA MILITARY OPERATION CALLED
THE STUDIES AND OBSERVATIONS GROUP.**

NOT COMPLETE

WALL TO WALL BAD SHIT

I shudder and break out into hives every time I get near this book.

This chapter is being written by my two research assistants, Kelley Atkison and Amy Haney.

Edited by Rick Spangle

"Flowers in the Killing Fields I" by Rick Spangle

CHAPTER 14

PAUL REED

**173rd Airborne Brigade,
Vietnam, December, 1967 to December 1968**

**FROM HIS BOOK "KONTUM DIARY" and OUR BOOK,
"WHEN FLOWERS BLOOM IN THE KILLING FIELDS".**

NOT COMPLETE

CHAPTER 15

TOM PAUKEN

**525th Military Intelligence Group,
Vietnam, 1969**

**FROM HIS BOOK "30 YEARS WAR"
AND SEVERAL PERSONAL INTERVIEWS**

NOT COMPLETE

Tom was formerly running to be the Republican gubernatorial candidate in Texas.

CHAPTER 16

EDDIE JOE DAVIS

**FIGHTIN' TEXAS AGGIE,
CAPTAIN, UNITED STATES ARMY,**

**173rd Airborne Brigade,
Vietnam, April 1969 to April 1970**

Eddie Joe Davis is the President of the Texas A&M University Foundation, and was the former Interim President of Texas A&M University in 2006 and part of 2007.

FROM INTERVIEWS WITH RICK SPANGLE

NOT COMPLETE

CHAPTER 1

CIA Air Operations in Laos, 1955-1974

Supporting the "Secret War"

William M. Leary

FROM THE CIA'S OFFICIAL WEB SITE

THIS IS A GOOD HISTORY OF **AIR AMERICA**. YOU MUST JUST REMEMBER THAT IT IS TAKEN DIRECTLY FROM THE CIA'S WEB SITE AND APPROVED BY THEIR LEGAL DEPARTMENT.

MY UNAUTHORIZED COMMENTS ARE IN ALL CAPS

RICK

The largest paramilitary operations ever undertaken by the CIA took place in the small Southeast Asian Kingdom of Laos. For more than 13 years, the Agency directed native forces that fought major North Vietnamese units to a standstill.

“Flowers in the Killing Fields I” by Rick Spangle

THIS IS BS SINCE HUNDREDS OF THOUSANDS OF NVA AND NLF FORCES USED THE HO CHI MINH TRAIL IN LAOS TO WREAK DEATH AND DESTRUCTION TO U.S. AND SOUTH VIETNAMESE FORCES IN SOUTH VIETNAM FOR ALL OF THOSE 16 YEARS.

AT THE TIME, THE U.S. CONTINUALLY DENIED THAT WE HAD ANY OPERATIONS IN LAOS. THIS SECTION ONLY TOUCHES THE TIP OF THE ICEBEG OF OUR LAOS OPERATIONS.

ANYONE THAT IS INTERESTED CAN THOROUGHLY RESEARCH SOME OF OUR LAOTIAN OPERATIONS BY READING THE BOOK “**SOG**” BY MAJOR JOHN L. PLASTER.

“**SOG**” REVEALS MANY OF THE TRUE OPERATIONAL FACTS AND DETAILS THE **HORRORS** OF OUR LAOTIAN COVERT PARA-MILITARY OPERATIONS IN LAOS.

IN THE FIRST 3 CHAPTERS ALONE I WAS HORRIFIED AT THE UNCONTROLLED LOSSES OF THE EXTREMELY HAMSTRUNG WARFARE THAT WAS BEING CONDUCTED UNDER RULES WRITTEN BY THE SAIGON CIA STATION CHIEF WILLIAM COLBY AND THE LAOTIAN AMBASSADOR WILLIAM SULLIVAN BEGINNING IN 1959.

COLBY AND SULLIVAN INSTITUTED SUCH A SMALL LAOTIAN AREA OF OPERATIONS (2 SMALL AREAS ROUGHLY 30 SQUARE MILES EACH) THAT OUR US ADVISORS AND INDIGINOUS SOLDIERS WERE CONFINED TO THAT WE HAD VIRTUALLY NO CHANCE OF ANY MILITARY SUCCESS.

IN THE BEGINNING, OUR OPERATIONAL TROOPS WERE NOT ALLOWED TO BE AIR DROPPED IN; THEY HAD TO “WALK IN” FROM THE VIETNAM SIDE OF THE LAOTIAN BORDER INTO ONE OR BOTH OF THE 2 SMALL AREAS DESIGNATED BY COLBY AND SULLIVAN.

THE ENEMY APPEARED TO KNOW, **IN ADVANCE**, EVERY TIME AN OPERATION WAS UNDER WAY. IN THE EARLY DAYS OF “COLBY’S SECRET WAR” (THE FIRST CHAPTER OF “**SOG**”), THE COMBINED FORCES OF US ADVISORS AND NUNG AND MONTGNARD FIGHTERS SUFFERED NEARLY 100% CASUALTIES.

“Flowers in the Killing Fields I” by Rick Spangle

LATER ON, IN LAOS, CAMBODIA AND SOME IN NORTH VIETNAM, THE CASUALTIES WERE NOT AS EXCESSIVE, BUT THEY WERE STILL **HORRENDOUS**.

THESE FACTS ARE WELL DOCUMENTED IN “**SOG**”.

Although the country eventually fell to the Communists, the CIA remained proud of its accomplishments in Laos. As Director of Central Intelligence (DCI) Richard Helms later observed: "This was a major operation for the Agency. . . . It took manpower; it took specially qualified manpower; it was dangerous; it was difficult." The CIA, he contended, did "a superb job."

WHAT ELSE WOULD YOU EXPECT TO READ ON THE CIA'S OFFICIAL WEB SITE

Air America, an airline secretly owned by the CIA, was a vital component in the Agency's operations in Laos. By the summer of 1970, the airline had some two dozen twin-engine transports, another two dozen short-takeoff-and-landing (STOL) aircraft, and some 30 helicopters dedicated to operations in Laos. There were more than 300 pilots, copilots, flight mechanics, and air-freight specialists flying out of Laos and Thailand.

THIS DOES NOT INCLUDE THE PILOTS, PLANES AND HELICOPTERS FLYING OUT OF VARIOUS LOCATIONS IN SOUTH VIETNAM WHICH WOULD PROBABLY DOUBLE THAT NUMBER.

I WAS STATIONED IN QUI NHON IN 1970 AND WAS ROUTINELY AT QUI NHON ARMY AIRFIELD 2 OR 3 TIMES A WEEK AND IT WAS UNUSUAL *NOT* TO SEE AIR AMERICA PLANES AT THE AIRFIELD.

THE CIA ROUTINELY RAN WHAT WERE CALLED "DISTRIBUTION" FLIGHTS THAT WERE USED TO CARRY COVERT OPERATIVES AND CLASSIFIED DOCUMENTS AND REPORTS ALL OVER THAILAND, LAOS, CAMBODIA AND VIETNAM.

During 1970, Air America airdropped or landed 46 million pounds of foodstuffs--mainly rice--in Laos.

I HATE TO SAY THIS BUT MUCH OR MOST OF THIS RICE (AND PIGS AND CHICKENS) FED THE ENEMY COMING DOWN FROM THE NORTH. EVEN THOUGH LAOS COULD NOT GROW ENOUGH RICE TO FEED ITSELF, THEY DID GROW MOST OF IT. THE NORTH VIETNAMESE COMING DOWN TO FIGHT THE WAR HAD TO GET RICE FROM SOMEWHERE. IN 1970, 46 MILLION POUNDS OF RICE FED LOTS OF ENEMY TROOPS.

AT THE TIME, MOST RURAL VILLAGES AND HAMLETS WERE CONTROLLED BY THE COMMUNIST INSURGENTS AND POLITICAL OFFICERS. NEEDLESS TO SAY MUCH OF THE FOODSTUFFS MADE ITS WAY TO THE NORTH VIETNAMESE TROOPS COMING DOWN THE TRAIL TO KILL AMERICANS

ESSENTIALLY, HERE THE CIA STATES THE FACTS BUT FAILS TO ADMIT TO FEEDING THE NVA AND NLF COMING DOWN THE HO CHI MINH TRAIL. IT WOULD BE HARD TO AVOID FEEDING THE ENEMY, ESPECIALLY WITH THE STRONG COMMUNIST PRESENCE IN LAOS ALONG WITH SOME OF THE OVERALL INEPTITUDE THAT EXISTED AT THE TIME.

WAY TO GO CIA!!!!!!

“Flowers in the Killing Fields I” by Rick Spangle

Helicopter flight time reached more than 4,000 hours a month in the same year. Air America crews transported tens of thousands of troops and refugees, flew emergency MedEvac (medical evacuation) missions and rescued downed airmen throughout Laos, inserted and extracted road-watch (HO CHI MINH TRAIL SPOTTER) teams, flew nighttime airdrop missions over the Ho Chi Minh Trail, monitored sensors along infiltration routes, conducted a highly successful photoreconnaissance program, and engaged in numerous clandestine missions using night-vision glasses and state-of-the-art electronic equipment. Without Air America’s presence, the CIA’s effort in Laos could not have been sustained.

THIS IS TRUE

A Distorted View

Air America’s public image has fared poorly. The 1990 movie *Air America* is largely responsible for this. It featured a cynical CIA officer who arranged for the airline to fly opium to the administrative capital of Vientiane for a corrupt Asian general--loosely modeled on Vang Pao, a military leader of the mountain-region-based Hmong ethnic group.

THIS IS PRETTY EASY TO LOOK UP AND DOCUMENT.

VANG PAO WAS A KNOWN “DRUG LORD” AND WELL KNOWN OPIUM TRAFFICKER. THIS HAS BEEN DOCUMENTED IN SEVERAL PUBLICATIONS

IT IS CLAIMED BY REPUTABLE SOURCES THAT OPIUM WAS FLOWN FROM POINTS IN THE GOLDEN TRIANGLE AREA OF LAOS TO SOUTHERN SOUTH VIETNAM WHERE IT WAS PROCESSED INTO HEROIN AND DISTRIBUTED TO OTHER PARTS OF ASIA AND THE USA.

THE FOLLOWING ARTICLE IS ONE OF MANY THAT CAN BE GOOGLED UP ON VANG PAO, DRUG LORD.

Obits for "Fabled Hero" of Vietnam War, Vang Pao, Omit CIA Drug Connection

By Conn Hallinan, January 11, 2011

Vang Pao, who died Jan. 6 in Clovis, a small town in California's Central Valley, was described in the Times as "charismatic" and in AP as a "fabled military hero" who led a Hmong army against the communist Pathet Lao during the Laotian civil war. Van Pao's so-called "secret army" was financed by the U.S. Central Intelligence Agency as part of the U.S.'s war against North Vietnam and the National Liberation Front in South Vietnam.

Well, "financed" is a slippery word, and while, it was true Vang Pao got a lots of money and arms from the CIA, a major source of his financing was the opium trade run out of Southeast Asia's "Golden Triangle." That little piece of history never managed to make it into the obits, which is hardly a surprise. The people the CIA hired to run dope for Vang Pao went on to run dope for the Contras in the Reagan Administration's war against the Sandinista government in Nicaragua. And talking about close ties between drugs and the CIA in Southeast Asia and Central America might lead to some very uncomfortable questions about the people we are currently supporting in Afghanistan.

Readers should search out a book by Alfred McCoy called "The Politics of Heroin in South East Asia," and pull up a Frontline piece entitled "[Drugs, Guns and the CIA](#)" by Andrew and Leslie Cockburn.

What they will find is not in the Times and the AP obits.

Throughout the Cold War, we never much cared what people were for, we only cared what they were against. Dictators, drug lords, genocidal religious fanatics (Rios Montt of Guatemala), all were welcomed with open arms--despite the heavy cost to American troops and neighborhoods back home, as Hallinan goes on to note:

The trade in opium and heroin in Laos was linked in turn to the U.S.-supported regime in South Vietnam led by President Nguyen Van Thieu. Much of that heroin ended up in the bodies of American GIs. During the height of the war there were between two and three fatal overdoses a day in Vietnam, as well as decimating neighborhoods back in the U.S.

THIS WAS CONFIRMED BY BEN OLSON'S PRINCIPAL AGENT, CODE NAMED HARRY, MANY TIMES DURING MY TOUR. SEE CHAPTER 6

RICK

“Flowers in the Killing Fields I” by Rick Spangle

The film (AIR AMERICA) depicts the CIA man as having the opium processed into heroin in a factory just down the street from the favorite bar of Air America's pilots.

THE POPPIES WERE PROCESSED INTO OPIUM THERE, FROM THERE IT WENT TO THE SOUTHERN PART OF SOUTH VIETNAM TO BE PROCESSED INTO HEROIN. AS STATED EARLIER, THIS IS HOW VIETNAM PRESIDENT THIEU GOT HIS CUT OF THE ACTION.

The Asian general, in return, supplied men to fight the war, plus a financial kickback to the CIA. Ultimately, we learn that the Communist versus anti-Communist war in Laos was merely a facade for the real war, which was fought for control of the area's opium fields.

THAT'S JUST THE WAY IT WAS.

Air America pilots in this film are portrayed as skilled at landing damaged airplanes, but basically as a wildly unprofessional menagerie of party animals, including a few borderline psychotics. These ill-disciplined airmen are not the villains of the story; they are merely pawns in a drug game that they either disdain or oppose outright.

MY GUESS IS THAT 90% WERE CAUTIOUS, CONCIENTIOUS AND TALENTED PILOTS AND CREW. MOST OF THE PILOTS HAD TO KNOW WHAT WAS GOING ON, AND ABOUT 10 PERCENT WERE PSYCHOTIC DARE DEVILS OR FUGITIVES FROM ONE THING OR ANOTHER.

I MET QUITE A FEW CRAZIES OVER THERE AND I PROBABLY QUALIFY AS ONE OF THEM MYSELF.

ACTUALLY, I HAVE PAPERS TO PROVE IT.

A Bum Rap

The connection among Air America, the CIA, and the drug trade in Laos lingers in the public mind. The film, according to the credits, was based on Christopher Robbins's book about the airline, first published in 1979 under the title *Air America*. Although Robbins later claimed that the movie distorted his book, it closely followed the book's theme if not its details. Both movie and book contend that the CIA condoned a drug trade conducted by a Laotian client; both agree that Air America provided the essential transportation for the trade; and both portray the pilots sympathetically.

Robbins provides factual details that the movie lacks. Citing Alfred W. McCoy's 1972 study, *The Politics of Heroin in Southeast Asia*, he relates how Air America helicopters collected the opium harvests of 1970 and 1971, then flew the crop to Vang Pao's base at Long Tien in the mountains of northern Laos, where it was turned into heroin at the general's drug laboratory.

My nearly two decades of research indicate that Air America was not involved in the drug trade. As Joseph Westermeyer, who spent the years 1965 to 1975 in Laos as a physician, public health worker, and researcher, wrote in *Poppies, Pipes, and People*: "American-owned airlines never knowingly transported opium in or out of Laos, nor did their American pilots ever profit from its transport. (HOW WOULD HE KNOW, IT WAS A TOP SECRET OPERATION FOR GOD'S SAKE). Yet every plane in Laos undoubtedly carried opium at some time, unknown to the pilot and his superiors--just as had virtually every pedicab, every Mekong River sampan, and every missionary jeep between China and the Gulf of Siam."

NOTICE THE WORD **KNOWINGLY** ABOVE. LIKE I SAID BEFORE, "MOST HAD TO KNOW WHAT WAS REALLY GOING ON". I DO KNOW THAT THE PILOTS WERE JUSTLY REWARDED FOR THEIR PILOTING TALENTS AND FOR THE RISKS THAT THEY TOOK. IN OTHER WORDS, THEY WERE PAID WAY ABOVE THE SCALE OF OTHER AMERICAN PILOTS WHO WERE FLYING IN COMBAT.

If the CIA was not involved in the drug trade, it did know about it. As former DCI William Colby acknowledged, "the Agency did little about it during the 1960s, but later took action against the traders as drugs became a problem among American troops in Vietnam". According to Colby, "The CIA's main focus in Laos remained on fighting the war, not on policing the drug trade."

THIS IS DODGING THE TRUTH THAT THE CIA DID A TERRIBLE JOB FIGHTING THE WAR IN LAOS, AND WAS COMPLICIT IN RUNNING DRUGS IN ASIA AND THE U.S.

THE HEROIN PROBLEM AMONG U.S. TROOPS GOT REAL BAD IN THE LATE 60'S AND EARLY 70'S. OUR DETACHMENT HAD AN AGENT CODE NAMED “HARRY” WHO'S FATHER WAS A VIETNAMESE AIR FORCE PILOT SERVING DIRECTLY UNDER VICE PRESIDENT NGUYEN CAO KY (IN FACT HARRY'S FATHER WAS KY'S PILOT). HARRY PROVIDED MUCH EXCELLENT INFORMATION ABOUT THE HEROIN TRADE COMING FROM CHINA. THIS INFORMATION HELPED THE CIA “CLAMP” DOWN ON SOME OF THE HEROIN THAT WAS BEING FURNISHED TO OUR TROOPS.

How It Began

The story of the real Air America begins in 1950, when the CIA decided that it required an air transport capability to conduct covert operations in Asia in support of US policy objectives. In August 1950, the Agency secretly purchased the assets of Civil Air Transport (CAT), an airline that had been started in China after World War II by Gen. Claire L. Chennault and Whiting Willauer. CAT would continue to fly commercial routes throughout Asia, acting in every way as a privately owned commercial airline. At the same time, under the corporate guise of CAT Incorporated, it provided airplanes and crews for secret intelligence operations.

In the 1950s, the CIA's air proprietary, as it was known in the lexicon of intelligence, was used for a variety of covert missions. During the Korean war, for example, it made more than 100 hazardous over flights of mainland China, airdropping agents and supplies.

Supporting the French

CAT also became involved in the French war against Communist insurgents in Indochina. In April 1953, the French appealed to President Eisenhower for the use of US Air Force C-119 transports and crews to fly tanks and heavy equipment to their hard-pressed forces in Laos.

"Having such equipment," the French emphasized, "might mean the difference between holding and losing Laos."

While reluctant to commit American military personnel to the war in Indochina, the Eisenhower administration was anxious to assist the French. This led to a decision to use CAT pilots to fly an airlift in US Air Force-supplied C-119s. In early May, a group of CAT personnel arrived at Clark Air Force Base in the Philippines for 72 hours of concentrated ground and flight school on the unfamiliar C-119s. On 5 May, they flew six of the transports, now bearing the tricolored roundels of the French Air Force, to Gia Lam airbase, outside Hanoi.

“Flowers in the Killing Fields I” by Rick Spangle

Operation SQUAW began the next day. It continued until 16 July, with CAT pilots making numerous airdrops to French troops in Laos. With the waning of the Vietminh offensive, which was due more to the weather than to French resistance, the CAT crews were withdrawn.

The war in Indochina, however, continued to go badly for the French. In November 1953, French paratroopers occupied Dien Bien Phu in northwestern Vietnam, 10 miles from the Laos border, and established an airhead. Gen. Henri Navarre, the French military commander, wanted to lure the Viet Minh into a set piece battle in which superior French firepower could be used to good effect. Among the many mistakes made by the French in placing their troops 220 miles from Hanoi was their miscalculation of the air transport resources needed to keep their isolated forces supplied. Col. Jean-Louis Nicot, head of the French Air Transport Command in Indochina, lacked sufficient aircrews to meet the Army's demands. Unless additional assistance could be obtained, the French garrison could not be kept supplied.

In early January 1954, Washington alerted CAT for a possible return to Indochina. Under a contract signed with French authorities on 3 March, CAT would supply 24 pilots to operate 12 C-119s that would be maintained by US Air Force personnel. Operations from Hanoi's Cat Bi airfield to Dien Bien Phu got under way just as the Viet Minh began their assault on the French position. Between 13 March and the fall of Dien Bien Phu on 7 May, CAT pilots flew 682 airdrop missions to the beleaguered French troops. One plane was shot down in early May, and the two pilots were killed; many other C-119s suffered heavy flak damage, and one pilot was severely wounded.

CAT operations continued in Indochina after the fall of Dien Bien Phu. Between mid-May and mid-August, C-119s dropped supplies to isolated French outposts and delivered loads throughout the country. CAT also supplied 12 C-46s for Operation COGNAC, the evacuation of civilians from North Vietnam to South Vietnam following the signing of the Geneva Agreement on 21 July 1954. Between 22 August and 4 October, CAT flew 19,808 men, women, and children out of North Vietnam.

THIS WAS **PART OF** THE RELOCATION PROGRAM DETAILED IN OTHER BOOKS WHEREBY THE U.S. GOVERNMENT PROVIDED AIR AND BOAT TRANSPORTATION FOR APPROXIMATELY 500,000 NORTHERN VIETNAMESE TO GO FROM THEIR HOMES IN THE NORTH TO RE-SETTLE IN THE SOUTH. AS IT TURNED OUT, IT IS ESTIMATED THAT AT LEAST 50% OF THOSE THAT RE-LOCATED TURNED OUT TO BE ALREADY TRAINED AND INDOCTRINATED MEMBERS OF THE VIET MINH THAT FOLDED INTO THE NATIONAL LIBERATION FRONT THAT BECAME KNOWN AS THE V.C. (VIET CONG), NICKNAMED “CHARLIE” OR “CHARLES”, THE ENEMY.

IN OTHER WORDS, THE U.S. GOVERNMENT GAVE FREE RIDES SOUTH TO AT LEAST 250,000 NORTH VIETNAMESE ENEMY SOLDIERS AND AGENTS FOR THE VC (NLF). **YEA CIA!!!!**

ESTIMATES OF NVA TROOP MOVEMENTS DOWN THE HO CHI MINH TRAIL RANGE FROM A LOW OF 60,000 PER YEAR FROM FRANK SNEPP TO SEVERAL HUNDRED THOUSAND PER YEAR FROM OTHER SOURCES, INCLUDING FIRST HAND ACCOUNTS. I THINK THAT FRANK IS ON THE LOW SIDE.

CAT and Air America also carried members of the CIA's Saigon Military Mission north of the 17th parallel. Attempts by the CIA to establish stay behind paramilitary networks in the north, however, proved futile.

THIS WAS TRUE ALL THE WAY UP THROUGH THE 1970'S. THIS FACT WILL BE ENHANCED AND ELABORATED UPON IN THE PARAGRAPHS BELOW AND IN SEVERAL OTHER PLACES IN THIS BOOK.

I WOULD LIKE TO GIVE ONE EXAMPLE FROM “SPIES AND COMMANDOS”, HOW AMERICA LOST THE SECRET WAR IN NORTH VIETNAM BY KENNETH CONBOY AND DALE ANDRADE.

ON PAGE 13 OF THE BOOK IS A PICTURE AND STORY FROM 1965 SHOWING THE CONTINUITY OF CONTINUING INEPTITUDE OF THE CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY.

THE PICTURE SHOWS 9 CAPTURED CIA TRAINED AND INSERTED SOUTH VIETNAMESE “STAY BEHIND” AGENTS AT THEIR TRIAL.

THE COURTROOM IS CRAMMED WITH AT LEAST 500 LOYAL COMMUNIST CITIZENS OF HANOI.

I WILL QUOTE THE AUTHORS: “THE CIA HAD NOT BEEN TOO CAUTIOUS IN PROVIDING PLAUSIBLE DENIABILITY. **WHILE THE WEAPONS WERE STERILE, THE RADIOS WERE CLEARLY MARKED WITH U.S. ARMY SIGNAL CORPS PLATES.**”

"Flowers in the Killing Fields I" by Rick Spangle

THE COURT ALSO PROVIDED PICTURES OF ONE OF THE SPIES READING AN ALEGED CIA PROVIDED PORNO MAGAZINE. ONE MAN WAS SENT TO THE FIRING SQUAD, ONE GOT LIFE IN PRISON, ONE GOT 20 YEARS, AND THE REST GOT 10 YEARS.

THE BOOK STATES THAT AT LEAST 10,000 CITIZENS WERE OUTSIDE THE COURTHOUSE CHEERING FOR THE GUILTY DECISION AND THE SENTENCING OF THE CIA SPIES.

WAY TO GO CIA!!!!

I WAS ONLY IN VIETNAM DURING ALL OF 1970 BUT HAD TOP LEVEL ACCESS TO THE CIA AND AIR AMERICA OPERATIONS BEING STATIONED IN QUI NHON AT DETATCHMENT A, SECOND BATTALION, 525TH MILITARY INTELLIGENCE GROUP. ALSO, I HAVE SPENT OVER 30 YEARS RESEARCHING THE INTELLIGENCE COMMUNITY WORLD WIDE.

RICK

READERS: IF YOU DESIRE TO READ THE REMAINDER OF THE CIA'S OFFICIAL HISTORY OF "AIR AMERICA" YOU CAN FIND IT ON THEIR WEB SITE.

CHAPTER 2

PREDICTING THE TET INVASION 1968

INTRODUCTION

THIS PART OF THE CHAPTER IS CARRIED ON AS DIALOGUE BETWEEN HARRY REESE AND RICK SPANGLE.

In addition, we have several other sources, including the NSA and a high level penetration of the North Vietnamese that gave the US military, including General Westmoreland himself, high quality information about the reality of the TET invasion which would begin on February 1, 1968.

HARRY: It’s really funny, and I don’t mean ha, ha, that I am now going to try writing about something that, up until now, has only been discussed in any depth between you and me.

Oh I’ve skimmed around the edges on occasion with others. I’ve told obligatory funny stories and I’ve even expressed my anger at how so much was ignored during the two months leading up to TET 1968.

But now I’m relating things which, at that time, were definitely TSC (Top Secret Crypto) and may still be.

RICK: LET ME CLARIFY. FROM MY MILITARY INTELLIGENCE (MOS 9666, EXPLAINED ELSEWARE) COUNTERINTELLIGENCE OFFICER BACKGROUND, WE WERE PROBABLY SOME OF ONLY A FEW PEOPLE THAT HAD ANY DETAILED

KNOWLEDGE OF YOUR AGENCY (OUTSIDE OF YOUR AGENCY) AND I WILL HELP THE READERS WITH MY BACKGROUND AND EXPERIENCE IN **YOUR** "TRADE".

TO AVOID TOO MUCH WORRY ON YOUR PART, I WILL GO OUT ON THE LIMB AND EXPLAIN SOME THINGS TO OUR READERS.

TO AVOID TOO MUCH ALL CAPS, I WILL CARRY THIS ON LIKE A CLARIFICATION DIALOGUE AND PUT MY NAME IN FRONT OF WHAT I AM SAYING OR USE OCCASIONAL ALL CAPS FOR MY COMMENTS.

PLEASE REMEMBER THAT THIS IS 1970'S DATA AND IS SUBJECT TO BE INCORRECT IN TODAY'S CLIMATE, ESPECIALLY AFTER 9-11, THE PATRIOT ACT, AND ALL THE CRAP THAT THE GOVERNMENT HAS PUT INTO PLACE TO CATCH A FEW TERRORISTS.

RICK: Above, you used the term TSC. This, for the readers, is TOP SECRET CRYPTOGRAPHIC/COSMIC. This is/was the highest clearance within the military and outside of the White House. I know firsthand about the extra pain in the ass the extra "C" was since it was my job to run them and to supervise the running of them.

My Clearance was a mere TOP SECRET, WHICH WAS A REQUIREMENT TO GET INTO MILITARY INTELLIGENCE, 9666 OR 9668. 9666 was Counterintelligence Officer, or keeping the enemy from getting information from us and 9668 was HUMINT, or Human Intelligence Officer, or gaining offensive intelligence by the use of Human Sources. 9668 was called Area Studies or an Area Specialist and that was normally a Case Officer running Covert Agents of some sort. That is also the official CIA term in use today, as seen on TV and in the movies.

At Military Intelligence School at Ft. Hollibird, MD, both MOSs (Military Occupational Specialties) were trained and each was cross trained in the other’s specialty. It was approximately 1/3 - 2/3. We were 2/3 trained in Counterintelligence activities and 1/3 trained in HUMINT (Recruiting and Running covert sources). We could serve in any position requiring either MOS. In Vietnam I spent 5 months in Counter Intelligence and 7 months in HUMINT.

I won’t even go into FOUO clearance (For Official Use Only) (Green Cover Sheets), Confidential clearance (blue cover sheet) documents or Secret clearance (red cover sheets). Top Secret had Yellow cover sheets and TS Crypto had?????. I don’t even know the color since I never saw one. I saw a bunch of Top Secret Crypto data, mostly already plotted onto a map, but, as such, our data had been downgraded to Top Secret.)

The Cryptographic clearance was reserved for those highly talented and smart individuals that were allowed access to the receipt and transmission of highly sensitive encrypted and always classified data that was passed from one unit to another unit or another station within the same unit and then de-encrypted and disseminated, usually in a timely manner.

The PRIORITY of transmission from lowest priority to highest priority was as follows: Routine, Urgent, Priority and Flash. I will deal with those crypto guys that sent and received mounds and mounds of what I called mindless Confidential and Secret data at a later point. Those Crypto guys were a dime a dozen in my world.

We had 6 to 8 of them at our detachment alone working 3 shifts sending and receiving Confidential and Secret data every day. Top Secret was occasional and, by coincidence, I was the only one of our guys that ever got Top Secret “Classification Authority” and authority to converse with our Group Commander outside of the “Chain of Command” on an “eyes only” basis. My chain was from me directly to the Group Commander, Col. Barber, then directly to the Commander of the Pacific Theatre, Admiral McCain (John’s Dad) and then to the President of the United States, Richard Nixon, with TOP SECRET EYES ONLY FLASH MESSAGES when a super sensitive TOP SECRET Atomic Energy Commission document went missing in my area of operations. That is another story and it will be told in a later chapter.

You were, as you state later, a member of the ASA. That was the Army Security Agency, the “Little Brother” to the NSA, the National Security Agency. In general, the ASA was a separate Agency from the US Army and reported only to the NSA. The ASA was charged with intercepting enemy radio transmissions **of all kinds** at all levels, listening to actual voices, translating intercepted radio transmissions (into English from Vietnamese, Chinese and some from Korean and other Asian tongues).

The ASA, under the NSA, at the time, had access to the “top of the line” in electronic equipment. Back then, we (the US Army) did not have satellite capabilities at our level. **Although**, we did have good **and well placed** parabolic antennas that **provided significant data on enemy locations and movement within both South and North Vietnam and other places.**

You were an “Analyst” and a “Team Chief”. I will address your position as Analyst first. I know, after 27 years, that you are, by nature, quite a humble guy and are not prone to brag, so I will give our readers a few basic facts, from my perspective as a highly trained Counterintelligence Officer and a longtime student of the Intelligence world. I will offer a few comments.

1. There were no dumb or stupid or analysts, but there were a few incompetent ones. I would bet that you met a few of those. (You may fill us in on some of those, if you choose.) Therefore you had to be pretty smart just to be chosen to be an ASA Analyst.
2. Then you had to be cleared for Top Secret. Since I know the procedure that was in effect at the time, I will pass it along to the readers. On your application for your Top Secret Clearance you had, among many other things, to list 5 character references. Confidential and Secret clearances could be conducted over the phone with, for Secret, one interview “in person”. Top Secret clearances required personal interviews with at least 3 listed character references, as well as, 2 developed character references. The reports were quite detailed and I won’t bore the readers anymore.
3. Now for the Cryptographic part. You had to list 5 to 8 more references, depending upon how many references the field agents could find the first time and how many additional references they could “develop”. We had to personally interview 5 to 6 and develop 4 to 5 on top of that, depending upon ease of access and ability to locate. Normally 2 agents were assigned to a Cryptographic or Cosmic clearance. Cosmic was reserved for a few high ranking General Officers and highly placed NATO personnel. In our world YOU WERE A SPECIAL CASE. Enough said.
4. Now for the “Team Chief” part. In the Intelligence world, rank was only important in how much you got paid. In my detachment, our Counterintelligence Officer was a Captain and I worked several cases, including the big one that I referenced above, because he was inept. My replacement, at the end of my tour, was a Sergeant

E-5 documented as a First Lieutenant (we did that in the intelligence world, mostly for liaison purposes). Major Joe, our Detachment Commander, let CPT DouchBag coordinate the Counterintelligence cases so Major Joe didn't have to do it himself. It was not unusual for lower ranking people to be supervising and training higher ranking people. This did not happen in regular Army operations, don't get me wrong.

5. You, as a TEAM CHIEF, along with other Team Chiefs, would have been responsible for briefing extremely high ranking Field Grade Officers (Majors and Colonels) as well as extremely high ranking General grade officers including MACV (Military Assistance Command Vietnam), a 4 star command, and the J-2 which was the JOINT Intelligence Command for the entire country and all of the services sent representatives. Each service (Army, Navy, Marines and Air Force ALL had representatives on the J-2, and someone from each service was present at each BRIEFING.

HARRY: You know my general background during my service in the Army Security (ASA). I enlisted on July 6 1964. After Basic Training at Ft. Ord, CA, I was sent to school at Ft. Devens, Massachusetts for training as a Traffic Analyst. The curious part about this is that I applied for a position as an electronic technician. A partial red/green color blindness popped up in my profile. Thus, I was turned down for the electronics position. But for once, the U.S. Army got something right. Analysis was where I belonged.

HARRY: But before I could actually attend AIT (“Advanced Intelligence Training”), I spent three months on KP duty, primarily on pots & pans, waiting for my Top Secret Cryptographic clearance.

Rick: since you didn't have your Top Secret clearance yet, this was probably a good “hide out” position for you.

“Flowers in the Killing Fields I” by Rick Spangle

Harry: Possibly you wonder why pots & pans? It was the dirtiest job! Yes. But my analytic ability was already coming to the fore. After assessing the situation, it became evident that you got almost no flack and no extra details when you had this job.

Rick: Were you still running the poker game and the Craps table???

Harry: Yep, that was my part time skill. My dad was a Sergeant Major in the Army and taught me all about gambling and acting as “the house” at an early age.

Harry: After finishing my training at Ft. Devens, I pulled two overseas assignments, one in Korea and one in Panama, before reaching my ultimate destination, Phu Bai, South Vietnam. The interesting thing about all of these tours was that I was a team chief in Korea as an E-3 (Private First Class, or PFC), a Team Chief in Panama as an E-4, Corporal, and a team chief in Vietnam as an E-5, Buck Sergeant. This may not sound that unusual, but in all three instances, I had team members that outranked me. That was the ASA way.

I render all this seemingly mundane information only to justify my claim to being a very good, if not exceptional, Analyst.

RICK: IT AIN'T BRAGGING IF IT'S TRUE.

HARRY: So now it's June 6, 1967, and Harry enters Vietnam. He gets to the 8th Radio Research FS (Field Station) Phu Bai, South Vietnam. My first job was repairing trench line in 110 degree plus weather.

RICK: I ASSUME THAT TRENCH LINE WAS HARD WIRED COMMUNICATIONS LINES FOR OLD STYLE LAND LINE INTERUNIT PHONE CONVERSATIONS.

HARRY: Good guess.

HARRY: Oh how I hated trench line at the time, but I loved it when TET opened up on February 1, 1968, the first day of the celebration of the Vietnamese New Year.

RICK: I’m assuming that the hard wiring made it easier to communicate with certain units that were protecting your exposed asses.

HARRY: YEP!

HARRY: I was pretty pissed that I was working outside rather than inside working with my assigned MOS. MY CLEARANCE GOT LOST???. I’ve now been in the service for three years at this time and had my TSC for two years and somehow my TOP SECRET CRYPTO security clearance, that the government spent thousands of dollars on, has been mislaid or misfiled in my transfer from Korea to Vietnam. You gotta love the US Army and the games that can be played in this hallowed arena. It seems that a Sgt 1st Class named James Best arranged for my clearance status/records to be “mislaid” by some of his Signal Corp. buddies. He got pissed at me for some unknown reason, like, I was right on several occasions when he was wrong. Yes, my transfer orders were clear, I was headed to Vietnam and my TSC had to go separately and my TSC clearance had to be updated for my new duty assignment. But apparently, clearance status confirmation was quicker if substantiated by your previous duty assignment. The confirmation did not arrive thanks to SFC Best.

It should be noted here that the sergeant involved was an E-5 when he arrived at Phu Bai in May of 1968. The guy lost 2 stripes for hiding my clearance confirmation.

RICK: ARE YOU SAYING THAT THE GUY THAT ARRANGED TO HAVE YOUR CLEARANCE “MISLAID” GOT BUSTED FROM SFC (E-7) ALL THE WAY TO “BUCK SERGEANT” (E-5)???

HARRY: YEP.

NOTE FROM RICK: HARRY ALREADY HAD HIS TOP SECRET CRYPTO CLEARANCE. HIS CLEARANCE HAD TO BE SENT BY SPECIAL COURIER TO HIS NEW UNIT BECAUSE OF THE ADDITIONAL CRYPTO PART. THE GUY THAT MISPLACED THE CLEARANCE KNEW THAT HARRY WOULD BE GIVEN SOME MENIAL TASK BEFORE HIS CLEARANCE ARRIVED. HE SHOULD HAVE BEEN BUSTED.

But finally I received my TSC clearance. I enter operations. And what am I told???

HARRY'S NEW BOSS: "We've been holding this problem for you."

HARRY: Actually, like so many things in the service, the new guy gets the shitty end of the stick. Or so they thought. It seems that they had been unable to come up with an explanation for a load of backlogged intercepts and supplemental data that seemed related but then again????.....who knows? it just didn't seem important enough for them to keep putting anymore time into it, so they gave it to me. It then became my problem, along with three other analysts that were assigned to my team to assist me.

THREE WEEKS LATER, WE PRETTY MUCH HAD IT LOCKED DOWN!!!!

HARRY: Would you believe we got the overall command network for the entire NVA.

HARRY: Exceptional communication security and overlap between regular unit commands and irregular units created a confusing picture. This confusion lead previous analysts to conclude that this was a lower echelon net. But like our own communications, small slips, when caught, can lead to better understanding.

RICK: WOW!!! HOW? PLEASE FULLY DESCRIBE THE DAY TO DAY ACTIVITIES DURING THIS PARTICULAR THREE WEEKS!!!! DESCRIBE THE APPROXIMATE COMMAND STRUCTURE.

HARRY: Note: Rick...day to day? Command structure? It is now 45 years later. Hell, there are days when I have a hard time just remembering to have lunch.)

Suddenly our team went from 4 members to 16 in just a few weeks. It is now mid December 1967, 6 weeks before the beginning of TET.

NOTE FROM RICK: AT THIS TIME HARRY’S TEAM HAD GROWN FROM 4 TO 16 MEMBERS AND HARRY’S TEAM WAS WORKING IN CONJUNCTION WITH 3 OTHER INTERCEPT ANALYST TEAMS, AND THEY WERE ALL LISTENING TO THE NVA COMMAND STRUCTURE, AND THEY ALL CAME TO THE SAME CONCLUSION, THAT NORTH VIETNAM WAS SCHEDULING A COORDINATED ATTACK ON THE SOUTH TO BEGIN AT THE BEGINNING OF TET, THE VIETNAMESE NEW YEAR, ON FEBRUARY 1, 1968.

FOLKS, THIS WAS NOT THE RAMBLINGS OF A SOLITARY KOOKY POT SMOKING ANALYST, IT WAS THE JOINT CONCLUSION OF THE TOP ARMY SECURITY AGENCY ANALYSTS IN VIETNAM, AND STILL NO ONE IN AUTHORITY GAVE THEM ANY CREDENCE AND THEREFORE, SINCE THE GENERALS WERE UNPREPARED, THE TROOPS WERE UNPREPARED.

We now have the ENEMY command structure well outlined and we are starting to firm up the lower subnets and their general locations.

Most of these appear to be the Regimental level. Depending upon which NVA Corps we were looking at, some of these subnets were Division level and some were Regimental. Most of the units around Hanoi tasked with defense roles **appeared** to be Regiments.

NOTE FROM RICK: For Non Military personnel. The basic Infantry unit is the Squad, consisting of 7 to 12 men. Next is the Platoon with 4 to 5 Squads. Then comes the basic Rifle Company with 3 to 5 platoons. Then comes the Battalion with 3 to 5 Companies. Then Comes the Regiment or Brigade with 3 to 5 Battalions and then the Division with 3 to 5 Regiments or Brigades. Then you can have a Corps with 3 to 5 Divisions and then you can have separate Armies each containing 3 to 5 Corps. This equals lots of troops on the ground.

HARRY : One, (I can't remember which) in particular was beginning to bother me. I have it down as a regiment, possibly including the 800th and 802nd battalions, but they are not where they belong.

RICK: THIS IS WHAT ANALYSTS DO, FOLKS, ANALYZE STUFF LIKE THIS.
THE CURRENT STRENGTH IS UNKNOWN.

HARRY: WE FOUND SOME COMPANIES AND BATALLIONS WERE ACTUALLY REGIMENTS AND WERE **HIGHER IN ACTUAL NUMBERS** OF TROOPS.

RICK: WE ALSO FOUND THIS TO BE TRUE USING SPOTTERS ALONG THE HO CHI MINH TRAIL. SOME UNITS THAT WERE THOUGHT TO BE COMPANIES BY THEIR LOCATION AND RADIO TRAFFIC WERE FOUND TO HAVE BATTALION AND/OR REGIMENTAL STRENGTH. SOMETIMES IT WAS THE OTHER WAY AROUND, LOTS OF RADIO TRAFFIC AND NO TROOPS. THAT’S WHY WE NEEDED BOTH RADIO TRAFFIC **AND** HUMAN INTELLIGENCE.

HARRY: If our information was correct, these two Battalions or Regiments were nowhere near where they were supposed to be. **Their location appeared to be a bit northwest of Hue when they were both supposed to be rail and transportation units around Hanoi.** Our team, being well suspicious of “out of place” units and radios, and watching our “back side”, we reported this as “unit movements” and nothing more, waiting on additional data.

Rick: What should have happened, under normal conditions, is that the 525th or the CIA or local Special Forces around Hue should have been sent a Flash message detailing your data and asking for “IMMEDIATE CONFIRMATION”. Both the 525th and the CIA had maps and plots of your data and their own and our own data as to unit positions.

The 525th and the CIA should have made an immediate effort to determine the “UNIT STRENGTH” AND “PROBABLE OR POSSIBLE INTENTIONS” of these “out of place” units. In the trade this would have been called an OBA OR “ORDER OF BATTLE ASSESSMENT”.

This would not have been Harry’s job, but Harry’s data should have been IMMEDIATELY passed along for confirmation or comment.

Two extra enemy Divisions or Regiments around Hue should have gotten someone’s attention.

Just so the readers know, Hue was south of Da Nang where a huge contingent of Marines was stationed and North of Nha Trang, a beautiful but not well defended city. Next down the Coast was Cam Ranh Bay, then Tuy Hoa, then Qui Nhon, where I was stationed. Qui Nhon was where the second or third largest ammunitions dump, in Vietnam, was located. None of these cities were very well defended as cities would go, and Hue would have been the best target, strategically, for several reasons. One, it was south of the Marines in Da Nang, and two, it was the next closest big city to the border of North Vietnam.

With Harry’s Division or Regimental NEW AND “OUT OF PLACE INTERSEPT” data in hand, the fact that no one bothered to even request confirmation of the data, borders on making Rick’s top 5 list of “ORGANIZED INEPTITUDE” errors of the war. In retrospect, Hue probably suffered the most devastation of the War, since it wasn’t that well defended anyway and our top level generals really did not expect any kind of coordinated attack upon one of the most beautiful provincial capitals in the entire country of Vietnam. Oh well.

The only thing left to determine is whether the ineptitude was organized or not organized, but, as Harry can tell you, it was definitely INEPTITUDE ON A GRAND SCALE.

HARRY: As time passes (a couple of weeks), our entire team, as well as other teams, become more and more convinced that the North Vietnamese were building up forces in the south but nothing was set in concrete, at this time.

RICK: WAS THERE ANY HUMINT DATA TO CORROBORATE THIS???? JUST STATE THERE WAS ALSO SOME OR NONE.

HARRY: Not that I can be specific about. Remember, a lot of our Humint data came directly from Marine units and was not properly 'scrubbed'.

Rick: Harry, the official term was “sanitized”, but I like ‘scrubbed’ better. It means “not passed through channels and approved for dissemination”.

Harry: Additional data came through the unauthorized analyst voice net.

Rick: You mean that they actually let you guys talk to each over the radio AND your “trench line”??

Harry: Yep.

Rick: I also had and sent out a bunch of “unscrubbed reports”. Our rules, which were written by the CIA, in my opinion, kept great timely information from being sent to the troops for QUICK ACTION. It appears that you had a bunch of great information that could have been corroborated and possibly avoided thousands of American casualties if we had kept our pants up instead of pulling our pants down.

Harry: Probing operations were occurring regularly especially around Saigon.

Rick: Probing operations are a regular form of “TESTING THE ENEMY STRENGTH AND INTENTIONS”. Small VC, NLF and NVA units “PROBED” quite a few American areas to see what “resistance” was met. If little resistance was met, the probing units would report “success” and the VC, NLF and the NVA would be encouraged that their battle plans would be successful.

Harry: This would suggest the high probability that a larger operation was being planned.

Rick: No shit

Rick: in retrospect, these “probing operations” were probably written off as “minor skirmishes”, which occur regularly in all wars. But, if these “minor skirmishes are plotted properly, and used along with current intercept data, all of this can lead a brilliant analyst to come up with brilliant observations and conclusions.

Harry: These are facts yes, but in the area of spookdom and intelligence gathering, they call it “strong speculation”. Every time that we put up reports of the growing possibility of an impending invasion, the “higher ups” in our organization, all the way up to and including NSA, **the response was negative.**

Rick: in other words, did they just sit on the data or did they pass it along and state that it was “not reliable”??

Harry: A little bit of both.

At this time, the NVA leadership, and Ho Chi Minh, continually reiterated that they were planning a CEASE FIRE as they had for the previous 7 years.

Rick: YEA FOR HO.

Rick: Also, it has come to my attention that in 2007 the NSA declassified a document that admits that they also had quite a bit of information that the TET invasion was in place and scheduled to begin at the onset of the TET celebration on February 1, 1968. The NSA bastards claimed that they had told Westmoreland about it and Westmoreland chose not to believe them. Then they blamed Westmoreland for not being prepared. In actuality, it really appears that the NSA was getting good information and not passing it along for some strange reason. It appears that we have “agenda driven intelligence reporting”.

HARRY: Now we get to an amazing new piece of data. **About 2 weeks before the beginning of TET**, one of my intercept operators brings me a fresh tape, hot off the grill. I listen to it myself and begin scratching my young hairy head (**yes I had hair then**). My operator, listened to the tape several times and brought it to me for my opinion.

He said that he didn’t understand the language. I listened to it one more time to make sure. Damn, it was Korean!! After a full year in Korea, I could speak quite a bit of it and I was amazed to hear the familiar tones of the language. The guy had a **NORTH KOREAN** accent. Then another light went on. I re-wound the tape and listened again two more times. Holy shit. I thought I recognized the voice.

I listened again, several more times.

This was an FBC (full bird colonel), an Artillery Commander from North Korea. I had heard his voice many times before when I was stationed there. I’m damn near sure this was his voice. If it wasn’t, the world could kiss my ass. I had no Korean linguist handy so I had to deal with my memory only. I listened once again. What he said was quite innocuous (**Rick: didn’t mean much**) but it had to do with rail and freight operations and it was definitely from Hanoi and not from Korea, duh. We knew the limits and locations of our antennas.

Rick: OK folks, this is how it was done back in the old days. 1. Harry knew the exact location of each of his reception antennas. 2. Harry also knew that each reception antenna had a signal strength meter. 3. Each transmission signal could then be picked up on multiple antennas. 4. The signal strength from each antenna gave Harry an approximate indication of how far the transmitter was from each of the reception antennas. A little basic reverse logarithmic calculus inside of a differential equation based upon the inverse square law of proportional wave attenuation, and voile, a scientific wild ass calculated guess as to exactly where the transmission originated from.

Rick: This further SUPPORTS Harry’s, and the other team’s, conclusions that AN INVASION IS IN ITS FINAL OPERATIONAL IMPLAMENTATION STAGES AND NOT IN JUST THE PLANNING STAGES. MANY NORTH KOREANS WERE IN THE HANOI AREA OBVIOUSLY CONDUCTING RAIL AND FREIGHT OPERATIONS.

HARRY: So what’s a Korean Bird Colonel doing in Hanoi??? This starts to drive me crazier and crazier. Our whole team begins working until early each morning until we are all beat. Then we get several links from HUMINT sources that the Chinese, including some Koreans, are beginning to come into the Hanoi area to augment the defense of the Hanoi area... what the hell is going on???

We had a team meeting. The overriding opinion was that **this action released at least two NLF or NVA** regiments or divisions **to move south, with possibly many THOUSANDS more troops attached for an invasion. WE SHOULD ALL BE PREPARED!!!**

Our theory is becoming more and more PROBABLE, even though the North was telling our politicians and the troop commanders in Vietnam that they were **honoring a cease fire** for the TET New Year’s holiday as they had for the previous 5 or 6 years.

RICK: This was ABOUT 2 WEEKS BEFORE THE ACTUAL TET INVASION OF 1968. Why were we not preparing for an invasion, instead of sending thousands of troops on R&R. Was this merely basic ineptitude or was it “ORGANIZED INEPTITUDE”??

HARRY: I began sending out reports that **our entire team** agreed that **RADIO AND HUMINT** “indications were STRONG that the enemy is planning on mounting a coordinated attack all over the country”, SOMETIME during the TET celebration. Superiors all the way up the channel through NSA kept saying “No way Jose”.

HARRY: ACCORDING TO THE TOP BRASS: “THE CEASE FIRE IS STILL IN EFFECT AND DUE ON SCHEDULE.”

RICK: MORE AND MORE OF OUR TROOPS WERE BEING SENT ON R&R EVERY SINGLE DAY.

Harry: The probes continued. Radio chatter continued to increase. HUMINT sources reported “increased activity” of all types. More troop movements. More radio traffic. More backup was moving towards Hanoi. WE GOT THE SAME RESPONSE ALMOST EVERY DAY. “YOU GUYS ARE CRAZY.”

Harry: We were so crazy we started a few “Betting Pools”, just like the Super Bowl. We were betting on exactly which day the attack would come. We were reporting every day that an invasion will be coming within days and now hours. Nobody (except a few low level marines) would listen.

We then sent out notices, **AGAINST ASA POLICY**, to individual commanders about “being prepared” even though the CEASE FIRE was in effect.

Then all hell broke loose.

The rest is history.

You can read about it in all of the history books.

Our teams didn’t get much satisfaction, especially when the reports of STAGGERING American casualties started coming in.

RICK: US News and World report stated, 41 years after the attack that, during the TET offensive, mostly during the first week of February, 1968, 3,895 U.S. troops were killed. During Bloody 1968, the bloodiest year of the war, by far, a little over 14,000 US troops lost their lives.

HARRY: Then we started getting reports that other agencies had produced information leading to the same conclusions that we had made.

We actually heeded our own advice and hid out as best we could.

HARRY: WE ACTUALLY USED OUR TRENCH LINE (HARD WIRE) COMMUNICATIONS TO COMMUNICATE BECAUSE IT WAS MORE RELIABLE THAN RADIOS.

We still took a lot of mortar and rocket fire early in February and regular mortars, rockets and artillery during the entire month of February 1968.

RICK: Such was the TET invasion from the perspective of young ASA Analyst Team Chief, Sgt. Harry Reese and his entire 16 man team and quite a few other teams of analysts from several branches of several services.

MORE FROM HARRY LATER, AS HE IS NOW RECOGNIZED AS A TOP QUALITY ANALYST.

ON OCCASION, HARRY BRIEFS THE J-2. THIS IS USUALLY RESERVED FOR OFFICERS TO GET THE CREDIT FOR THE WORK OF THE LOWLY ENLISTED ANALYSTS.

MORE COMING IN THE BOOK FOLKS.

MORE REPORTS OF THE PENDING INVASION FROM THE NORTH CAME FROM SOME OF THE TOP PENETRATION OPERATIONS THAT THE CIA HAD IN NORTH VIETNAM, YET NO ONE TOOK NOTICE.

WE REMAINED UNPREPARED RIGHT UP UNTIL THE LAST MINUTE, WHEN WE WERE STILL UNPREPARED. THE TET INVASION WAS THE TURNING POINT FOR THE ENTIRE WAR. AT LEAST THAT’S WHAT ALL THE TEXTBOOKS TELL US.

CHAPTER 3

THE OFFICIAL HISTORY OF PHU CAT AIR BASE

RICK: I was assigned to the base security detail in June/July 1970 and I am detailing some of my encounters in the next 3 chapters.

DURING THE TIME I WAS COVERTLY ASSIGNED, I MANAGED TO OBTAIN HOUSING WITH THE "SHADOW" SQUADRON" STATIONED AT THE BASE. THE BASE WAS ENCOUNTERING AND SUSTAINING BETWEEN 1 AND 2 MILLION DOLLARS IN DAMAGE TO AIRCRAFT ALMOST EVERY NIGHT.

I WORKED WITH THE REMINANTS OF THE KOREAN MARINE COMPANY, THE MSS, THE AN NHON DIOCC, THE PRU AND 3 CIA ADVISORS TO RID THE BASE OF THE VC SAPPERS, ARTILLERY AND MORTAR FIRE THAT CAME FROM AN NHON DISTRICT, HOME OF QUANG VINH AND SURROUNDING AREAS.

FOLLOWING IS THE OFFICIAL PUBLISHED HISTORY OF THE AIR BASE DURING THE TIME I WAS "RUNNING COVERT INTELLIGENCE FOR SECURITY OPERATIONS" FOR PHU CAT AIR BASE.

1969: As of 3 January 1969, approximately 90 aircraft were assigned to Phu Cat AB. Those included the F-100s of the tactical fighter squadrons, HH-43B/R rescue helicopters, AC-47 gunships, C-7A airlifters, EC-47N/P electronic warfare planes, UC-123B/K Ranch Hands, and RF-101C and RF-4C photo reconnaissance planes. The year also marked the transition from F-100 to F-4 combat aircraft. Det 1, 612TFS (F-100D aircraft) departed on 13 April to make room for 480TFS (F-4C, later D aircraft) from Da Nang AB. On 11 May, 174TFS (F-100C aircraft) returned to Sergeant Bluff (Sioux City), IA. 355TFS (F-100D) aircraft returned to Myrtle Beach, SC, on 15 May. On 27 May, 416TFW (F-100D aircraft) departed for Tuy Hoa AB. By the end of the month, Commando Sabre (Misty-FAC F-100F aircraft) was inactivated. 389TFS (F-4D aircraft) arrived from Da Nang AB on 24 June, to complete the transition to F-4 aircraft.

The year also marked the beginning of significant withdrawals of US forces from Vietnam including US Air Force units. While Phu Cat AB lost some personnel, the primary effect was shuffling of tenant units. As AC-47 "Spooky" gunships were turned over to the Vietnamese Air Force, they were replaced by AC-119G "Shadow" and then AC-119K "Stinger" aircraft. 361st Tactical Electronics Warfare Squadron (TEWS) (EC-47N/P aircraft) moved from Nha Trang AB to Phu Cat AB. 25th Casualty Staging Flight was inactivated at Phu Cat AB.

1970: The US withdrawals continued, resulting in the inactivation of 37TFW at Phu Cat AB. The wing assets remained, however, to be redesignated 12TFW when the designation was moved from Cam Ranh Bay AB, on 1 April. While at Phu Cat AB, all 12TFW aircraft used the call sign "COBRA." In June, 459TAS

(C-7A aircraft) was inactivated at Phu Cat AB. The base RANCH HAND unit was redesignated "A" Flight, 310th Tactical Airlift Squadron as TAS and RANCH HAND units were consolidated in Vietnam.

Affecting all units and personnel was the increase in VC and NVA mortar and rocket attacks on the base. Until 1970, the base was relatively secure from stand-off and sapper attacks because of the number of ROK (MARINE) and US Army units patrolling the area, ESPECIALLY THE 173RD AIRBORNE BRIGADE, and because of the 1041SPS(T) and later 37th & 12th SPS Cobra Flight aggressive patrols outside the immediate perimeter.

As those forces were either withdrawn or downsized, security patrols were decreased. (NO SHIT)

(WHEN I WAS ASSIGNED IN JUNE/JULY 1970, THE AN NHON DISTRICT VC POPULATION WAS ESTIMATED AT 85%. IN SEPT/OCT IT WAS ESTIMATED AT 40%. AFTER VINH WAS NEUTRALIZED ON DECEMBER 3, 1970, THE VC COUNT WAS ESTIMATED TO BE ABOUT 5% OF DISTRICT POPULATION).

1971: Personnel and unit withdrawals continued.

The RANCH HAND mission was moved to Tan Son Nhut AB. Det 1, 608th Military Airlift Support Squadron was inactivated at Phu Cat AB. Aerial Port,

Aerospace Rescue and Recovery, Communications, and Weather units were either inactivated, downsized, and/or redesignated. 537TAS (C-7A aircraft) was inactivated at Phu Cat AB and the aircraft turned over to the Vietnamese Air Force (NVAF) 429th Transportation Squadron (TS) being formed at Phu Cat AB. VNAF 431TS (C-7A aircraft) was also formed at Phu Cat AB. 361TEWS (EC-47N/P) aircraft departed Phu Cat AB.

CHAPTER 4

RICK'S EDUCATIONAL BACKGROUND

and Early Military Background and Experience.

**Rick's full name is George Richard Spangle,
George R, so to speak.**

In May 1964, Rick graduated from Jesuit College Prep, Dallas, Texas.

In January 1969, Rick graduated from Texas A&M University and received a BBA in Marketing with a minor in Accounting, and he received a commission as a Second Lieutenant in the United States Army, Military Intelligence branch.

Rick then attended Infantry Officer's Basic Course, 8 weeks (IOBC 8), Fort Benning, Georgia.

From there, he traveled to Baltimore, MD to attend the 16 week Military Intelligence course, MOS (Military Occupational Specialty) 9666, Counterintelligence Officer.

His first duty station was as Military Intelligence Field Office Commander, Houston, Texas. He replaced a Lieutenant Colonel. The command was recently downgraded from a Region command (Battalion) to a Detachment (Company) command.

CHANGING WORK WEEK POLICIES.

We had a GS 13 Operations Officer that had classified duties. I didn't even know what he did except that he knew everybody in town that had anything to do with law enforcement, intelligence, NASA, and several of the defense contractors.

We had a Warrant Officer, W-3 who was the Detachment Administrative Officer and BI (Background Investigation) Coordinator. Then we had a GS-7 Secretary, and 15 working agents, primarily doing background investigations for Secret and Top Secret security clearances.

When I arrived at the office, we had approximately 150 open security clearance cases. In order to increase productivity and further improve morale, I made a new policy: “If the office was caught up within 2 open cases per agent (30 open cases total), the entire office could take off on Fridays. After about 1 month, the office started taking off on Fridays.

KEEPING TABS ON COMMUNIST FRONT ORGANIZATIONS

I would guess that the most fun that I had while I was in Houston was with the PMS (Professor of Military Studies) at the University of Houston. We were in the height of the Cold War, and the prominent radical “thugs” were members of the SDS, SNCC, THE BLACK PANTHERS, and several other communist front organizations.

Most Americans do not know this, but these were ALL Communist front organizations and were all being financed by the CPUSA, (the Communist Party USA), which received its money directly from the Soviet Union (the KGB) in a covert effort to subvert the American way of life into totalitarian communism.

In order to verify this, I would suggest that the readers Google up David Horowitz and read a little about him. He was raised by open members of the CPUSA and during the 60's he was a popular left wing liberal and radical proponent of “THE NEW LEFT”. He wrote several books promoting radical leftism throughout the late 60's and mid 70's.

In 1976, after finding out the TRUTH about the leaders of the new left wing political establishment, he turned tail and ran like a scared rabbit. He became a staunch conservative then and is today. He has published several books about his life as a Leftist and his life as a conservative.

1 BRIEF PAGE FROM THE INTERNET via Google:

David Horowitz, author of [The Black Book of the American Left](#) and the founder and president of the David Horowitz Freedom Center, has spoken at length about how he was raised by “card-carrying communists” who always “described themselves as progressives.” He followed in their footsteps, becoming one of the founders of the New Left in the 1960s, which he described as an organization “formed by children of communists who wanted to get away from the taint that Stalin had put on communism, (*BY KILLING 30 MILLION RUSSIANS)and revive the vision” OF MARX. So what made the born-and-raised communist become the staunch conservative and defender of American liberties that he is today? Among other things, it was a deadly encounter with the Black Panthers.

It began in the early 1970s, Horowitz explains, when he was introduced to the leader of the Black Panther Party by “a Hollywood producer.” In short order, he helped raise the money to buy a white Baptist church that had been “overtaken by the inner city” in Oakland, and gave it to the Panthers for a school.

“Flowers in the Killing Fields I” by Rick Spangle

“I was editing the largest magazine of the left, and I recruited MY bookkeeper, BETTY VAN PATER, to do the books for the school”. “In December, 1974, Betty Van Patter, the book keeper that I placed in the job with the Black Panthers, disappeared, and by the time police fished her body out of San Francisco Bay five weeks later, I knew the Panthers had killed her.”

Horowitz has **written at length** about the topic, explaining how “the liberal press made nothing of it” and how “the existence of a Murder Incorporated in the heart of the American Left is something the Left really doesn’t want to know or think about. Such knowledge would refute its most cherished beliefs.

Horowitz explains that “all my friends were a menace to me and my family, because I knew if I said I thought they killed Betty they would’ve called me a racist and a CIA agent, and the Panthers were also capable of killing me.”

“It took me about ten years to recover somewhat from this and to become a conservative.” He states “I voted for Ronald Reagan in 1984, and when I came out of the closet as a conservative, of course I knew that the left would be gunning for me, so the rest of my life has been spent fighting the left and defending this great country of ours which we are rapidly losing.”

PLEASE GOOGLE UP BETTY VAN PATER AND READ THE ENTIRE STORY

RICK: I suggest that everyone, both liberals and conservatives alike, study this man. He comes closer to avowing my principles than anyone I know of. He hates the liberal progressives and calls the Republicans “WEAK MINDED” and afraid to stand up for Republican principals.

THE NEXT WELL KNOWN COMMUNIST FRONT ORGANIZATION WAS THE SDS (STUDENTS FOR A DEMOCRATIC SOCIETY).

Suffice it to say that because of their direct communist connections and receiving money directly from the CPUSA by way of the soviet KGB, and because the leaders were constantly making overt physical threats against the recruiters for the U.S. Army, the Army kept close tabs on this organization.

The U of H PMS and I had an excellent operation "keeping tabs" on the SDS and the FBI kept good tabs on the Black Panthers and we all kept those "in the know" fully informed.

ENOUGH SAID

CHAPTER 5

RICK'S VIETNAM EXPERIENCES,

January to early July 1970

ROUND TRIP AIRFAIR TO VIETNAM VIA SEABORD WORLD AIRLINES

It was around the 3rd or 4th of January, 1970 in the waiting area at Travis Air Force Base in San Francisco. Rick meets Benjamin Clarence Coleson III, also a Military Intelligence Second Lieutenant, fresh out of Ft. Hollibird, MD, and a 9668 Area Specialist, trained as a Case Officer Spook. They strike up a great conversation and instantly become "buddies". Both are blessed with great senses of humor.

Ben and Rick get to know each other for several hours and review stories of their Intelligence training.

Ben was an enlisted man who became an officer.

He had his basic training at Ft. Leonard Wood, MO, and then he went to the language school, at Presidio (Monterey, Calif), where he trained in the German language for 6 months.

He then went to the ASA training school at Goodfellow AFB (Air Force Base) in San Angelo, TX. This was the same training that Harry Reese went to at Ft. Devins, MA. Ben's training was in San Angelo, Texas. While he was at ASA School, Ben was introduced to the 13th hour saloon and dance hall. There Ben met many young beautiful Mexican and Hispanic women with big boobs looking to marry GIs. This was 8 weeks of heaven for Ben. Ben was a connoisseur of fine young women. He always was and always will be.

Ben and several of his army buddies were at Goodfellow AFB for the ASA training school. They had no inspections and no drill sergeants were in their faces screaming at them. It was there that Ben learned to sit in front of an R390 RADIO RECEIVER for hours and hours at a time. This was a manually tuned, wide frequency band range, radio receiver that our ASA "diddy boppers" used to intercept radio signals from our enemies AND OUR FRIENDS.

Ben was then shipped to Germany where he used his German language training and skills to translate German radio transmissions "on the fly". He then would give the translated messages to an ASA team chief who would then have them teletyped to many points of interest.

When he heard transmissions in other languages, he would record them and forward them to other linguists for translation and forwarding to the appropriate parties.

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He was stationed at the ASA field station at the Herzo Base in Germany. The Field Station Commander was COL Howard. The Colonel liked Ben’s personality and Ben’s ability to speak German fluently. Col. Howard offered Ben the opportunity to be his driver and Ben took the opportunity to be the driver for the field station commander. COL Howard introduced Ben to General _____ who was the Herzo Base Commander. Ben also got the PART TIME JOB of driver for the Base Commander. WOW, driver for the Base Commander, a General. That jeep was cool. The motor pool kept it all “spit shined” and running in perfect order. Whenever Ben was driving, he ALWAYS kept the star uncovered, whether the general was riding with him, or not. He pretty much ABUSED his driver privileges by doing this. Anywhere he went without the general, people thought that HE was the general so they saluted him and he always got the best parking space that was available. Ben was in heaven AGAIN.

Ben had been the Col’s driver for about 4 months when the Col asked him what he wanted to be when he grew up. Ben told him that he needed to make more money because he liked women TOO much. Ben told the Colonel that he wanted to go to Infantry Officer Candidate School, (OCS) at Ft. Benning Georgia. In a few days, the Colonel arranged the whole thing. This was in May of 69. Ben volunteered to go to Infantry OCS and then to Vietnam.

It was not long until Ben realized that young Infantry officers going to Vietnam had a very short life span, so Ben contacted Col. Howard, who had been transferred to the Infantry OPO which was the Office of Personal Operations. The Colonel arranged for Ben to transfer to the Military Intelligence branch where he went to the 9668 (Area Studies) training school at Ft. Holibird, Maryland for the 24 week school. That was the U.S. Army covert Spy School. From there Ben was assigned to Vietnam.

Both he and Rick were wondering what is in store for them in Vietnam. Finally, the flight was called. They looked out the terminal window and saw a non-descript looking Boeing 707 with the airline name “Seaboard World”.

They immediately got into a discussion of the plane’s accommodations. Being officers, they hustled to the front of the boarding line and both wondered if they would be assigned 1st class seats. WRONG. When they boarded first and looked into the cabin, it was wall to wall three by three seats as far as they could see. At least they got to sit at the bulkhead with no one in front of them.

The plane landed in Guam. Man was it hot!!! In about an hour, an announcement came over the airport PA system that the plane was experiencing some problems with the landing gear that had to be fixed. About eight hours later the flight was under way again and on its way to Ton Son Nhut Air Base in Saigon. The plane landed and the fresh Military Intelligence replacement troopers disembarked the plane. It was winter in the states and Ben was from Bemidji, Minnesota. When the two got off the plane it was about 122 degrees with humidity of 115. Rick was from Texas and fine, Ben almost passed out from the heat. He broke out in a sweat and in about 5 minutes his uniform was drenched.

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Both Rick and Ben caught a jeep and headed to the repo depot. That was the Replacement Detachment. They spent the night there and the next day they heard their names called over the PA.

Ben was assigned to the 1st MIBARS (Military Intelligence Battalion Aerial Reconnaissance Section).

Rick was assigned to the 525th Military Intelligence Group. Someone from each unit had sent a jeep to pick each one up, so they knew that they were expected at their units.

After being trained at spy school, as a covert operative, for 24 weeks, Ben was assigned to the First MIBARS. The Battalion Commander knew that Ben was not qualified to cut and paste aerial reconnaissance photographs, so Ben was assigned as the Executive Officer (XO) of the Battalion Headquarters Company where he wondered “what went wrong” with his assignment. This will be explained later on in this chapter.

Rick did his inbound processing the same day at the 525th MI Group. The Personnel Officer for the Group was First Lieutenant Ephraim Zimbalist III, the son of the star of the TV show, The FBI.

That night, the compound took a couple of rounds of light mortar fire. All of a sudden, two guys wearing “boonie hats” and striker fatigues charged into the barracks, grabbed Rick and escorted him to a bunker for about ½ an hour. Then a horn sounded and he was escorted back to the barracks. He was made aware of something called the “Quick Reaction Force”.

Rick quickly got assigned to the 525TH MILITARY INTELLIGENCE GROUP, 2D BATTALION, NHA TRANG, DETACHMENT A, QUI NHON, (COVER NAME: USA PAAD), United States Army Provincial Area Advisory Detachment.

All of the group’s Battalions and Detachments had cover names, cover locations, cover assignments and duties to look like they were a bunch of non-descript, routine, mundane advisors to small sections of the Vietnamese people and not major intelligence gathering networks.

GEORGE R IS BORN

Rick arrived in Qui Nhon and immediately, because of his 9666 MOS (Military Occupational Specialty), became the COUNTER INTELLIGENCE TEAM CHIEF.

MAJOR MALCOM’S SCOTCH.

YEP. True story. Day 7 in Qui Nhon. George R was the Junior Officer. Major Malcom was the detachment commanding officer (CO). There was a mortar attack and the entire unit piled out of the barracks and ran for the bunker by the office door. The bunker smelled like piss since the bunker was

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quite a bit closer to the office than the latrine. Right after George R got to the bunker, he got pushed out of the bunker and sent back to the barracks for Major Malcom’s bottle of scotch. What a way to start, a little humor on day 7.

GEORGE R’S FIRST SCAM:

Early on, George R was promoted to First Lieutenant.

George R is pretty ballsy, so he reaches into his middle desk drawer and finds his set of Medical Service Corps brass. Part of his training was building and maintaining a cover identity quick, then preparing a plausible cover story and then executing the perfectly believable cover story with astute perfection.

He had heard that the Commanding General of the Qui Nhon Support Command, where USA PAAD was located, (Major General Hunter), had a 74 ft. yacht with a 6 man crew, that was used for the Commanding General, CG, General Hunter, and senior grade and general grade officers to take “In Country” R & R. He went over to the 67th MedEvac Hospital and talked to a few of the nurses and walked around several of the wards. It was not a pretty sight. There were many injured soldiers. What a shame that they could not have some R&R also. He got a great idea. He did a little research and found out that MG Hunter had a “Protocol Officer” taking care of his agenda, schedule, and day to day affairs. She turned out to be a Major. Rick located her office and paid her a visit. He found her in frikkin’ starched fatigues. Holy shit, we’re in a combat zone and this female Major has on neatly pressed, starched fatigues. He almost started laughing. George R. introduced himself (wearing his recently acquired Medical Service Corps brass) as an Administrative Assistant at the 67th MedEvac Hospital.

He engaged her in casual conversation and politely let her know that he was aware of the big boat that the seniors (senior officers) used for R&R. He told her that it would be great if he could use it once in a while to take some of the wounded, but ambulatory, soldiers out for some R&R to uplift their spirits since they were staying in country and going back to their units. George R proved to be quite convincing and asked her to check with the general and that he would be back in a couple of days and we could check the schedule for available dates.

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George R went back a couple of days later and the Major had good news and he got the first available date for the ambulatory patients to do some in country R&R. George R scheduled his promotion party for that date. The whole outfit was quite impressed, including Major Brintnall, their, way too serious, Detachment Commander. The promotion party went great. At least once a month, early on in his tour, George R scheduled the boat for Ambulatory R&R. Many of the nurses got to go also. Major Jim Wilson, the II Corps Vet was a regular, CPT Stephen D. Emmitt, the II Corps Dermatologist and Venereal Disease Specialist and the Support Command Sergeant Major were also regulars, along with the injured soldiers. Knowing those three proved useful during his entire tour.

GEORGE R'S FIRST BREAK:

George R got orders to conduct a CI (Counterintelligence Inspection) of the Military Assistance Command, Vietnam (MACV) II Corps Headquarters in Pleiku. George R travels alone, by jeep, through the Anh Khe Pass, past Binh Khe and onwards to Pleiku. The road is kind of a scary and lonely road with plenty of places for snipers to hide on either side of the road and take pot shots at young lieutenants traveling alone by jeep. This trip was uneventful. He arrives at Pleiku and finds the II Corps MACV Headquarters compound and then proceeds to find the Commanding General's office. He was a Lieutenant General, three stars, hot shit in the military world. George R meets the CG and the Sergeant Major and begins conducting the Counterintelligence Inspection.

George R casually walks around the compound with a clip board making notes. George R walks around outside to the back of the CG's office building to a small area with a rectangular chain link fence. He opens the gate. It is the unclassified area where classified trash is burned almost every day. The burning itself was supposed to be done by someone with the appropriate clearance. Therefore, CONFIDENTIAL material was supposed to be burned by someone with a CONFIDENTIAL clearance.

SECRET material was burned by someone with a SECRET CLEARANCE AND TOP SECRET MATEIAL WAS BURNED BY SOMEONE WITH A TOP SECRET CLEARANCE.

Right out in the open there was a Yellow Cover Sheet (TOP SECRET) titled “The Invasion Plans for Cambodia”, supposedly initialed and signed by President Nixon himself. It was also initialed by many people acknowledging that they had read the document. This cover sheet was absolute proof that many people were lying about the pending invasion of Cambodia.

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This cover sheet was sitting out for anyone with no clearance at all to see or pick up and take to a VC, NLF OR NORTH VIETNAMESE COMMUNIST AGENT. VC agents were everywhere. Even though the document itself had been burned (normally because it had been revised), the existence of the document itself was still TOP SECRET. At the time, President Nixon was totally denying the fact that we were going to invade Cambodia. THE THREE STAR COMMANDING GENERAL OF MACV II CORPS WAS BUSTED.

George R takes the TS cover sheet with about 20 initials on it and clips it on the clip board. He then casually walks back to the CG's office and goes to the Sergeant Major's desk and requests to see the CG immediately. The SGT Major asks George R “what's so important that you need to see the CG RIGHT NOW. George R states “You don't need to know that right now”. I just need to see him urgently. Just tell him, PLEASE. The SGT Major says “yes sir” and heads into the CG's office. George R sits down in the Sgt. Major's chair.

While the Sgt Major is off running his little errand, George R goes to flipping through the SGT Major's desk calendar. George R notices that the SGT Major has his wife's (or some female's) birthday marked. It was sometime in June. Let's say it was June 17th. George R figures the Sgt. Major to be 42 to 46 years old, therefore he was born between 1919 and 1924. George R swings around in the Sgt. Major's chair and stands up in front of the Top Secret document control safe and begins dialing numbers. After dialing the first two numbers about 4 or 5 times and guessing the last number to be somewhere between 16 and 28, the damn thing opens up, as if by magic. HOLY SHIT, AM I GOING TO HAVE A FIELD DAY.

The first time out, George R gets to bust a 3 star general AND his sergeant Major. The Sgt. Major comes back and tells George R that the CG will see him now. George R tells the Sgt. Major that he thinks “we have a problem”, “I JUST POPPED YOUR TOP SECRET DOCUMENT CONTROL SAFE OPEN USING A BIRTH DATE THAT I GOT OUT OF **YOUR** CALENDAR. I WILL NEED TO SPEAK WITH YOU AFTER I'M DONE WITH YOU AND THE CG. OUT IN THE CLASSIFIED TRASH BURN AREA, I FOUND THIS TOP SECRET COVER SHEET TITLED “THE INVASION PLANS FOR CAMBODIA”. “I THINK THAT YOU GUYS ARE GOING TO HAVE TO DO A LITTLE SECURITY TRAINING, YOUR SECURITY IS A BIT LAX, DON'T YOU THINK?

The Sgt. Major goes to stuttering and begins some mindless babble as we get to the CG's office. The CG takes one look at the Top Secret cover sheet with all of the initials on it and instantly goes white and almost faints back into his plush office chair.

The CG says “What would you like us to do??” George R says “I'm kind of at a loss here. According to regs, I'm suppose to make reports to about 40 different people, including JAG (the Judge Advocate General), your immediate superior, General Abrams' office and Admiral McCain's office (The Commander of the Pacific Theatre). I think that someone should probably notify President Nixon, since he signed the document.” I think that the best thing for you to do is call General Abrams' office and inform him of the situation and that you have a POSSIBLE TOP SECRET SECURITY BREACH. You also need

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to check your security procedures and see what the hell you are supposed to do now, I REALLY DON'T KNOW. I really don't know what YOUR procedure is, I just know that I have to fill out a correct report on what I found at your location. This kind of shit ain't supposed to happen. My report will be filed in my system and I would guess that that report will make it all the way back to the President, by way of my group commander Col. Barber to General Abrams.” “After that, I have other shit to do and I need to get back to Qui Nhon.”

“By the way, I also opened your Top Secret Document Control safe by using a combination that I found in the Sgt. Major's calendar. I need to do a security briefing with him and counsel him on document security and making it a bit more difficult to guess the combination on a Top Secret document safe.”

“Why don't you take your first step by calling your immediate boss, and I'm assuming that that is the CG of MACV in Saigon and you guys decide what to do. I'll notify my detachment commander and you guys can work out the details.”

This was not a real funny situation.

George R had paid attention in class at COUNTERINTELLIGENCE SCHOOL.

The week after that, George R had to make a trip to Nha Trang to Battalion Headquarters for a security briefing where he got to meet with CAPTAIN SUGGS. CPT. Suggs thought that he was a real serious BADD ASS. It was his job to scare the shit out of each of the unit's officer's during these “security briefings”. These briefings were conducted once a month for the first 2 or 3 months. CPT. Suggs made it quite clear that anyone revealing classified information to the enemy would be dealt with in a harsh manner.

Our group was quite security conscious and no stone would go unturned in locating enemy spies. Suggs was quite serious and let it be known that the entire Battalion would be quite security conscious under his watch as the Battalion Counterintelligence Officer.

After the Security Briefing, Rick made a side trip to a Montanyard village near Ban Me Thuot, looking for Yards (short for Montagnards) that could speak English. He had the use of one and found another one that day for the Battalion Operations Officer, Major Hubbard, who was always looking for good interpreters.

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Major Hubbard obviously suffered from severe paranoia and was always looking around and seemed to be constantly in fear of his life. Major Hubbard was stationed in Korea during the Korean War and after the War, was assigned the duty of “RUNNING BLACKS” into North Korea. That meant that he was charged with running covert agents, with no documentation, into North Korea during the COLD WAR. He was not talkative, but he did state that he was fairly successful and only lost about ½ of his agents.

One Interpreter that George R used was named “Billy” and he was working for Aussie Austrai at the PRU compound. In order to be officially hired and paid by our government as an interpreter, the interpreter had to take and pass a written test. Billy, a Yard, spoke perfect English and was a great interpreter; he just couldn’t read it or write it, therefore, he couldn’t get paid by our government. He was such a good interpreter that Aussie paid him out of what was called the Charlie Foxtrot”, which was the “Contingency Fund” used to pay covert agents and bribe VC and politicians into working for our side of the war.

As a general rule, Yards did not like the Vietnamese but some spoke the Vietnamese language well. If you found one that could speak English, they were usually pretty loyal and trustworthy.

5 months were down and stuff really began to happen. CPT Douche Bag, a minor bureaucratic functionary type, shows up and he gets George R’s job and just sits at his own desk and does nothing for the next 6 months except try to cause trouble for everyone. George R gets assigned “under cover” to several bilateral operations and one unilateral operation. Bilateral operations were run with personnel from other countries and unilateral operations were run with just Americans.

PHU CAT AIR BASE

In 1970 Phu Cat Air Base was the only US air base in VC controlled territory, it was in An Nhon District. In June 1970 An Nhon District in Binh Dinh Province was 85% VC. It was the home district of Quan (g) Vinh, the number 1 most wanted VC in central South Vietnam. The VC divided South Vietnam into 3 sections, north, central and south.

THE MSS

The Military Security Service was the South Vietnamese version of the FBI. In An Nhon District, they were ruthless bastards, and quite useful in rooting out VC Cadre and locating and popping VC including Vinh, the most wanted VC in all of

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Central Vietnam. In many parts of South Vietnam, the MSS were a bunch of soft, cowardly and corrupt internal security forces. Most of them were collecting comparatively good money for what they did.

In the book I will detail the history of the MSS. In general, it was a rather politically oriented organization that was used by several previous Vietnamese administrations to ruthlessly maintain control of village and hamlet politics. For some reason George R got quite lucky, the MSS in An Nhon District was in complete support of the Thieu administration and in complete support of the US government. For Vietnamese, they were highly paid and quite loyal. A lot of George R's success was related to this fact. Money talks, BS walks.

THE PHOENIX PROGRAM

The Phoenix Program was conducted over a long period of time by the CIA with little success except for the high numbers of ALLEGED VC that were killed, caught, captured, and, in many cases, tortured. George R was assigned to provide operational intelligence to 3 of the CIA operational units that were a major part of the Phoenix Program. These were the PRU (Provincial Reconnaissance Units), the PSB (Police Special Branch) and the DIOCC (District Intelligence Operations Coordination Centers).

Further research can be done by reading the book entitled “THE PHOENIX PROGRAM” which was written with the consent of the CIA after President Bill Clinton declassified all Vietnam covert operations in 1995.

THE BINH DINH **PRU** (PROVINCIAL RECONNAISSANCE UNIT), AUSSIE AUSTRAL and JOHN McGarth.

The Binh Dinh PRU were 93 of the most well paid, former VC enemy cadre “bad asses” in the entire country, headed by a former VC named Tich who was Aussie's personal body guard. Tich and Billy were old buddies and long time enemies of Ho Chi Minh and Vo Van (Quan) Vinh.

Aussie is referenced and partially detailed in a comprehensive book about the Phoenix Program called “THE PHOENIX PROGRAM”, mentioned above. He was the senior CIA guy in our Area of Operations (AO), behind the CIA Qui Nhon Station Chief, and he was a great guy and a superb agent, case officer, interrogator and manipulator of minds and hearts. Enough said here for now. Any further research on Aussie can be done by reading about him in the aforementioned book, “The Phoenix Program.”

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Much has been written about The Phoenix Program, mostly about its abuses and its ineffectiveness at genuine elimination of the VC communist cadre and infrastructure. Many alleged VC were killed or selectively targeted and assassinated over the length of the program. The official estimate was in the area of 20,000 some odd bodies. Taking into account, the entire country, thousands upon thousands were targeted, killed or captured, and then counted, but very little of the VC infrastructure was eliminated. Frank Snepp (see chapters 7, 8 and 9) stated many times that we killed lots of people but we were not effective in eliminating very many VC.

Frank Snepp spent 6 years as a CIA analyst in Vietnam. During his last 2 years, he was the CIA's TOP ANALYST IN VIETNAM and was charged with briefing all of the top military and political officials in the country.

POLICE SPECIAL BRANCH (PSB)

This was a small unit of well armed and well trained “selective target specialists”. That’s right, small units of 8 to 10 sneaky little assassins, whose job was to neutralize individual targets after being confirmed to be enemy VC. Confirmation was normally just in someone’s mind. The rule was that the target was assigned ONLY after 2 DIFFERENT reliable sources stated that the individual was indeed VC (NLF). Frank Snepp’s bold analysis in 1976 pretty much confirmed that MOST of the alleged VC targets were NOT VC after all.

As a general rule, that is the way most of the war effort went around the Country of Vietnam. Around most of the country, there were lots of alleged VC bodies with little decrease in the effects of the enemy propaganda effort and little decrease in the effectiveness of the communist control at the village and hamlet level.

THIS IS VERIFIED IN CHAPTER 7 of this book by the first book written by FRANK SNEPP III, “Decent Interval”.

For some reason, that was not the case in Qui Nhon and An Nhon based upon operations conducted by George Richard Spangle and Bennett Clarence Coleson III.

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THE AN NHON **DIOCC** (District Intelligence Operations Coordination Center) and the Phu Cat INTERROGATION CENTER. It was also run by you know who, the CIA.

Rick was assigned as the covert intelligence officer for the AN NHON DIOCC and Phu Cat Air Base.

The first thing that Rick had to do was find the CIA operational office for the DIOCC in An Nhon Village. It was right around the corner from the front gate of Phu Cat Air Base. They had some sort of Civil Affairs cover name and it was their job to get to know the village and district leaders. The head CIA guy was Cpt. Abraham and his assistant was a young blond guy dressed in green fatigues wearing no rank or insignia. He never told me his name. One of them was usually around conducting the day to day business affairs at the village or district operations center or at the Phu Cat Interrogation Center.

You had to have a “need to know” to know about the Interrogation Center or even know where it was. It was not a pretty place. There were several rooms. The floors were dirt and there were only a few tables and chairs. Some rooms had several doors, some with signs on them.

We also had the use of an out of the way small building on the Air Base. We had access to the latest anesthetic drugs that could be administered by an MSS or PSB male agent trained to administer injections of these substances.

Usually a local DIOCC or PSB soldier/agent or civilian performed the interrogations with one or more Americans with an interpreter watching and taking notes. Sometimes the DIOCC let members of the MSS or the PSB interrogate prisoners also with one or two Americans with interpreters watching and listening. Sometimes Rick would witness the interrogations usually with an interpreter. The interpreters would listen to the interrogations and relay translations of what was being asked and answered. We found this system of checks and balances quite effective.

At first Rick just watched and listened. As time went on Rick got more and more comfortable with the place and how the system worked.

In the case of An Nhon, they found that the prisoners were usually more willing to “open up” to a fellow Vietnamese without an American in his face. With two Americans and two interpreters in the room, the interpreters were afraid to lie about what was being said by the prisoner. The two interpreters were also afraid to lie to the

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Americans because the interpreters knew that the Americans would “compare notes” after the interrogation before the final reports (verbal and written) were processed for disposition. Many times no reports were written.

Our groups of DIOCC, PSB and MSS interrogators were quite tough, calculating and psychological interrogation professionals along with being brutal in inflicting pain if the prisoners did not cooperate. They (and we) got lots of good information from lots of high level VC prisoners in this manner.

Most of the VC high level prisoners ended up “on the US payroll” and working for us or going away to another province to prison. If the South Vietnamese interrogators caught them in repeated lies, they dealt with that in their own ways. Our group of interrogators had zero tolerance for repeated VC cover stories and lies.

Once the VC knew that they had to tell the truth and get paid, or go to prison, or die, most of them told the truth and accepted a paycheck to help us kill or capture other cadre members and find and root out weapons and ammunition that was hidden in caches in and around the hamlets and villages of An Nhon district.

HIGHLY TRAINED KOREAN MARINES

These guys were real badasses. From about 1966 to early 1970 there was a Korean Marine Company stationed just outside the Phu Cat Air Base perimeter. Along with the 173rd Airborne Brigade, the ROKs were pretty much in charge of Base Security. There were about 200 ROKs (Republic of Korea Marines in the Company pulling various security details around Phu Cat Air Base. They were augmented by the 173rd Airborne Brigade from Pleiku and Kontum until late 1968 when the 173rd was moved to LZ (Landing Zone) English at Bong Son. The 173rd Airborne Brigade was replaced by the 4th Division (three times as many troops) in early 1969. In early 1970 the US continued withdrawing troops from the Fourth Division area and by mid to late 1970 the Fourth Division was disbanded and sent home or assigned to other units in Vietnam.

As noted in the official history of Phu Cat Air Base, during mid 1970, the VC got real aggressive and began sapper, artillery and mortar attacks almost every night. In fact, when Rick was assigned to the security detail, the Air Base was losing about one million dollars in equipment almost every night. Welcome to Phu Cat, 1970.

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MISSION IMPOSSIBLE (The TV show)

At Intelligence School, the trainees were shown Mission Impossible TV shows as training films. (No kidding). In fact, later, after returning home, George R figured that the series was probably financed and approved by you know who. We were also shown other movies and TV shows for training.

SHUTTING DOWN THE ATTACKS ON PHU CAT AIR BASE. (MISSION IMPOSSIBLE 1)

Rick was given the Impossible Mission of shutting down the rocket, mortar and sapper attacks on the Air Base. Rick, the DIOCC, the PRU, the MSS and the KOREAN MARINES ran several different types of brutal operations to eliminate the attacks on Phu Cat.

In the beginning, George R recruited and trained several members of the MSS to be Principal covert Agents and Action covert Agents to Identify and locate members of the VC Cadre infrastructure. The cadre members were NLF (VC) propaganda, training, and operational personnel that were suppose to keep the population under the control of the Communists.

There were so many of them that they were not hard to identify or locate.

George R was pretty tough on the new covert Agents, but they were paid well for what they did. George R got real intimidating, real quick. He had good teachers. George R trained his agents rigorously in the jungle rules of spy tradecraft and counterintelligence techniques.

That would be counter surveillance methods and being totally aware of what is going on around you at all times. You screw up, you die.

It wasn't long before they started getting back some information about who the local cadre was and where they were located. Rick started by following the rules established by the CIA and followed by the Military Intelligence command.

Rick made SECRET Contact Reports for every Agent contact that he made. The agents made verbal reports to Rick of their contacts with their Action Agents.

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For Rick, typing up regular Contact Reports was a real pain in the ass. It was the established procedure, so Rick attempted to accomplish this in a timely manner. This was the way that they were taught in intelligence school. This was basic spy stuff 101.

The only problem was that in normal covert ops, meetings didn't happen all that often. In Rick's situation, meetings happened “all the time” and it was tough keeping up with regular paper work.

Then there were the IIRs (Intelligence Information Reports), IRs, for short.

According to the established procedure, that appeared to be set up to protect the enemy, the IRs had to be brought back to Detachment Headquarters in Qui Nhon, typed up and submitted to the RTT (Radio, Telephone and Teletype) boys assigned from the Signal Corps to each covert Detachment. Most of the reports were classified Confidential and were sent as “routine” traffic. They were sent to Battalion Headquarters for review and from there they went to Group Headquarters in Saigon. From there they went across town to the CIA where they were logged in, looked at, and then passed back to MI GROUP Headquarters with or without “permission to disseminate”. Permission to disseminate was never denied.

From there, the reports went back to Battalion and then back to the Detachment and then, and only then, back to the Case Officer (Rick).

Then Rick was allowed to take the reports to the Abraham, the DIOCC (the CIA guy), the Korean Marines, the MSS, or anyone else that might be interested like the 173rd Airborne Brigade or the PRU advisor, McGarth. At that time, Abraham was coordinating with McGarth, so I rarely saw him.

The 173rd had their own intelligence gathering system and was pretty much too bogged down with internal bull shit regulations to be concerned with our high quality intelligence from our high quality sources. This, of course did not include the 525th operation at Bong Song which was set up to support the 173rd and provide intelligence from local sources directly for Battalion and Company level operations. Some of the 525th operations run out of Bong Song were quite successful and provided much high quality intelligence.

We had much more luck with the local PRUs, MSS, AND PSBs. The PSBs were the Police Special Branch and were, as stated above, coordinated and trained by the CIA.

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The bull shit INTELLIGENCE REPORT approval process took about 3 days. So it normally took about 4, or more, days from the time the Agent produced the information until the information got to the field. It took at least another day to plan and institute any type of operation.

To make a long story short, the alleged reason for this idiotic burdensome procedure was because Rick's new Primary Principal Agent (Fred) was a new agent, recruited specifically by George R, and the established procedure required that Fred be given a rating of F-6 for the first 6 months. Don't you just love bureaucratic rules in the spy business? The rating system was a letter and a number, A-1 through F-6. The 6 was not necessarily bad, it only meant that the agent was new.

All of the above mentioned LOCAL groups were looking for “good intelligence” on the bad guys. All of the US operational units were getting ready to leave the country and were pretty much in a “defensive posture” and marking time for withdrawal.

For the first 3 weeks or a month Rick followed orders and the established procedure. The operational units (except the KOREAN MARINES) took the 4 to 5 day old information and cautiously reacted and ran some good “Search and Pick Up” operations, attempting to locate and kill or capture enemy cadre or ammunition.

At this time, the Korean Marines would not react at all because they were suspicious of everyone, including the US military and me.

The net result was that the information turned out to be good information but late getting to the field. In the case of the cadre, usually the cadre had been at the stated location, but moved to another location to avoid being picked up. In the case of ammunition, the ammunition cache had been moved to a new location. This (moving around) was normal for the local VC.

After a little over a month of this frustration, Rick got pretty pissed. He met with his Commanding Officer, Major Joe (Scallan) pretty regularly, and almost every day that they were in Qui Nhon together. George R kept bagging on Major Joe to “cut him loose” from the stupid approval procedure and let him give the information to the operational units without approval from

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Headquarters. Major Joe said that he would request permission from Colonel Gardner, the asshole, who was the Battalion Commander.

A few days later Major Joe said that Colonel Gardner said “NO, follow the goddamn procedure”.

Rick got pretty hot. Major Joe was the coolest field grade officer (major and above) that Rick had ever met so Rick suggested a plan. Every month, In Nha Trang at Battalion Headquarters, there was a “high level staff conference” involving all of the 525th MI Group personnel. The next one was in about 4 or 5 days and Full Colonel Barber, the Group Commander, was going to be there.

Major Joe said that he would explain the situation to Col. Barber and see what he said. This was highly irregular to go “outside the chain of command” but Major Joe said that he would see what happened. In the meantime, Rick went to An Nhon and had another meeting with Fred. Rick got some more information and came back to Qui Nhon, made the Intelligence Report and gave it to the RTT boys.

Major Joe got back from Nha Trang and said that he had a good talk with Col. Barber away from Col. Gardner. Major Joe said that Col. Barber really didn’t want to give permission to violate procedure at this time. Major Joe said that he really went to bat for George R and his abilities as a Case Officer and told Col. Barber that all of the information received from Fred was “on target” and the operational units confirmed that all of the information was correct and the only problem was that the people and the ammunition had moved or had been moved.

Col. Barber finally agreed to let Rick disseminate early without telling Col. Gardner or Major J. Barry Williams, the Battalion Operations Officer. Col. Barber also told Major Joe that their meeting never happened and George R was to make no written reports about disseminating information without permission. Col. Barber also told Major Joe that if anything adverse happened to George R as a result of his covert activities that he (Col. Barber) would disavow any knowledge of his actions. Col. Barber reminded Major Joe of the rule in the intelligence world that “if there was no written report, it didn’t happen”.

When Rick got the news he was shickedled titleless.

George R made the rounds to all of the operational units, including the KOREAN MARINES. The Koreans had made it clear that they were not going out on any operations using intelligence from “unproven sources” without the provider

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(George R) going with them. George R explained to the Koreans that all of the information had been proven up but the problem was timeliness.

The Koreans agreed to run operations against possible ammunitions caches if George R agreed to go as a “good faith” measure to show his confidence that the information was good and timely.

The Koreans also stated that they did not want to run infantry operations against the ammunitions caches; they wanted to run offensive perimeter mortar operations against the caches and attempt to get secondary explosions to verify that the caches were neutralized.

George R thought about the proposal for about 5 seconds and said “I’m in”. He said that he would bring the cache locations right from the meeting with the agent to a secure location on the Air Base and meet with the Korean Marine Company Commander. At this time there were only about 60 or 70 of the ROKs left but they were still “Gung Ho” to go. They would take 6 two man mortar teams with a full 11 man infantry squad for perimeter security and another 6 man infantry reserve unit to carry mortar ammo.

After Rick provided the location information, the Squad leader would send a 3 to 5 man scout patrol to perform quiet reconnaissance, draw a map of the hamlet and spot the alleged location of the ammo hooch. With that information, the CO and the XO (Executive Officer) and the Platoon leader and the Platoon Sergeant would all get together with George R and the Koreans would agree on an operation plan and George R would accompany the senior officer.

George R said “I’m in”. Things appeared to be getting serious.

JUNE/JULY 1970.

From early June through December of 1970 George R was continually back and forth between the Detachment A Headquarters (USAPAAD) office located at the Qui Nhon (II Corps Support Command) compound and Phu Cat Air Base, the An Nhon DIOCC and the Phu Cat Interrogation Center.

On Rick’s first night at the DIOCC compound, with Cpt. Abraham, the Cpt. took Rick to the Officer’s Club at Phu Cat Airbase.

Rick had a couple of drinks with Cpt. Abraham and noticed an Air Force First Lieutenant sitting at another table wearing a Texas Aggie Class Ring. Rick excused himself for a few minutes and went over and introduced himself. The

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Aggie was named Mike Mankin and he was a Class of '68 graduate of A&M. He was in the same class as Rick. They got a separate table and had a short conversation. Mike asked Rick what he was doing at Phu Cat Air Base. Rick told Mike that he had just been assigned to the Base Security Detail as the Intelligence Officer. Mike asked Rick where he was staying. Rick told Mike that he was staying at the Village compound as a guest.

Mike told Rick that there were a few extra rooms at the BOQ (Bachelor Officer's Quarters) and that he would introduce him to the Base Commander, who just happened to be at the Club. Mike walked Rick over to the Base Commander's table and introduced him. Rick told the Base Commander that he had just been assigned as Intelligence Officer to the Base Security Detail. BC asked Rick how come an Army Officer was running intel for his base security. Rick said “Because it involved coordination with several of the local village advisors who were Company men who wished to remain anonymous. Also it was considered a “task force” and consisted of a combination of Korean and American forces since so many of our troops were being sent home”. The BC said GREAT!!!.

Mike asked the Base Commander if it was OK if Rick stayed at the BOQ when he was “in the area”?? The Base Commander said “sure”. Rick told the Base Commander that he would like to visit with him at a later date about “base security”.

The Base Commander said that they were getting hit almost every night and the VC was doing a lot of damage to the planes sitting in open hangars and out in open areas of the Base. Rick asked why there was so little security. BC said that it was because “country wide” so many people were going home that Phu Cat security was a pretty low priority. Rick sarcastically said “Beautiful, just fucking beautiful”.

The Base Commander told Rick that anything he (Rick) could do would be greatly appreciated. Rick told the base commander that once he got “his feet on the ground” he would pay him a visit.

Rick returned to Cpt. Abraham's table and informed him of the results of his meeting Texas Aggie Mike Mankin and the Base Commander. Cpt. Abraham said “great work”, I don't even know the base commander.

Rick told Cpt. A that he was able to stay on the base and that the base BOQ was air conditioned. Cpt. A said “Great”. “It's probably more secure than the village or district compound anyway.”

When Rick was back in Qui Nhon he was over at the Qui Nhon PRU (CIA) compound quite often reviewing stuff with Aussie, Tich and Billy.

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Rick was also a regular visitor to the Qui Nhon Army Airfield, the 67 MedEvac Hospital, Phil and Gary’s CIA compound, the Sergeant Major’s office, Major Jim Wilson (Snoopy’s) office, the II Corps Veterinarian’s office, Dr. Steve Emmett, the Dermatologist’s office and other local areas of interest in Qui Nhon. Rick was also a regular visitor to the Provost Marshall’s compound and the MP detention center, commonly known as “the Jail” or “the Brig”. Rick had to be in “off limits areas” quite often and the MP’s patrolled the areas regularly, especially at night. Several times George R got “picked up” by the MP’s for being in the wrong place at the wrong time.

Rick was never “officially” issued a curfew pass so enterprising young Rick typed up one for himself. Most of the times Rick got in trouble he was traveling from one of the CIA compounds back to the PAAD compound going through “off limits” areas after dark. More about that later.

During this period, George R was at Phu Cat at least once a week for a day or two at a time. Rick had to travel back and forth from Qui Nhon to Phu Cat on Highway 1. About $\frac{3}{4}$ of the way from Qui Nhon to Phu Cat was the base of the ANH KHE PASS. The Anh Khe pass was famous for being the sight of more horrible ambushes than anywhere else in Vietnam. There were many famous ambushes and battles in and around “THE PASS”. The base of THE PASS was on a lonely and desolated portion of road. The surrounding dirt was red and kind of looked like Oklahoma, except for the rice paddies.

Off to the left you could see mountains heading up to the central highlands. Off to the right you could see small rice paddies dotted by an occasional hooch. Behind the rice paddies, between the rice paddies and the ocean was jungle. VC hid out in the jungle, and many times, a VC would take “pot shots” at Rick in his jeep. There were also occasional chopper security flights up and down highway 1.

When Rick got snipped at he would accelerate and begin weaving his jeep and moving around in the driver’s seat. He would do his best to maintain a low profile while being a difficult moving target. Because of the surrounding mountains and the echoes, it was almost impossible to tell where the shots were coming from. Most of the time, the shots were NOT coming from AK-47s. Rick also knew what M-16s sounded like and they were not M-16s. That meant that they were M-1 Carbines.

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The M-1 Carbines were from WWII and were given to the “Ruff Puffs”. The Ruff Puffs were the Rural Popular Forces, the local militia. They were local, part time forces, mostly only slightly trained, and easy targets for the well trained NLF (VC). Yes, our government supplied hundreds of thousands of M-1 carbines to the Ruff Puffs, many of which found their way into enemy hands. In Binh Dinh province alone there were approximately 300,000 Ruff Puffs. You could compare them to some sort of lowly trained local militia. No training, no control, scared shitless of the VC and paid very little compared to the PRU or the MSS or even the Vietnamese regular army.

The Vietnamese people, in general, were quite small in stature, primarily because of their diet of approximately 95% rice. The M-1 Carbine was a small, light weight rifle that shot a .30 caliber shell from a small cartridge and it didn't kick very hard. It wasn't very accurate and didn't have much stopping power, unless the shooter was “real lucky”. Over there, if you got hit by a lucky shot, it was called “taking a golden bee bee”. When you were out there all alone being sniped at by carbines, you were always aware of “golden BBs”.

“Every time I made it safely to or from Qui Nhon to Phu Cat without catching a golden BB, I had a great day.”

At that time, George R was meeting with Fred at least once or twice a week and sometimes every other day. Sometimes Aussie furnished George R with an interpreter, sometimes Battalion Headquarters furnished George R with an interpreter. The CIA had quite a few secondary operations going on in the Qui Nhon area. One was run by two guys named Phil and Gary. Motor Pool Mary was one of their sources and interpreters and they had another Montagnard interpreter named Chip.

Chip liked to smoke opium. The interpreters were occasionally given polygraph tests. Once, according to Gary, Chip took a polygraph test and the operator had to quit the test right in the middle and then told Gary that “in order to get these readings, Chip either had to be wasted on opium or dead”.

Billy was the best interpreters of the lot. Sometimes Billy and/or Mary would act as my interpreter. The worst interpreter I ever had was an American guy named Dave who had just graduated from the 32 week Vietnamese language

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school at Monterrey California. All of the Vietnamese had a hard time understanding and communicating with him. He had a pretty good sense of humor though. Sometimes he would speak to them in English and just look at me and shrug his shoulders.

The MSS and the DIOCC also had a few translators. When interrogating, we made a habit of keeping two translators in the room at the same time to verify what each one was telling us.

My favorite, as I stated before, was Billy.

George R was continually getting great information from Fred and his agents. As soon as he got information, he would immediately take it to the DIOCC AND THE PRU ADVISORS. They had an easy time coordinating operations against the local VC cadre. The PRU was headquartered in Qui Nhon. As I said before, McGarth was now the Senior Advisor. The Senior PRU BADDASS was the former VC named TICH that I mentioned before. TICH was directly supervised by Aussie, and now McGarth, and made about 50,000 Piasters a month. The

PRU force was around 92 some odd men, all formerly VC who were all making substantially more money than any of the normal Vietnamese villagers or city dwellers. From what I could tell, the Qui Nhon PRU detachment was one of the best and most effective in the entire country.

Aussie, and then McGarth and TICH did a great job and they were instrumental in using our intelligence information to rid An Nhon District and Phu Cat Air Base of all forms of VC attacks.

THE BIGGEST SUPPRISE OF MY TOUR.

With no advance warning at all, I got the biggest surprise of my tour. It was the middle of June and one of the case officers in our office, the one sitting right next to me, Perry Polinsky, was ready to go home back to the world. He had about three days to go and no replacement had showed up yet. Major Brintnall was also short (thank God). Major Brintnall came out of his office and said that Polinsky's replacement was on his way over from the airfield and would be here in about 10 minutes. In about 10 minutes Polinsky's replacement walks in the door, looks around the office, sees me, and gets the biggest shit eating grin I ever saw and starts laughing his ass off. It is none other than BEN COLESON. Yep, that's right the guy I met at Travis Air Base and rode over on the plane with to lovely Vietnam. Someone figured out that he was not trained to read aerial photographs; he was trained to be a case officer and run covert agents. Polinsky was leaving and we needed a replacement to run Polinsky's great young agent, CODE

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NAMED, “HARRY”. Ben got the assignment. The odds were 1 in 500,000. Oh My God, we were back together again. LOOK OUT EVERYONE “WERE BAAACK”!!!

On Ben’s first night in Qui Nhon, we had a great reunion and got drunk at the Qui Nhon Officer’s club. I asked Ben “What the hell happened” and “How the hell did you get stationed here?”. Ben told me that he had been assigned as the Executive Officer of the Headquarters Company for the 1st MIBARS (Military Intelligence Battalion Aerial Reconnaissance Section) and that he was in charge of many of the administrative duties for the Battalion, including running the mess hall and signing for and maintaining millions of dollars of aerial reconnaissance equipment, including the airplanes, cameras and photo interpretation equipment.

Ben said: “About a week ago some guy named COL Barber came to visit the MIBARS Battalion Commander. COL Barber was the CO of the 525TH MI Group and was some kind of HOT SHIT commanding officer within the intelligence community.

COL Barber met the CO (Commanding Officer) of 1st MIBARS in the battalion mess hall. COL Barber got to visiting with the Battalion CO and suddenly the attention got diverted to the food. For some reason COL Barber started bragging about his meal being the best meal that he had had since he had been in Vietnam. COL Barber asked the CO who was in charge of the mess hall? The CO said that it was First Lieutenant Coleson, the Headquarters Company XO. “Is he here?”, COL Barber asked. CO said “I’ll check. Ben, indeed, was in the mess hall and the CO introduced Ben to COL Barber, the Commander of the 525th. Col. Barber asked Ben what his secret was to the GREAT CHOW. Ben said that he was formerly an enlisted man and that he loved to cook and enjoyed good food and he just happened to have a great mess sergeant that used to be a chef and had studied at the Cordon Bleu School before enlisting in the Army.

COL Barber then asked Ben what his background was and Ben told Col. Barber his whole story. COL Barber suddenly had a flash run through his mind. Ben was a highly trained covert operative and had just graduated (6 MONTHS AGO) from the covert spy training school at Ft. Holibird, Maryland. Col. Barber told Ben that he had an immediate opening in Qui Nhon for a Case Officer (Agent Handler) for one of the best operations in the country and he needed to make sure that he had a high quality Case Officer to run one of the best sources that he had, an agent CODE NAMED “HARRY”. Ben said “PICK ME COACH, SEND ME IN, I’M READY”.

COL Barber told Ben to pack his bags, he was going to Qui Nhon, NOW. Ben’s MIBARS CO asked COL Barber what he was going to do for an XO for his Headquarters Company. COL Barber told the MIBARS CO that he could find himself a grunt at the replacement detachment, that he (COL Barber) needed Ben in Qui Nhon to run HARRY because Harry’s Case Officer was leaving country in just a few days.

McGarth, Special Forces (SF) Captain

It was right around that time that Aussie got transferred from the CIA station in Qui Nhon AND the CIA station in Qui Nhon got a new Station Chief. The new Station Chief was a guy named Pat Haley and the new PRU Advisor was a Special Forces, Green Beret Captain named John McGarth. He had civilian documents and a civilian cover to avoid too much high profile military bull shit. The lower the profile that was maintained by the CIA, the better big brother liked it.

BEN'S DOCUMENTS

Ben's documentation was simple, he was Department of the Army Civilian working for USA PAAD. He had a black jeep with no markings and no top and wore green fatigues with no rank or insignia. He had a civilian ID card and the MPs couldn't hassle him in any way shape or form.

He didn't even need a curfew pass, all he needed was his DAC (Dept. of the Army Civilian) ID card. It was as simple as that. George R was Jealous. He was always getting hassled by the MPs.

Whenever Ben was questioned by the MPs, he would always just tell the MPs to go get fucked, he was a goddamn civilian and what he did was none of their fucking business.

POLINSKY AND HARRY

Perry Polinsky only had 3 days left in country so Polinsky had to work quickly to get Ben up to speed with Harry. Polinsky and Harry both knew that Polinsky would be leaving country soon so Polinsky set up what was called “an emergency meeting procedure”. Polinsky left Harry the “signal” for an emergency meeting. Harry knew the designated time and place for the emergency meeting. It would be the next day at the designated place at the prearranged time.

Polinsky introduced Ben to Harry and told Harry that Ben would be Harry's new “Handler” and Harry would be reporting to Ben and only to Ben. Polinsky gave Harry his final payment and wished Harry well. Harry spoke what would be called pigeon English. Lots of slang, street sayings, a little French and many short cuts inside the shortened terms within the simple language called “pigeon English”. Ben told Harry that he wanted to meet with Harry every other day for about 2 weeks to get familiar with Harry and learn as much as he could about Harry and his sub agents, where they were, what they did, how they operated, what their placement was, and what information he could expect to get.

POLINSKY’S GIRL FRIEND

The day before Polinsky left country he introduced Ben to his girl friend, Ann. Besides having a good, stable, high quality operation going on, Polinsky had a great young Vietnamese girl friend with her own place to live in downtown Qui Nhon, complete with a covered and hidden garage to park and store his black jeep.

Ben had inherited one of the best covert operations in Vietnam along with a built in girl friend complete with an extra place to stay along with a low maintenance female companion that spoke reasonably decent pigeon English. WOW, Ben landed in heaven AGAIN!!!

BEN’S WEAPON

Ben was, kind of, on his own.

His 525th “in processing” was so quick he practically had no orientation at all. He went from running a mess hall and keeping track of a bunch of high tech aerial recon equipment, including air planes and high tech photography equipment, to running one of the best covert sources that the US Army had at its disposal.

Ben was naturally quite resourceful.

When he was at Battalion Headquarters in Nha Trang receiving his civilian documentation, Ben asked the Operations Officer “what about a gun”???. The OPS officer said “you don’t get one, you’re a fucking civilian. Ben just about had a cow. “What, no gun?? Why the fuck don’t I get a gun?” “Civilians don’t carry guns over here, that’s just the way it is!”

Major Brintnall, the detachment CO, was leaving country soon and knew very little about running covert operations. He had his own problems and was quite detached from the day to day operations at the detachment.

Around Ben’s second week in Qui Nhon Ben asked Ann, his new girl friend that he had inherited from Polinsky, if she could get him a gun “off the books”. She told him that she would look, but guns were hard to get for civilians all over the country. About 2 days later she said that she had found him a small .38 revolver with six bullets for 50 bucks. Ben gave her the money in MPC, Military Payment Certificates, because greenback dollars were illegal, except in COVERT OPS. GO FIGURE!!

RE-TRAINING HARRY

Ben found out over the next 2 weeks that most of Harry’s information came from his father who was a well known pilot in the Vietnamese Air Force. In fact Harry’s father was the personal pilot for the Vice President of the Country, Nguyen Cao Ky. Harry’s father was well placed and was providing a lot of good inside political information about the inner workings of the office of the Vice President of the country of Vietnam.

Almost immediately Ben had a “COME TO JESUS MEETING” with Harry. Ben told Harry that he (Harry) had been providing good political information about KY, but that Ben didn’t like politics and didn’t give a shit about the Saigon Government. What he wanted was “tactical and personal” information about the VC. Names, ranks, positions within the Cadre, the structure of the VC cadre. Ben wanted to know how money was being raised, how the VC was being fed, where the NVA (North Vietnamese Army) was. He wanted to know what the NVA unit designations were. What were the NVA intentions?? What were their goals and where were they going to attack?? Stuff like that.

Ben felt like Harry was a damn good agent, he just needed to be “re-focused” into producing information on the enemy VC instead of only producing political information provided by his father. Ben told Harry to meet more of his father’s friends, especially those from Laos and those that knew the inner workings of the VC. Ben told Harry that the VC were everywhere, all he needed to do was find some of them and pay them some good money to “RAT” on their brothers. Before, Polinsky was paying Harry by the month to provide political information from his father. Ben told Harry that from now on he would only be paid if his information was good, correct and furnished in a timely manner. He would only be paid AFTER the information was CONFIRMED by “on the ground” operations run by the local PRU or Police Special Branch who was being coordinated by McGarth.

Ben taught Harry how to draw simple maps of what was “on the ground” like he learned how to do while he was at Infantry School, how to draw hooches and where they were located in relation to rice paddies. Ben taught Harry how to “elicit” information from friends of some of his father’s friends, how to get them talking and just sit around and listen. He taught Harry how to “develop” friends within the VC infrastructure.

Ben was surprised to learn how little Harry actually knew about counter surveillance measures, that is, how to tell if someone is following you by taking aggressive measures like reversing your direction of travel and seeing who reverses their direction of travel. He taught Harry to “ALWAYS BE TOTALLY AWARE OF EVERYTHING GOING ON AROUND YOU”. “If you let your guard down once, you die”. You must always maintain secrecy and never tell anyone what you are actually doing.

THIS WAS ALL JUST SIMPLE SPY STUFF 101 THAT EVERYONE LEARNED IN SPY SCHOOL.

HARRY LEANS ON BEN AND BECOMES THE HAPPIEST SPY IN QUI NHON

About the third week of Ben re-training Harry, Ben was ragging on Harry to begin bringing in some tactical information on the local VC. Harry said that he had transportation problems because his 1961 model “Mo-Ped” was a piece of junk and he needed new transportation if he was going to travel around and develop “field information” on the local VC. Ben said “Bring me some good information and I will see if I can get you enough money to get you a used Honda motorcycle. Harry said “Me no get VC information without NEW MOTORCYCLE!! Harry told Ben: “I give good information, me good spy. Me working on good information. Me getting new sources. Me need travel to see new agents. My mo-ped a piece of shit, no good, number 10, no run. Me need NEW MOTORCYCLE. Me WANT NEW motorcycle. ME GET YOU FUCKING GOOD INFORMATION ON VC.

Ben says “OK, OK I see what I can do. How much is a New Honda 150 motorcycle. Harry says “\$800 US”, Green only, NO MPC. Ben says: “You full of shit, I find out for sure”. Ben leaves the meeting and tells Harry that he will see him in 3 days and gives Harry a new meeting sight and he tells Harry to make sure that he is not followed and to change his direction of travel at least three times before he gets to the meeting.

Ben goes to Ann’s house and has sex with her and asks her to find out what a brand new, or a great used Honda 150 costs, “on the economy”. Just find me the best deal, OK??? Ben leaves Ann’s house and heads to the USA PAAD office to go talk to Major Brintnall.

Ben was in a quandary. Three weeks into his new job, his well known, really good agent starts pressuring him for a new motorcycle to START bringing in GOOD information on the local VC. Upon arriving back at the USA PAAD office, Ben goes into the CO’s office, closes the door and tells Major Brintnall that Harry is leaning on him for a new motorcycle. Ben engages Major Brintnall in a conversation about Harry’s past performance. Ben states that Harry has a great reputation for producing great political information and he (Ben) is attempting to get Harry to produce information on the VC, both local and national, because he has such great contacts.

Major B states that he is not all that familiar with the individual agents and their operations and their information. Major B states that he would like to talk to the Battalion Operations Officer, Major Hubbard, and get Major Hubbard’s opinion and input. Major B also wants to get Major Hubbard to coordinate the approval and the purchase through CW4 McCall, the Chief Warrant Officer in charge of the Contingency Fund (CF). The Charlie Foxtrot, as it was called, were the funds that were used to run covert operations, to pay covert agents and to make covert payments for “necessities”, toys, supplies, tradecraft materials etc. that were essential for any spy to produce GOOD, TIMELY INFORMATION.

CW4 McCall was a real hardnosed “accountant/CPA” type that watched every penny of every covert op in the Battalion. Everything had to be justified AND accounted for. A motorcycle is a major item, an asset, and not an expense, and, normally would go on someone’s “books” to be depreciated over some period of time. Hard assets had to be justified and approved by Group Headquarters. Ben knew that Harry had a lot of potential but hadn’t produced any top quality information on the VC as of yet. Ben had a “gut feeling” that if he could swing the motorcycle that he could “hold it over Harry’s head” and get him to produce a lot of GREAT information real quick.

Major Hubbard went into action. Major Hubbard contacted the Group Operations Officer in Saigon and the Group Ops Officer went over to COL Barber’s office and told COL Barber that the new guy in Qui Nhon, Coleson, wanted to get Harry a new motorcycle. Col Barber picks up his phone and places a direct call to Ben Coleson at the USA PAAD office. COL Barber says “how’s it goin’, Ben? Ben says “Actually, pretty good. I’m getting Harry trained at his new duties”. COL Barber says “What’s the deal with a new motorcycle. Be careful what you say over this line”. Ben says: “With his new duties, he will have to do a lot of traveling and his old mo-ped won’t cut it. In fact, it is broke down right now.” COL B says: “That’s all I needed to know, I’ll get it wired up.” COL B tells the ops officer to authorize the expenditure. The ops officer says “yes sir” and leaves. The Group ops officer contacts Major Hubbard in Nha Trang and gives him the “go ahead” for the motorcycle for Harry.

Major Hubbard calls CW4 McCall into his office and says that Barber says that Harry can have a new motorcycle but just make sure he gets a good deal and doesn’t spend more than it is worth. CW4 McCall calls Ben directly and tells him that he just got the funds cleared for Harry to get a new motorcycle. Ben was tickled shitless. Ben pokes his head into Major B’s office and says “COL Barber says that Harry can have a new motorcycle.” Major B says “Don’t spend too much money”. Ben says: “I won’t, and I’ll make sure we get our money’s worth out of Harry”.

That evening Ben goes back to Ann’s house and has sex with Ann and takes her out for a bowl of pho’ and gets in a conversation about what it costs to buy a new Honda 150 on the economy. Ann says that she found one that was almost new for \$125, GREEN, NO MPC. Ben says that sounds great. I’ll get \$150 and pay you \$25 for finding such a good deal. Ann says: “Great, I lub u berry much”. Ben says: “I lub u TOO much”. They went home, took a shower and had sex again and went to sleep.

The next day was the next scheduled meeting with Harry, in the afternoon. Before the meeting Ben went to the USA PAAD office and called CW4 McCall and told him that the motorcycle would be \$200 bucks, ALL GREEN. CW4 McCall said: “I’ll send you the money in a dispatch”. Ben says: “GREAT”... That afternoon Ben had his meeting with Harry. Ben, all of a sudden, got real serious with Harry. Ben says: “Harry, you wouldn’t believe all of the bull shit I had to go through to get you a fucking brand new motorcycle. My boss talked to his boss and his boss talked to his boss and his boss talked to his boss. Then the BIG BOSS had to talk to the President of the United States. The president of the United States said that If you don’t get the best information of any spy in Vietnam, I MUST KILL YOU. It’s as simple as that. If information no good, you die.” BEN NOW HAD HARRY’S FULL

ATTENTION. Harry says: “I get good information. I promise. I promise. I get best information of any spy in Vietnam. No shit”!!! Ben says: “I’ll see you in 2 days at Rosey’s. (Rosey Mi Chou’s was the local whore house, where they met occasionally.

Ben went back to Ann’s where they had sex and spent the night. The next day the dispatch showed up at the USA PAAD office with \$200.00 in it for Ben, for Harry. Ben signed the receipt for the money. Ben went back over to Ann’s place, had sex with Ann and gave her \$150 to go get the motorcycle. About 3 hours later Ann shows back up with an “ALMOST NEW, BRIGHT SHINY RED HONDA 150. Ann had a great big grin because she knew how to ride small motorcycles. She gave Ben a little hug and they went into her place and had sex on the old, thin feather mattress on a piece of plywood about 4 inches off of the floor on a little platform in Ann’s little 1 room, modest home.

The next day Ben woke up and had sex with Ann and spent the rest of the day with Ann riding around Qui Nhon on the motorcycle. That evening, at the appointed time, Ben showed up at Rosey’s with the new Honda for Harry. Harry was outside waiting for Ben. Harry saw Ben ride up on the motorcycle and started smiling from ear to ear. “Mita Coleson, it beautiful, number 1 motorcycle, me lub it.” You could tell that Harry was really HAPPY.

Ben parked the motorcycle around the block from Rosey’s and he and Harry took a little walk around the block. Again Ben got real serious with Harry. Ben said: “Harry, you now got be best spy in all of Vietnam. Nobody know you real name, you only Harry. You famous now and everybody know that Harry has a new motorcycle. YOU GET THE BEST INFORMATION ON VC IN VIETNAM OR YOU DIE. Harry continued to smile. “Me get you best information in Vietnam, YOU SEE! Ben says: “We meet again in 3 days. We meet at 3 in the afternoon at Johnnies Bar in Qui Nhon.” Harry says: “Me be there, Mita O.” Ben walks around the corner to the front door to Rosey’s Bar and Whorehouse. He takes \$10.00 out of his pocket and picks out one of the local working girls and takes her upstairs and takes a steam bath and balls his brains loose. In about an hour and a half he walks out the front door to Rosey’s and catches a rickshaw ride back to Ann’s place. Ben was pretty happy. He landed in Heaven AGAIN.

From that day forward, Ben had absolute and total control over Harry. It was as simple as that.

Also, from that day forward Ben would be a regular customer at Rosey’s Whorehouse. It was owned by the Provost Marshall (Head MP) and, roomer had it, the profits were split among the MPs and some of the local politicians.

Ben was also a regular visitor to Dr. Steve Emmett’s office. Dr. Emmett was the dermatologist and venereal disease specialist for most of Central Vietnam (II Corps) and Steve began keeping a separate record of all the venereal diseases that Ben acquired while he was in Qui Nhon. Every time Ben came to his office for treatment, Steve took pictures of Ben’s dick and stated many times that Ben had set the record for Venereal disease treatments in all of Vietnam. Steve claimed that he had, by way of Ben Coleson, the best collection of VD pictures in all of Vietnam.

CHAPTER 6

MORE OF THE SAME PART 2

FROM JULY 1970 TO THE END OF DECEMBER 1970.

MAJOR BRINTNALL

It was right around this time that Major Brintnall’s replacement arrived. Before he left, he was required to fill out Officer Efficiency Reports on all of his subordinates. Major Brintnall was a West Point graduate and conducted everything “by the book”, even though we were a covert unit running covert ops and were TOTALLY UNDER COVER. No one liked him and he kept most of us pretty pissed off at him.

To make a long story short, he flushed all of the officers in the detachment down the crapper except me. The officer rating system was a summary of our performance and a percentage rating from 0 to 100%. Most military officers receive reasonably high ratings. One or 2 ratings below 95 can ruin a career.

The only officer to receive even a GREAT rating was me. I got a 98 and Major Brintnall told me that it was the highest OER score that he had ever given. I had become famous by simply stumbling over the TOP SECRET cover sheet to President Nixon’s Invasion Plans for Cambodia and guessing the combination to the MACV top secret document control safe. Also, my new MSS operation in An Nhon was showing spectacular results for being a “NEWLY RECRUITED AGENT”. Things were already starting to look up at Phu Cat Air Base with sapper attacks already on the decline. Our operations at An Nhon and Phu Cat were becoming pretty well known throughout the intelligence community.

The next highest rating was Polinsky’s 92.

Everyone else’s score was in the 80’s, mostly because of military bearing, not shaving and stuff like that. Harry was one of the most famous agents in the country so Polinsky automatically got a good score. The other operations were quite mediocre so Brintnall blamed the Case Officers because they had such shitty agents. In actuality most of the agents in the country were being paid good wages for shitty information. That’s just the way it was. There were a few really good operations, but not many.

THE ENLISTED MEN’S SHOWER.

My second worst ass chewing came from Major Brintnall, my second CO. We went through several phases where the officer’s shower had NO HOT WATER. I showered in the enlisted man’s shower that had plenty of hot water. Brintnall got pissed and threatened to give me an ARTICLE 15.

“Flowers in the Killing Fields I” by Rick Spangle

AssHole. He really got pissed the second time he caught me. I damn near got the Article 15. (An Article 15 is Administrative Punishment, accepted by a soldier, in lieu of a Court Marshall)

Major Brintnall gave me a 98 on my OER (Officer Efficiency Report) just before he left country around the end of June 1970. He said it was the highest OER he had ever given in his entire career.

THE 173RD AIRBORNE BRIGADE.

Several times, I went to Bong Song, (LZ English), Home of the 173rd, and helped on our covert ops with our two man team running agents in support of several 173rd operations, Maloon and Kells.

Fred Maloon was an E-4 and a great guy. CPT Kells was super scared of his shadow. He wore a flak jacket, a helmet liner AND a combat helmet everywhere he went, including covert meetings.

They always made sure I got a good hot shower.

MAJOR JOE

Our new Commanding Officer was Major Joseph H. Scallan, a full blown real Military Intelligence Officer and real cool to boot.

Immediately, he relaxed things around the office. Effective IMMEDIATELY there was no such thing as “military bearing”. We were running COVERT OPS and we were not going to be judged on how we looked, or when we shaved, we would be judged by the results of our operations, good or bad.

Major Joe took an immediate liking to me and Ben. He also liked Terry Moses, the company clerk, and he loved his big poster board, the country wide map in his office with the ASA and HUMINT spots marked on it.

The map was real big and full of different colored dots and spots. They were little peel and stick DOTS that were full of different meanings. Some were ASA intercept spots where the ASA had intercepted radio transmissions from VC and NVA radios. Some of the colored dots were HUMINT (Human Intelligence) dots. Those dots came from a wide variety of sources. Some came from CIA operations in Laos, from a guy named “the HOG”. The “HOG REPORTS” came from Aussie, McGarth or the CIA Station Chief, Haley. At the time, that’s all we knew.

“Flowers in the Killing Fields I” by Rick Spangle

What I found out later was that the HOG REPORTS originated from a relatively young and quite famous CIA officer named Jerry “Hog” Daniels” who spent many years as the primary case officer for the famous “Laotian drug lord”, Vang Pao. Vang Pao was the high profile drug lord that was featured in the movie “Air America”, starring Mel Gibson. Besides all of the comedy and the drug running, those operations produced quite a bit of excellent covert operational data, besides dropping tons of food and supplies to the enemy along the Ho Chi Minh Trail.

The ASA was producing tons of excellent electronic intercept data by way of a new type of receiver antenna called “the parabolic antenna”. Has anyone heard of those???

The CIA and the 525th were producing some excellent HUMINT (Human Source) data, some of which was coming from HARRY, by way of Ben. Much of this data came as a result of Harry’s contacts within the Vietnamese Air Force, Vice President KY, and the results of information gained while running drugs into Vietnam (and the US) from the “GOLDEN TRIANGLE”.

Big Brother ain’t going to like this, but it is no secret now and it is true. It was just one of the facts of life during the covert parts of the War in Vietnam.

All of this information is readily available on the internet, via GOOGLE.

BEN AND RICK GET AMBUSHED IN AN OFF LIMITS BAR, AFTER HOURS. (Another chance to die)

When Rick was back in Qui Nhon, he and Ben hung out together on a regular basis either at the Qui Nhon Support Command Officer’s Club or at one of the “OFF LIMITS” bars in down town Qui Nhon. The VC pretty much hid out during the day but had control of certain areas at night. Sometimes they even hung out at the LEPER’S BEACH. It was the site of a former leper colony. George R and Ben even hosted a barbecue cook out party with a case of steaks provided by Major Jim Wilson, the Veterinarian.

Rick and Ben were pretty much forced to hang out at some of the “off limits” bars at night in order to contact VC sources. Sometimes they were accompanied by one of the CIA’s interpreters that were receiving contingency money from us or one of the CIA guys.

One night, in late August or early September, Ben and Rick were in a local “off limits” bar in an off limits area where they occasionally met VC sources or one of the interpreters. This night, about 2 AM, some ass hole came down the street in a jeep with 2 guys with M-1 Carbines and opened fire on the bar. Rick had his M-16 and his .45 and Ben had his fucking snub nosed .38 pee shooter. They ducked under the table and Ben pulled his .38, turned around and started to open fire. Rick said “not now, not now”. Rick pitched him his .45 and said “this’ll make more noise”. Rick said “When I say 3 turn around, open fire and cover me”. “3.” Ben turned and began firing, Rick rolled over onto the floor in the prone position, shaking like a leaf, took aim and fired twice. He got one of them and started shooting at the other one, they sped off quick. The ass holes must have recognized Ben’s suspicious looking black jeep.

“Flowers in the Killing Fields I” by Rick Spangle

It was out front. We were OK. We ran for it and headed out of the bar just wanting to leave and get the hell out of there. The owner was waving his hands yelling “what me do, what me do???” Ben said “Ask the fucking MP’s and the VC, we don’t know shit. We weren’t even here. Leave us the fuck alone or we shoot you.” Another lucky night in Qui Nhon, and another chance to die!!!

BAD MOON RISING (ANOTHER CHANCE TO DIE)

Ben and Rick were going to another outdoor USO show, this one from the Philippines. The band was great, they sounded just like Credence Clear Water Revival and it sounded just like we were listening to Fogerty and the great band. There were about 200 of us standing in front of the outdoor stage listening to a great concert, and then all hell broke loose.

About ½ way through the song “BAD MOON RISING”, we came under a mortar attack from our rear. Some VC had come up from down the beach to sneak up on us. THERE WAS NO REAR SECURITY. The VC set up about 3 or mortars and began shelling us.

Ben and Rick remembered their infantry training and began “hauling ass” and haphazardly running for their lives. A round hit dangerously close to them and the concussion tripped them up. They picked themselves up and ran as fast as they could to the Qui Nhon Army Air Field, where Ben had a room in the civilian quarters. He got out the Scotch and they toasted living through another “close call in Qui Nhon”. If they had been regular troops, they would have both gotten Purple Hearts from skinning up their arms when they fell during the enemy attack.

STEALING ALL OF THE JEEPS AT THE OFFICER’S CLUB IN LESS THAN 20 MINUTES.

YEP. Me, Ben Coleson and Dr. Steve Emmett pulled this one off perfectly. I taught Steve how to pick locks. He got real good. The three of us planned it out and executed it perfectly. The show at the Officer’s Club was the “Tassie Hamilton Show, from Australia. We picked the locks on about 30 jeeps, started them up, moved them around and parked them all behind the field grade BOQ (Bachelor Officer’s Quarters), and then left. When the show was over and everyone left the Officer’s Club, there were no jeeps to be found. Steve Emmett finally had to tell them where they were.

MAJOR JAMES WILSON, TEXAS AGGIE AND II CORPS VETANARIAN

Major Wilson, the Aggie vet, was normally in costume as “Snoopy” (from Peanuts) as “the Red Baron” wearing authentic Sopwith Camel floppy eared head gear, complete with goggles. He had a jeep with no windshield. I assisted in several animal surgeries and he always wore it.

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He was the head meat inspector for the II Corps area. We invited him to many parties and he was usually good for a case of steaks or chickens that needed to be tested to see if the meat was spoiled.

He formed a club called The Lancers. To be initiated, you had to be on a beach, held by your feet by him, standing on your head. Then you had to drink a ½ pint of Lancer’s Wine. Many of us did. I may have a picture of my initiation.

He was the hardest drinker of all of our friends. He partied hard all of the time and usually could be found drunk somewhere around the airfield, the hospital, or around the officer’s club.

Twice, Ben and I threw a party in his honor at the Leper Beach. The Beach was actually “off limits” and was under VC control BUT, because it was the former sight of a leper colony we figured that they would stay away. It was a gorgeous sight, right on the South China Sea and a great spot for a barbecue party. I still have a picture of me cooking some of Major Wilson’s steaks at one of the parties that we had in his honor. He always had an excuse for a party, in fact his favorite quote was “A party is an excuse within itself, what more can I say.”

MAJOR JOE’S HOBBY.

Major Joe’s hobby was tongue exercising. Yep. He kept a small cocktail glass at his desk during the day. While we were studying the ditty bop map in his office he would put the glass up to his mouth and try to touch the bottom of the glass with his tongue. At the officer’s club he would drink scotch on the rocks. After each drink he would do the same thing, over and over.

PHU CAT AIRBASE AND THE SHADOWS

Phu Cat Air Base was the home of an Air Squadron of a new series of Top Secret air weapons called SHADOWS. They were C-119 Flying Box Cars that had been modified with improvements that came out of the PUFF THE MAGIC DRAGON AND SPOOKIE programs. I got a tour of a highly classified SHADOW by one of the pilots who was my Texas Aggie buddy named Mike Mankin who introduced me to the Base Commander. In the back, it had, besides the 4 Gatling style mini-guns, a huge zillion power carbon arc lamp for lighting up battle fields at night and, of all things, a 105 Howitzer used for firing fodder and other classified stuff at the enemy. I think that they also fired other stuff that they could not tell me about.

“Flowers in the Killing Fields I” by Rick Spangle

The C-119's were left over from WWII and were a good stable platform and could carry more weight than a C-46, Gooney Bird. Their only disadvantage was the fact that all of the avionics was mounted ABOVE AND BEHIND the pilot's heads. Crash landings were serious business and “The Shadows”, among several other planes, were called “Widow Makers”.

Those Phu Cat Air Force boys had it great, for a Combat Area. As I stated before, the BOQ rooms were air conditioned and they had a great Officer's Club and a pitch and put golf course. The golf course had slightly packed sand for greens. They were not much to look at, but they were OK for a combat zone and that made for a perfect plot against one of the hard ass colonels on the base that loved to play golf and raise hell with the cooks and the mess sergeant at the officer's club. The Colonel continually ragged on the cooks and the Mess Sergeant about the quality of the food. I thought that the food was pretty good so I helped the Mess SGT and the cooks pull off one of the greatest gags of all time on that golf course and I call it “The Golf Course Assassination Plot”. It took about 4 months of prep work to pull off.

THE GOLF COURSE ASSASSINATION PLOT PART 1

Essentially what we did was have the mess sergeant and the cooks at the Phu Cat Air Base officer's club raise and feed little local gophers in their barracks and rooms. Then the cooks would sneak onto the golf course at night and dig little holes in the sand greens for the gophers to live in and then they would place feed in the holes for the gophers. The crew kept feeding the gophers in their little holes for four months. TO BE CONTINUED.

They also had a great tape center for dubbing music tapes. At this time, I was being treated quite well because the attacks on the base were coming down to a tolerable level and most of the pilots knew that I was running intelligence for the base security operations. They were still getting hit regularly but not near like it was two months before.

MORE OF BEN'S OPERATIONS

During this time, Harry, who was already one of the best and most well known agents in the country, was getting to be even better. Ben was having regular meetings with Harry, and because Harry was an established agent for a pretty decent length of time and because Harry's information repeatedly checked out great, because Ben had re-trained him so well, Harry's rating was raised to a B-2. That was the highest rating that Harry could get because of the rating system. You had to be an

American to be rated A, no matter how good or reliable you were or how great your information was. Your information could only be rated 1 if you were an American. It was a pretty stupid system, but that’s just the way it was.

Because Harry’s information was so good and because it had been proven up in so often in the past, Ben did not have to go through the normal procedure of obtaining permission to disseminate Harry’s information. McGarth had advance knowledge of Ben’s meetings with Harry and usually was standing by with several squads of PRUs ready to go out the next day and react to Harry’s latest information.

Ben and Harry were becoming quite famous within the inner circles of the intelligence community. Major Joe was also becoming quite well known and well respected as the Detachment Commander with the best operations in the entire country. George R and Ben were making Major Joe famous.

BEN SENDS HARRY TO LAOS

Ben really didn’t send Harry to Laos, what he did was, at Major Joe’s request, ask Harry to send several of his action agents over to Laos on a spotting mission along the Ho Chi Minh trail.

Ben also told Harry to cautiously round up a few of his dad’s drug running friends and get them to start providing information on troop movements along the HO CHI MINH TRAIL.

Ben also offered Harry and his guys a “big bonus” if they could hire some Hmong spotters along the trail and bring back some maps of some really large troop concentrations along the trail.

Ben requested some extra money from the Contingency Fund CW4 and Major Joe got it approved.

During this time Major Joe and George R were analyzing the ASA intercept reports and plotting them on the big map in Major Joe’s office. Harry was one of quite a few HUMINT operations that were confirming the locations of radio transmissions.

HARRY AND THE NVA PAYROLL GIG

This may have been one of Harry’s best intelligence coups.

Ben had been making the PRU compound his regular hangout and he got to know Pat Haley, the CIA Station Chief, and John McGarth the PRU Advisor quite well. All of Harry’s information was proving to be quite valuable and Ben’s information was being accepted with more and more confidence with every operation that was being run with Harry’s spectacular information.

“Flowers in the Killing Fields I” by Rick Spangle

Harry, Ben, George R, and Major Joe were becoming more and more famous within the intelligence community and COL Barber was sending congratulatory notes quite often.

Since Ben was a regular at the PRU compound, and because Harry’s information was being acted on “most of the time” and with “due swiftness”, Ben sometimes would accompany McGarth, Tich, and the rest of the PRU team on some of the local Binh Dinh Province operations. Ben remembers being on quite a few of these operations and he remembers some of brutal kills and captures that Tich and the rest of the PRU made as a result of the spectacular intelligence provided by Harry.

He also remembers questioning McGarth about the loyalty of the individual PRU soldiers and about his own “personal security”. McGarth always told Ben that he had no fear of his life because he held the key to the entire operation, “THE MONEY”. He said that these were the highest paid Vietnamese troops in Vietnam and he paid each one of them “PERSONALLY”. He also said that he put the “fear of god into each one of them EVERY time that he paid them. When any action started, about 6 of the “troops” stayed right with Ben and McGarth to make sure that nothing happened to them.

As far as their weaponry, they carried captured AK-47s most of the time. They had access to M-1 Carbines, but they all preferred the AKs. Many times they dressed as VC and snuck up on the VC acting like fellow VC and then surprised the VC by killing several of them and telling the remaining few that they had 2 choices, work for the Americans, or DIE. Most of them worked for the Americans.

The PRU had 4 vehicles, 3 old 4WD SUVs and an old jeep, all with no markings. The compound was kind of dank, moldy and dingy. The guard gate was old and you could climb over it fairly easily. As you walked in through the gate, about 50 feet, off to the left, was the operations office where the advisor (Aussie or McGarth) had a desk and a meeting room with several tables and chairs for meetings and writing operations plans.

If you walked straight into the compound, there was a breezeway between the Station Chief’s office and the PRU office. Behind the Station Chief’s office was the administrative office. The Station Chief had a pretty cool office with quite a few maps on the wall, some with colored dots on them showing where successful operations had been carried out. Several of the maps showed detailed layouts of several key villages in Tuy Phuoc and An Nhon where known VC were known to “hang out”. Behind the Station Chief’s office and the administrative office was a fairly large “barracks” with the ability to house about 40 men. Most of the PRU troops maintained residences in the city of Qui Nhon or other local villages and some of them even maintained “cover identities”, “cover relationships with women” and “cover jobs” to help them ELIMINATE SUSPICION of being involved with the CIA or the PRU.

The entire PRU operation was quite well run and quite professional in all respects.

NOW FOR THE NVA PAYROLL GIG.

Harry had an extremely well placed NVA (North Vietnamese Army) source that was being quite well paid for excellent information about enemy troop movements. This information was normally being reported to Major Joe to use for spotting and locating troop movements on his big map board in his office.

This time on Harry’s routine meeting with Ben, Harry reported that the NVA had a large payroll coming down from Hanoi and when it was going to be coming through Laos, Harry’s agent was going to be one of the guards. Ben about had a cat. All of that particular agent’s past information had always been absolutely correct so Ben immediately began working up an O-Plan (Operation Plan) in his mind.

Ben figured that McGarth would be “chomping at the bit” to get his hands on that data. Ben told Harry that he wanted to go into “emergency meeting mode”. Ben told Harry to make sure that he set up a similar procedure with his agent so no one was forced to wait for a regular meeting. Ben taught Harry how to schedule “emergency meetings” by using “emergency signals”. They both used the “chalk method”. Ben and Harry had a regular place, that they changed often, where each one checked every day where each one could place a covert chalk mark when one of them wanted to schedule an emergency meeting. Ben told Harry to do the same thing with his agent that was going to be a guard for the NVA payroll while the payroll shipment was in Laos.

Ben, Harry and Harry’s agent went into “emergency mode”. Ben notified McGarth that Harry’s guy was in emergency mode and that he and Harry were in emergency mode. Ben had been working with Harry on drawing maps of sections of the Ho Chi Minh Trail and he told Harry to make sure that his agent had a good map of the specific route along the trail that the payroll was going to take. Ben also gave Harry specific instructions on how to describe the payroll security plan including what vehicle the payroll was going to be in, where it was going to be hidden, how it was going to be hidden and who or what officer, was to be carrying the payroll or who was going to be in charge of the transportation of the payroll and how they were going to be dressed.

Ben had everything in place.

Harry had several other operations going at this time so Ben and Harry were routinely meeting twice a week and Ben was checking his emergency chalk mark location faithfully, every single day. Then it happened, the chalk mark showed up. Harry and Ben met the next day, just like clockwork. Harry’s agent had all of the information including the description of the vehicle, a map of the route of the payroll, and the estimated time that the payroll was expected to pass each “checkpoint” along the Trail.

Ben immediately went to the PRU compound and met with McGarth. They took Harry’s maps and began plotting the information on the latest maps furnished by “The Company”. Ben and

McGarth met with the CIA Station Chief Haley. Haley and McGarth told Ben that they would “take it from here.”

Because he had put in so many hours over the last 2 weeks, Major Joe told Ben to take a week off and go fuck himself into oblivion. Ben was given a week off for “in country R&R”. Ben was a bit tired of his girl friend Ann and he had hustled all of the “good looking” doughnut dollies and he didn’t really have a plan for a week off. So he decided to go back to his hooch on the airfield. On the way back to his hooch right at the entrance to the airfield and the 67th Evac Hospital stood the most famous hooker in all of Qui Nhon, Motor Pool Mary.

Motor Pool walked right out in front of Ben’s jeep, put up her hands and said “stop, stop, we need talk”. Ben said “What the fuck do you want this time, Motor Pool??”. “I got some top information for you, BIG BEN!”, but first I want fuck you, for free. You good looking American and several of Rosey’s girls tell me you have great big dick. I hab little bitty pussy and me want shave it for you.” Ben said “You too dirty, you fuck too many guys. If you want to be with me I give you bath”. Motor Pool said, “You treat me good and give me bath??” “YEP, ME GIVE YOU BATH”. Mary said “Me like bath”. Ben looked around and said “Get in the back of my jeep and lay on the floor, I not want anyone see me with you”.

Ben drives the 100 or so yards to his hooch in the civilian barracks (BOQ) and no one is around. He tells Mary to get out and “no let anyone see you”. They went into Ben’s room. Ben didn’t have a shower in his room. He went down to the shower building behind the civilian BOQ to check and see if anyone was there. Someone was in the shower. Ben took Motor Pool over to the hospital which was less than 100 yards away. He went in and found one of the nurses that he knew and told her that he was going to take Motor Pool over to see Dr. Emmett so he could give her an EXAM to make sure that she didn’t have anything and that he would appreciate it if she would let Ben scrub her down here and give her a bath. Nurse Good Body said “sure” and showed Ben where he could clean her up. Ben gave her a good “scrub down” in the shower and even shampooed her hair which was so wiry that he thought that she was ¼ African.

After he got her cleaned up he told her to lay down on the back floor board of his jeep and took her to the officer’s club and told her to stay down in the back of the jeep and “don’t let anyone see you”. He then went into the officer’s club looking for Steve Emmett. Steve was pretty predictable and had just sat down for a drink when Ben went over to him and told him that he needed him to do a VD inspection for him. Steve said “what have you been fucking this time?”

Note well: Ben had been a regular customer for Dr. Emmett’s Venereal Disease Clinic services. Ben was probably Steve’s best customer and Steve maintained a great collection of pictures of Ben’s genital region. Steve, Ben an George R hung out quite often, so this was not an “out of line request” for Ben to make under the circumstances.

Ben said: “It’s not for me this time, I’ve got Motor Pool Mary in the back of my jeep and I need you to give her a good VD inspection BEFORE I fuck her so you don’t have to take more pictures of my

“Flowers in the Killing Fields I” by Rick Spangle

dick next week. Steve said “Not a problem, meet me at my office, I’ll head back over, you know where it is. Ben said “Great”.

Ben goes and gets Motor Pool out of the floor of his jeep and says “Follow me over to doctor office. Stay behind me so no one will see me with you.” Motor Pool says, “OK, Big Ben, me feel good. Me like Bath”.

Ben walks about 50 yards to Steve’s office and has Dr. Emmett give Motor Pool Mary a thorough VD inspection. Steve even took a blood specimen and a urine specimen from Motor Pool and looked at both under his microscope. Motor Pool was clean and Steve gave her a “clean bill of health”. Motor Pool didn’t have anything.

Ben took Motor Pool back to his hooch and had his way with her several times over the next 3 days until both he and Motor Pool were smooth wore out.

After he was finished with Motor Pool, he left his jeep at his hooch and George R took him to Phu Cat Air Base and got him an air conditioned room at the BOQ for 3 days and George R’s Air Force buddies let him sit around in the BOQ day room and watch AFVN (the Armed Forces Vietnam Network) television station for a while and he got to play pool with the Air Force officers. Ben couldn’t believe how “plush” the officer’s club was at the Air Force Base. He even got to play pitch and put golf at the base golf course that had packed sand greens.

During those 3 days, George R had meetings with the Commander of the Korean Marine Company, the Base Commander of the Air Base and CPT Abraham, the An Nhon DIOCC. George R also checked in with the cooks on the “Golf Course Assassination Plot” and had a meeting with Fred.

After those 3 days, George R drove Ben back to the USA PAAD office in Qui Nhon. During the trip back from Phu Cat some sniper took a pot shot at Ben and Rick. Ben ducked down on the passenger floor board and screamed “how often does that happen?” Rick said, as he sped up and began weaving, “About every other time that I drive up here. “

When Ben and George R arrived back at USA PAAD, Major Joe asked Ben what happened with Harry’s information about the NVA payroll coming south along the Ho Chi Minh trail. Ben said “I haven’t been over to the PRU compound this whole week. Remember you gave me a week off.” Major Joe said “Yeah I know, don’t you think that you should get your ass over and see what happened??”

Ben took a big drag off of his cigarette and said “YEP. It’s late now, I’ll get over there 1st thing in the morning, I haven’t seen Ann in a week, I told her I was going on R&R.” I haven’t had any pussy in 3 whole days. Major Joe said “Get your ass out of here, sometimes you and George R really piss me off.”

George R drove Ben back to his hooch so he could pick up his jeep and drive over to Ann’s place.

THE RESULTS OF THE NVA PAYROLL GIG

Ben was obviously anxious to find out the results of the operation against the NVA payroll coming down the Ho Chi Minh Trail.

Ben Got out of bed with Ann about 10 AM the next day, picked up his .38 pistol and climbed into his black jeep. He headed over to the PRU compound.

He found McGarth and asked him how it went on the NVA payroll gig.

McGarth kind of hemmed and hawed around and kind of beat around the bush and told Ben that the payroll must have taken a different route than Harry’s guy said because they couldn’t find the vehicle that Harry’s guy described. Ben said “Are you shitting me”?? I figured you guys had a “lay down” for a haul of a lot of money, even if it was in Piasters. McGarth said that they didn’t find hide nor hair of any payroll money. Ben was devastated. Ben even got slightly sullen and depressed. Then Ben took a walk around the compound.

The troops no longer had AK 47s, they all had brand new, shiny M-16s. They were so new they were even glossy. They were even the newest model, the one with the good flash suppressor. Then Ben took a walk further around the compound and found that 2 of the old SUVs were gone and had been replaced by 2 BRAND NEW SUVs. Ben was hacked. They didn’t even bother to cut Ben and Harry in on the Booty.

Ben had to report back to Major Joe. Ben told Major Joe that McGarth was covering something up. McGarth just hemmed and hawed and made shitty excuses about not being able to find the Payroll. Ben told Major Joe about the M-16s and the 2 new SUVs. Ben got pretty hot.

The next week, there was a fresh new coat of paint on the stucco exterior walls of every building in the entire compound. Some of the buildings were painted dull green and some were painted white. The interior walls of the compound were also freshly painted.

Ben was really pissed. He could barely afford to pay Harry and these CIA guys were not being “straight up” with Ben. Ben never got the Company to admit that they had had a successful operation against the NVA payroll. He’s still pissed, to this day. To this day, Ben believes that McGarth had a big wad of cash stuffed somewhere around the compound.

“Flowers in the Killing Fields I” by Rick Spangle

BEN AND THE DIME SLOTS

Ben Coleson played the dime slots every single night he was at the Officer’s Club. One night, during a mortar attack, mortars smashed the poop out of the roof in 2 or 3 places. Everyone scrambled for safety, as was standard procedure. BEN STAYED RIGHT THERE PLAYING THE SLOTS. I started screaming at him. He was so focused on the slot machine that he just stayed there putting dimes in the machine. Then the shelling quit after the third round. The whole thing only lasted about a minute.

THE SENIOR OFFICERS’ BARRACKS TAKES A FEW MORTAR ROUNDS

One night, during another mortar attack, a mortar projectile struck the roof of the Senior Officer’s Quarters. Two Majors were in the act of having sex when it hit. The female major was on top and protected the guy. She got some shrapnel wounds and a Purple Heart. He escaped unharmed.

THE NIGHT OF THE 20,000 (MISSION IMPOSSIBLE II) (First person narrative)

This came as a result of months of diligent work and analysis and coordination by Major Joe and Rick, with operational intelligence effectiveness and in depth presentations to the Phu Cat Base Commander provided by George R himself.

Major Joe and Rick had been working on the DITTY BOP (ASA INTERCEPTS) – HUMINT (Human Intelligence) maps most of the Time that Major Joe was in country. Ditty Bop is the term for “Signal Intercept” or triangulating enemy radio signals. HUMINT is Human Intelligence, us boys. We were the MI version of Ground Pounders. We were the Indians with their ears to the tracks listening and watching for the enemy. This enemy did not use tracks.

We received signal intercept data from the Army Security Agency (ASA). All we got was enemy radio intercept data and we converted that to red, yellow, blue, green and black dots on a large rectangular map of Central Vietnam, Northeastern Cambodia and Eastern Laos. The different colors stood for different sized units, platoon, company, battalion, regiment, and division. We were plotting our HUMINT DATA and the ASA was picking up and sending us “traffic” from NVA, AND NLF (VC) radios. The ASA sent the coordinate updates almost every day by SECRET encrypted transmission to our headquarters in Saigon. Saigon sent them to Battalion and Battalion sent them to us.

“Flowers in the Killing Fields I” by Rick Spangle

Major Joe would get the coordinates of the new intercepts and plot them on the map every other day or so. Ben, by way of Harry, had access to Laotian spotters and NVA cadre that were covertly being paid to furnish information on troop concentrations along the Ho Chi Minh Trail. McGarth also furnished us with some information about troop concentrations along the trail. About every other day or so Major Joe would show George R the map with the ASA updates and Ben would give him his latest HUMINT spotter and NVA reports from Harry. Major Joe also got some HUMINT spotter data from Battalion who got the data from Group Headquarters in Saigon.

With the radio patterns that were set by the enemy invaders that were in Laos and Cambodia, our spotter reports and “group reports” and with the results of the ROLLING THUNDER After Action Reports, our analysis and distribution of reports to different Units, including the Air Force, netted approximately 50,000 enemy KIA in 4 months and around 20,000 KIA IN ONE NIGHT. Sometimes we could hear the “POUNDING” all the way to Qui Nhon.

The real key was timely distribution of reports. Essentially I had secret access to some of McGarth’s best data, courtesy of Aussie. Aussie showed me where the reports were kept at the PRU compound and I knew where to look for the data. The CIA had several good sources of spotter data of reports of NVA AND NLF troops coming down the Trail. I managed to get a gig going with the Base Commander at Phu Cat and he had a gig going with the Base Commander at a classified base in Thailand (Udorn).

Because of my position as the Intelligence Officer for Phu Cat Base Security working with the Koreans, the MSS, the DIOCC and the PRU and because of the extreme success of these operations, the Phu Cat BC (Base Commander) was real familiar with my activities as far as shutting down the sapper, rocket and mortar attacks on the Base. About once a week I would give him a briefing and bring him some of the MAP UPDATES that I had received from Major Joe.

I really didn’t know what was going on with the Air Force and the Rolling Thunder raids at the time, but apparently the Base Commander at Phu Cat and the Base Commander at Udorn (and/or Udapa), Thailand were good buddies and compared intelligence notes on a regular basis. The Phu Cat BC told me that he really appreciated my input and Major Joe’s insights on troop movements and troop concentrations along “THE TRAIL”. Harry’s Laotian operations were also useful in the analysis of all of this ASA and HUMINT data.

IF YOU HAVEN’T CAUGHT ON YET, THIS WAS ONE OF A FEW “BACK CHANNEL ACCESS OPERATIONS” WHEREBY GREAT INTELLIGENCE INFORMATION WAS SHARED BETWEEN INTELLIGENCE GATHERING AGENCIES AND OPERATIONAL UNITS THROUGH “NON-ROUTINE CHANNELS” OUTSIDE THE NORMAL CHAINS OF COMMAND TO THE EXTREME DETRIMENT OF THE ENEMY.

A NOTE ABOUT BODY COUNTS: MANY YEARS LATER, AFTER READING AT LEAST 10 BOOKS ABOUT THE CIA AND VIETNAM I CAME TO REALIZE THAT THE CIA NEVER REALLY REPORTED THE TRUTH ABOUT BODY COUNTS. SOMETIMES THEY OVER STATED THE BODY COUNTS TO HELP KEEP THE MONEY COMING FROM CONGRESS AND MAKE IT LOOK LIKE WE WERE HAVING MORE SUCCESS THAN WE WERE HAVING. SOMETIMES THEY WAY UNDER STATED THE BODY COUNTS IN ORDER TO GET MORE MONEY BECAUSE THE NUMBERS WERE SO LOW.

FRANK SNEPP NOTED THAT THE CIA WAS ASSASSINATING TONS OF ALLEGED VC CADRE WITH NO DECREASE IN VC CADRE AT ALL. SEE CHAPTER 7.

THE ATOMIC ENERGY COMMISSION TOP SECRET DOCUMENT GOES MISSING (Mission Impossible III)

DURING OCTOBER OF 1970 A SERIOUS EMERGENCY OCCURED WHILE GEORGE R WAS UNDER COVER AT PHU CAT WORKING WITH THE MSS, THE PRU AND THE AN NHON DIOCC AND THE PHU CAT AIR BASE COMMANDER.

THE AEC (ATOMIC ENERGY COMMISSION) TS (TOP SECRET) PLANS TO THE USS SAVANNAH (THE FIRST US NUCLEAR POWERED SHIP) SUDDENLY WENT MISSING. (This was 1970 in the middle of the COLD WAR FOR NUCLEAR SECRETS). This was around 18 months after the Second Kennedy Assassination and nuclear tension was REAL HIGH IN THE WORLD.

THIS WAS AN EXTRA SERIOUS BIG MAJOR DEAL FOR MANY REASONS:

1. THERE WAS A STOLEN, LIVE, AEC, Top Secret DOCUMENT MISSING.
2. In the stolen plans, the fuel tank diagrams and access points to get to them were EASILY AVAILABLE.
3. THE DIESEL FUEL TANKS WERE LOW.

THERE WAS A DANGEROUSLY LOW FUEL LEVEL. LOW FUEL MEANS MAXIMUM VAPOR AND A MUCH BETTER EXPLOSION. DIESEL FUEL BURNS BUT IT DOES NOT BLOW UP.

Vapors are MUCH more dangerous than the fuel.

“Flowers in the Killing Fields I” by Rick Spangle

COMPLICATING FACTORS WERE AS FOLLOWS:

1. There were 3 ships and not just one. All were the same design.
 2. The ships were Merchant Marine vessels and nobody knew who the hell was in charge of them and why the hell did those @\$#@\$\$'s have an ATOMIC ENERGY TOP SECRET document anyway????
 3. A 100% WORLD WIDE ATOMIC ENERGY COMMISSION DOCUMENT SEARCH WAS IN FLASH MODE, A TON OF PEOPLE WERE NERVOUS, AND THE PRESIDENT WAS HAVING SOME SENIOR STAFFER WATCH THIS SITUATION INSTEAD OF THE ARMY. This had to be a big deal. BTW: Admiral McCain, John's Dad, who was the Commander of the Pacific Theatre at the time was also standing by with the ability to send a flash message to President Nixon.
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1. The three ships that were in the Harbor, were of the same design as the USS Savannah and were producing electricity AND fresh water for 903,000 people.
 2. There was a container of Chlorine (over 40,000 pounds) and a 40' container of some mystery chemical sitting on the deck of the middle ship ready to blow up and kill said 903,000 people directly after the explosion fired off a NUCLEAR TYPE Chlorine explosion of large and extreme significance in world seismic occurrences, not to mention the Chlorine gas POISON.
 3. There also could have been some residual “DIRT” (possible low level nuclear radiation) if a fuse (like a hand grenade or a C-4 explosion) contacted the vapor at the wrong place at the wrong time. This could create lots of toasty critters, gas poisoned people, and lots of suspense for a movie.
 4. The fuse was so short, no alarm was sounded in the town. This was a serious Mission Impossible situation.

It took around 17 hours to determine who had the covert authority to do anything. While this was going on, I was researching and passing “EYES ONLY” messages from me directly to the Group Commander (Col. Barber) to Admiral McCain (John's Dad) and then on to the President.

Military Intelligence got the task. DIA (Defense Intelligence Agency) TURNED IT DOWN, ROGAN WAS AWAY AT THE TIME working on his Albanian Plot Theory. Naval Intelligence had no one within reach and McGarth DID NOT WANT TO BLOW HIS COVER.

“Flowers in the Killing Fields I” by Rick Spangle

That left OUR Military Intelligence Detachment. The Counter Intelligence Team Chief was pretty much incompetent, so Major Joe sent him to “pound sand”. At the time, I was seriously “under cover” but Major Joe gave it to me, anyway. We got the document in less than 2 ½ hours. McGarth was standing by.

PATHFINDER, SEAL AND ME (PART 1)

The key to this deal was the Pathfinder and the Seal. Some wise senior general must have seen what was about to happen and made a phone call and dispatched a COUPLE OF PATHFINDERS (HIGHLY TRAINED SEALS). Major Joe got a “FLASH” message from HQ saying: “GEORGE R TO MEET PATHFINDER AND SEAL ON ROAD TO HARBOR. NO BONA FIDES. GOOD LUCK. NO NEED TO EVACUATE AT THIS TIME.”

THEY WEREN'T HARD TO FIND. One of them was carrying an M-16 with a high power scope and an 18” flash suppressor (silencer). There were none of those around the Qui Nhon area.

I pulled over and said nothing. One said “Are you George R?? I said “Yep.” One said “I’m your Pathfinder” and the other said “I’m your Seal”. SEAL was packing a Starlight Scope, the forerunner of our night vision equipment.

After getting comfortable with one another, and after receiving suggestions from my secret weapons, the “protection operation” began. Remember that they sent George R a PATHFINDER **AND** A SEAL.

One set up a sniper post overlooking the three ships with a good view of approaches to all three ships. The other set up a covert search of the fuel tanks on all three ships. When I got the “GO” from Major Joe, I went over with the Captain of the three ships and followed the proposed instructions from PATHFINDER.

WE CALLED “ALL HANDS ON DECK”. TENSION MOUNTED.

After about 15 minutes, The Third Officer was missing. We then headed to THE 3RD OFFICER’S CABIN. WE ENTERED THE THIRD OFFICER’S CABIN AND SEARCHED IT. THE DOCUMENT WAS UNDER HIS BUNK, in a WAR ZONE FOLKS. THE REST IS HISTORY. The good news was that the Captain only thought that it was TOP SECRET. The coversheet was red and it was only Secret. None of the nuclear stuff was with it. Lucky place, lucky time. Happens all the time. DURING THE ENTIRE TIME, THE ENTIRE TOWN OF QUI NHON, 903,000 PEOPLE WAS **NOT** BEING EVACUATED.

“Flowers in the Killing Fields I” by Rick Spangle

With the culprit identified, I sent the data to McGarth and he got the data and processed it for an immediate action operation. Result: REPORT: “Caught SOB in Taiwan with passage booked for a Soviet Bloc country.” I don’t think that he made the flight.

Col. Barber, the Group Commander, flew his private “King Air” to Qui Nhon to congratulate me and to “sit at my desk” for INSPIRATION. President Nixon sent me a nice letter (Presidential Citation) that Major Joe read in front of Col. Barber and the guys and then sent back to Group Headquarters with Col. Barber. During the reading of my citation, Ben Coleson and I were both wearing our Mickey Mouse ears that we wore on special occasions. Col. Barber just grinned and shook his head back and forth.

PATHFINDER, SEAL AND ME (PART 2)

This adventure proved useful at Phu Cat Air Base. Pathfinder had a well classified (at the time) weapon. It was, as stated above, a simple, PRECISION M-16, with a 90 power scope with an interchangeable Starlight (NIGHT VISION) Scope. It also had an 18” flash suppressor/SILENCER.

THAT THING WAS COOL. Phu Cat Air Base was still pretty severe VC Country (About 40% At the time, down from 85% VC 2 months before) and was getting hit quite often. It was not as bad as when George R began the Base Security operation.

Pathfinder and Seal agreed to set up a sniper post during the nights for about a week before they returned north to whatever they were doing before they were assigned to the Top Secret Atomic Energy Document Detail. Once at Phu Cat, they began taking turns sniping at night and allowing me to act as a part time spotter while they were target shooting at objects coming through the fence line of the Air Base. Those boys were great shots. During that week alone they got about 10 VC attempting to come through the fence line. The VC activity slowed down greatly again after that week.

As I stated before, I was bringing regular information to the Korean Marines about Ammunition caches stored in small hooches in small hamlets around An Nhon. Most of their operations used mortars instead of snipers. My normal MO was to get information about the locations of local VC Ammo Caches from my PA (Principal Agent), Fred. After I got the information, instead of following normal procedure, I would take it directly to the Koreans. The next day I would accompany the Koreans on a mortar operation. About every other operation was successful. During August, September and October of 1970 we destroyed 5 VC ammo dumps, severely hurting VC operations in An Nhon District.

“Flowers in the Killing Fields I” by Rick Spangle

The operations, as stated earlier, usually involved 5 or 6 mortar teams (2 mortarmen and an ammo bearer. There would also be an 11 or 12 man security detail protecting the mortars and carrying a round or two of mortar ammo. The idea was to fire all at one time and hope for a secondary explosion. We were successful at least 5 times during August, September October and November.

Those Koreans loved me and hated the Vietnamese (all of ‘em). The Korean’s favorite recreation game on their compound was “Skull Hockey” (field hockey with sticks and an enemy skull). The skulls were lovingly placed on a memorial around the small hockey field, inside the Korean compound after the flesh, brains and eyeballs were finished being splattered everywhere.

Abraham even got a kick out of that.

FARNSWORTH’S EAR (ANOTHER CHANCE TO DIE) (This is a first person account told by Rick)

Jim Farnsworth, one of our agents stationed in Bong Song , supporting the 173rd Airborne Brigade at LZ English, was in Qui Nhon for a briefing on intercept coordinates and enemy strength estimates with Major Joe. The briefing was over and Ben and I were sitting at our desks next to each other. Ben was on my right cleaning his snub nosed .38 revolver. Farnsworth was sitting in the guest chair immediately to my right front at my 2 o’clock position, his face less than 3 ft. from my face. Ben had slid his office chair about 2 ft. from the center of his desk and was still cleaning his weapon as Farnsworth and I were talking. Ben was in his own little world, cleaning his weapon. Ben finished cleaning and began loading his only 6 bullets into his gun. One at a time, he placed the rounds in their chambers. Calmly, and without concern, he cocked the gun and spun the cylinder. He must have been holding the trigger because he wheeled around in his chair, and when the cylinder stopped spinning, he slammed the cylinder closed.

When the cylinder closed, the gun went off, Farnsworth started screaming, “WHY’D YOU SHOOT ME???? WHY’D YOU SHOOT ME?????”. He was bleeding profusely from the right side of his face. He had small black spots all over his face and red all over his face and was still yelling “WHY’D YOU SHOOT ME???? I was screaming “WHAT THE FUCK, WHAT THE FUCK, BEN??... Inside the closed office, it smelled like a battle field. I wiped my face and smelled my hand. It smelled like gun powder.

Farnsworth fell to the floor. I yelled “Jim, talk to me, talk to me!!!. Farnsworth said “Ben shot me, I’m bleeding, he fucking shot me, and I’m bleeding like shit”. Major Joe ran out of his office saying WHAT THE FUCK IS GOING ON???. Farnsworth yelled “I’M SHOT, I’M SHOT” and fainted into shock. Major Joe found a towel and gave it to me and said “George R, snap out of it, snap out of it, you’re OK, you’re OK. It’s his ear, it’s his ear goddammit. Go get this towel wet and find another towel. I yelled “SEND MOSES, I’LL CLEAN HIM UP WITH THIS ONE!!! Send Moses, I’ll clean him up. I’M IN SHOCK TOO GODDAMMIT”.

“Flowers in the Killing Fields I” by Rick Spangle

I wiped as much blood off of Jim’s face as I could and Moses returned with a dry towel and a wet towel. Ben was in a daze and also in shock. We were all still about 3 ft. from each other and I was cleaning Farnsworth up. He was shot clean through his right ear, no nick, just a clean hole, still bleeding.

I put the dry towel over his ear and pinched it to stop the bleeding. I then wrapped the towel around his head and looked at Major Joe, still borderline in shock. Farnsworth had stood up and was still yelling at Ben, “WHY’D YOU SHOOT ME”? Ben, in shock, said “It was a goddamn accident; I didn’t do it on purpose. Are you OK?? Farnsworth said “How the fuck should I know”??

Major Joe said “George R, you and Ben get the Son of a Bitch to the Hospital. Remember, we’re under cover and don’t tell them that he’s shot. What the fuck should I tell them??? Major Joe said: I don’t fucking care, just get him fixed and both of you get him back here as quick as you can. I couldn’t think but I needed to do something. I took a couple of deep breaths to calm down. I tightened the towel on Farnsworth’s head and proceeded to walk him to my jeep and helped him into the front seat.

I said “CHIEF, CHIEF, here’s your cover, here’s your cover, FOCUS, FOCUS. We were at Rosie Mi Chau’s (the local whore house, owned by the MPs) and one of the hookers got pissed and bit you in the ear, BIT YOU IN THE EAR AND WOULDN’T LET GO. SAY THAT TO ME A BUNCH OF TIMES!!!! Farnsworth began repeating. “SHE BIT ME IN THE EAR; SHE BIT ME IN THE EAR, WHY’D SHE BITE MY EAR??? WHY’D SHE BITE MY EAR???”

We were only 2 minutes from the 67th MedEvac Hospital. Motor Pool Mary said “What going on???” I said “One of Rosey’s hookers bit him in the ear. He’ll be ok. He’ll be OK”. Mary said “Why???” I said “Who the fuck knows???” Mary said “you want me kill her?”. I said “Fuck no, you go jail”!! Mary said “Only 2 weeks, Me know owner. He boss MPs”. I said “You not suppose know that...” Mary said “You think me stupid???” I said “I hate that mother fucker, he’s put me in jail 3 times this year!!!” “Go to hell Mary, I got take friend to 67th. Leave me alone!!!”

I pulled into the emergency area of the 67th and took a couple of deep breaths and Ben and I got the Chief out of my jeep and took him to the admitting nurse. She said “What the hell happened to him???” I said “One of Rosey’s hookers bit him.” She smelled his face and said “smells like gun powder!” I said “look, we’re under cover and can’t tell you what happened or we’ll get in trouble, you gotta help us out this time, please.” She must have felt sorry for us. She took us all back, cleaned him up herself, wiped his face and neck with alcohol and put a stitch in his ear and sent us on our way.

Later that month me, Ben, and the Chief made a special point to find her and take her out on the beach to one of Jim Wilson’s parties. We never told her who we really were. Another close call and another chance for both of us to die. Farnsworth was less than ¼” from permanent brain damage or death and I was about 2 ft. from a bullet in the head. Just another lucky day and another chance to die. Jim Farnsworth was a Corporal, E-4, documented as a Warrant Officer, W-2 or a CWO (Chief Warrant Officer. That’s why we called him “The Chief”.

THE DRUNKEN GUNSHIP PILOT

Yep, another true story. One night Rick and Ben were in the officer’s club hanging out with their normal guy buddies, that being the doctors and the pilots. One night there was a new pilot hanging out with us who had just landed at the Qui Nhon Army Airfield. He got rip roaring drunk after about an hour and a half and told us he was with one of the combat flight units and he was in his Huey Gun Ship that was loaded and ready to go. He was off duty for a couple of days and was staying in the pilot’s BOQ (Bachelor Officer’s quarters).

For some reason he got all drunked up and wanted to impress us all with his flying ability. The doctors had an early day and decided to go back to the BOQ.

Young Drunkey asked Ben and I if we knew how to shoot M-60 machine guns. We said “SURE”, WE BOTH WENT TO INFANTRY SCHOOL. He said “Lets go”.

Ben drove me and Drunkey to the Airfield in his civilian classified black jeep so the MPs could not arrest us during the short trip to the air field. Drunkey was pretty drunk and Ben and I were pretty well buzzed. Drunkey checked his ammo and started up his Huey. Ben and I loaded up the M-60’s and strapped ourselves into the door gunner, slightly padded, metal chairs. Drunkey headed straight out the runway directly into the dark abyss of the South China Sea. He flew out for about 10 minutes and made a U turn and started back.

As he headed directly into Qui Nhon Harbor and the Army Air field, he veered to the left a little and flew into a dark area. We could see light at about our 2 o’clock position. All of a sudden he veered about 90 degrees to our right and got so close to the water that I looked at his altimeter and it said -50 feet. He began shooting off his rockets. Ben asked him over the intercom, “What the fuck are you shooting at??” He said “the fucking sharks, those are VC sharks”. “If you see any out the doors, shoot the mother fuckers. I see some, shoot ‘em, shoot ‘em.”

We began shooting off the ammo just because it was fun and we were drunk and had nothing better to do than to humor our drunken pilot buddy.

As we got closer to the Harbor we could see a slight reflection off of the ocean. All of a sudden we could see the landing strip and Drunkey brought the Huey in for a landing. We were too drunk to be scared. We were young, drunk and full of piss and vinegar. Just another calm night in Qui Nhon.

“Flowers in the Killing Fields I” by Rick Spangle

MY BEST ASS CHEWING

It actually came from Major Joe. I was out on the town with Ben one night in an off limits area about 2 in the morning. I headed back to our compound and Ben headed back to the airfield. Ben had a civilian jeep and I had a military jeep. I got pulled over by the MP's for being in an off limits area after dark. I had a curfew pass that I had typed up myself. The MP didn't like it, said it was fake and hauled me down to the Provost Marshall's office and threw me into the Brig. I wouldn't talk to anyone but the Provost Marshall himself. The MP's got the PM out of bed and he came down pissed and pretty much said "How come you keep showing up where you are not supposed to be". I said "how do you know I'm not supposed to be there???" He said "what the fuck are you doing back here". I said "just call my CO" (commanding officer). He said "Who's that, I forget". "Major Scallon" I said. He said "Where did you get this curfew pass??" "I made it myself. I need it for my work." "What's your job???" "You don't have a need to know that." "What's your unit???" "You don't have a need to know, just call Major Scallon." "What's his number???" "6595". He won't be there 'til in the morning." "Where's your barracks??" "Just go through the main gate at the support command compound and take an immediate left. The road takes a curve around to the right, there will be a Catholic chapel on the left. Our barracks is the next building on the left. We are on the second floor. The day room is first. Go down the hall. Major Scallon's room is the second room on the left. Wake his ass up and tell him that George R is in the brig and he needs to get his ass down here on the double."

The Provost Marshall decided to go himself. About 30 minutes later the Provost Marshall and Major Joe showed up together at the brig. The PM told the MP to "let the son of a bitch go. His CO says he's cleared to go into off limits areas. I still don't know what he does".

Major Joe didn't say a word the entire trip back to the barracks. The next morning I rolled in about 10 AM and Major Joe said "George R, get your ass in here". I casually walked into his office and he shouted "get your ass up against the wall". I braced myself against the wall across from his desk. He said "give me your goddamn curfew pass". I pulled it out of my pocket and gave it to him. He tore it into a bunch of tiny pieces and threw it at me and said "get the fuck out of my sight." I looked pretty serious and then gave him a smile and casually walked out of his office and went back to my desk in front of my typewriter. About two minutes later he came out of his office and asked me what I was doing. I said "I'm making another curfew pass. You just tore mine up. I really need one signed by the Saigon Provost Marshall". He said "goddamn you George R. Get the fuck out of here. Sometimes you really piss me off." Then he started laughing his ass off. He was a really great guy and we got along great except for the times that he had to get me out of jail.

“Flowers in the Killing Fields I” by Rick Spangle

MORE SNOOPY PARTIES and OUR PARTIES

Major Wilson, the Vet was a total PARTY ANIMAL. He had no boss in country or his boss was in Saigon and always drunk like Jim. He was always, as stated above, having parties, at least one a week.

Several times during my tour I got an entire case of steaks for a BBQ party on the beach. I got one case from the Sgt. Major and several cases from Major Jim, whom we all called “SNOOPY”. He was a Texas Aggie. He was the meat inspector for II Corps. He was a great guy. As I stated before, we tested steaks at least once a month.

GOING TO THE HIGH LEVEL STAFF CONFERENCE AGAINST DIRECT ORDERS

For some reason, the high level staff conference was off limits to junior officers. Ben and I decided that we wanted to attend the High Level Staff Conference any way. It was in the middle of November towards the end of our tours. Col. Barber, the group commander, was going to be there with all of the Battalion commanders, Operations Officers and other staff officers from Group Headquarters and officers from all of the other Battalion headquarters. It was going to be a really big gig. Ben and I decided to go and award J. Barry Williams, our Executive Officer/Operations Officer, and Major Joe, our Commanding Officer, what we called the Order of the Brass Splint, as a practical joke.

We found two pieces of curved brass and mounted a dildo in them and typed up a rather comedic citation and packed our Mickey Mouse ears. We really didn't know that there would be so many people there and, as usual, we had direct orders to “STAY PUT” in Qui Nhon and our orders were “don't leave town”. Major Joe even called the airport and told the Air Field Commander that we were not to be given flight orders or transportation under any circumstances. That made us want to go even worse. This time Ben went into action. He got one of his ugly Doughnut Dolly girl friends to persuade one of her chopper pilot buddies that she was banging, to give us a ride to Nha Trang, with no flight orders, OFF THE BOOKS. It happened by magic. Once at the Nha Trang airport, we got a rickshaw ride to the second battalion compound.

Yep, we made it just in time. We busted into the room and found the largest crowd of officers that either of us had seen during the entire war. There must have been a hundred senior intelligence officers at the conference. Major Joe started to give us an ass chewing but the rest of the crowd said “let them go ahead”. So we did. WE PUT ON OUR MICKEY MOUSE EARS. Ben had one award and I had the other one. Then Ben read J. Barry's citation and I read Major Joe's. They were quite funny. Then we pulled out the dildos mounted on the curved brass splints and gave them to J. Barry and Major Joe.

“Flowers in the Killing Fields I” by Rick Spangle

Everyone had a great laugh. After that they ran us out of the meeting since we were field agents from Qui Nhon and we didn't have a need to know the classified information that was being discussed about operations from all around the country.

We casually left the meeting and got a jeep ride back to the airport where our chopper pilot was waiting for us to take us back to Qui Nhon.

RICK SMOKES POT FOR THE FIRST TIME

I may still be in denial about this one. Maybe I should leave this one alone. Maybe not.

What happened was, I scored us some Thai Stick rolled in papers soaked in Opium from a college buddy of mine that was a clerk in the JAG Corps at the Qui Nhon Support Command. He had it as evidence in several court cases (no shit).

After smoking it, and getting plenty stoned, we played Ina Goda Davida for a couple of hours and hid out under the middle sections our desks until we were straight and a lot less paranoid. That episode kept me from smoking pot for over 10 years. Ben was there but I would bet that he forgets this one.

We are pretty much in "TELL ALL" mode.

SNOOPY AND THE RED BARON STEAL A MUCH NEEDED JEEP.

Jim Wilson's jeep with no windshield finally broke down and he had no one to fix it so we went up to the 4th Division compound in Pleiku for an unauthorized replacement. The entire 4th division was being disbanded and all of the troops were being sent to the states or being transferred to other units. Ben, Steve, Snoopy and I took two of our jeeps to Pleiku and rode around the red dirt compound for a while and found a nice looking older jeep that looked available. As usual, it had a chain around the steering wheel and a pad lock around both ends of the chain. No one was around so Steve Emmett got out of my jeep and Snoopy got out of Ben's jeep and put on his Sopwith Camel helmet and goggles. Steve got into the passenger side of the jeep with Snoopy and picked the lock on the chained up steering wheel. Jim pulled the pin out of the wind shield and laid it down just like on his old jeep in Qui Nhon, then he started the engine just like it was his. I led the way out of the compound and Ben brought up the rear. The guard waved us through the front gate of the compound when I told the MP at the gate that the next 2 jeeps were with me. Steve and Jim got escorted back to Qui Nhon right through the Anh Khe pass just like nothing was going on.

“Flowers in the Killing Fields I” by Rick Spangle

SCAMMING THE 4TH DIVISION OUT OF 4 MORE JEEPS AND A 2 ½ TON TRUCK AND SHIPPING THEM TO NHA TRANG

That scam went so well, we tried it again a couple of weeks later. The Battalion Headquarters was in need of several jeeps and a ¾ ton truck, so the S-4 supply officer got me on the phone and asked me if I was still the best scrounger in the battalion. I said “sure, what do you need”???. He said “about 4 jeeps and a ¾ ton truck. I said “I’ll see what I can do”. Essentially, I got Moses and the RTT guys and headed to Pleiku again complete with self generated paperwork for a “material transfer authorization”.

This time I went straight to one of the many motor pools that were being disbanded and showed one of the 4th Division maintenance NCO’s my self-generated and signed paperwork authorizing me and the guys to pick up 4 jeeps and a ¾ ton truck. The sergeant looked at the paperwork and said OK. We walked around the motor pool and picked out the jeeps and the ¾ ton truck that we wanted. We started them all and they all ran great. We got the motor pool sergeant to sign our paperwork and we were on our way out of the compound again with no problem from the MP’s at the gate. The paperwork was in order, and we proceeded on through the gate and drove on back to Qui Nhon just like we got the paper work approved through regular channels.

Shipping the jeeps to Nha Trang was quite a bit more difficult than acquiring them. Since we were an undercover organization, and highway 1 was way too dangerous for a covert convoy, we had to ship them by way of the US Navy. The Navy had no record of our existence, so we had to come out from cover and use our real names and unit designations. Once we did that and the navy confirmed that we were actually with the 2nd Battalion of the 525 MI Group, we got all of the proper paper work in order with the proper signatures, and it went like clockwork. I think that was the only time during my tour that I made things happen “BY THE BOOK”. Battalion Headquarters got the jeeps and they were tickled shitless. For once everyone was happy with my abilities to get things done in the correct manner.

THE GOLF COURSE ASSASSINATION PLOT (PART 2)

One night, during the second week in November, the cooking crew put a whole bunch of gopher food in the sand around all of the greens. In about a week the gophers had tunneled all around all of the greens. Then I gave them another idea. They carried it out with perfection. It was a great gag.

“Flowers in the Killing Fields I” by Rick Spangle

For the next 2 weeks, the mess sergeant and the cooks rounded up about 8 or 10 of the local dogs and kept them in pens with hardly any food. For that 2 weeks all they fed the dogs was a little gopher every other day. The dogs got real skinny. Then one night, just after the Vinh Assassination, the crew let the dogs go at the golf course. The dogs absolutely tore the living shit out of the greens made out of sand getting at the gophers. My only regret is not being able to get pictures from the air of the dogs tearing the shit out of the golf course.

THANKSGIVING DAY 1970. ANOTHER CHANCE TO DIE.

Things were heating up in pursuit of the ever elusive terrorist, Vo Van (Quan(g) Vinh. He was the Finance Chairman for all of Central Vietnam. He was in charge of raising money for NLF (VC) operations in the central part of the country. He did this by threatening villagers and their families. If they did not contribute to the communist cause, he would kill them or some member of their family. As I stated before, he had killed between 2000 and 3000 of his Vietnamese countrymen who desired freedom instead of communism, or at least supported the Americans.

He had been one or two steps ahead of us for months. He had been moving 2 or 3 times a week and even with our expedited dissemination procedure, he stayed one jump ahead of us. During this time we renamed Fred for security purposes. Fred was named after the Battalion Executive Officer,

Major Fred Williamson. Major Williamson was replaced by a West Point grad named Major J. Barry Williams. Therefore, for security reasons, we renamed Fred, J. Barry. J. Barry (Fred) came up with some hot shit information about a Province VC committee meeting that was about to go down in a local An Nhon hamlet that was allegedly abandoned.

I forgot about the paper work and rushed back to Qui Nhon and got hold of General Hunter's pilot, named Stan, a Warrant Officer, W-2. I told him I needed some aerial photos around the village of Phan Something, right now, for an operation in the morning. He had taken me several times on “hand held” photo missions. He told me that the General had just notified him for a flight but he would check with some of the other guys in the pilot's barracks. He came back in about 10 minutes and said that he found a Beaver pilot available “right now” and if I had a camera, he could take off within ½ an hour. I said “let's go”. I had my camera on me. He called his Beaver, “Low, Slow and Reliable” and, as promised, we left in about 30 Minutes, after waving to Motor Pool Mary on the way to the airfield.

“Flowers in the Killing Fields I” by Rick Spangle

We took off for the emergency photo recon mission. We only made one pass at the target hooch at a good altitude and direction to avoid raising any suspicion. I got a bunch of shots to get a handle on the lay of the land and any excess water and/or other obstructions in the area. Everything looked OK to go. I also located where to get to a rice paddy dike so we didn't have to slosh around in the paddy. About an hour later, we landed back at Qui Nhon. I immediately went to the Qui Nhon Support Command photo lab and got the film processed. I then went to the PRU compound and met with McGarth. We organized a combined PRU/MSS operation for the next morning. McGarth coordinated everything with Abraham.

Again, to hell with protocol and paper work. I went back to my office and called Abraham on the phone and briefed him. He had already talked to McGarth. He told me to meet him at the DIOCC office and we would join the operation “in progress”. They (the MSS and PRU) knew we were coming. I left Qui Nhon just after day break. I was in a hurry, needless to say.

On the way to the operation, some MP chopper overhead clocked me speeding, got in front of me and landed on the asphalt in front of me, and some MP got out and gave me a speeding ticket. Highway 1 had signs that speed was being monitored from the air. Needless to say I was pissed and now I was late. I finally got to the DIOCC office and we took Abraham's jeep to the local abandoned hamlet.

We got out of Abraham's jeep and started across the big rice paddy dike. About 200 yards into the walk, all hell broke loose. We were being shot at from the hamlet on the right. We dove into the paddy. We had AK's on our right and M-16s and M-1 Carbines on our left. Bullets were flying overhead and bullets were splashing everywhere. We got lucky, our guys opened up on the hamlet when they saw us coming under fire. The VC opened up on us first and the MSS and PRUs diverted their attention and rushed the hamlet and we were able to escape with our lives. Because of good intelligence, we were able to back out of our position fairly quickly and live to fight another day. The MSS and PRUs had the VC outnumbered. They killed 6 or 8 and captured 3 high level cadres. We took the cadre to interrogation. Vinh had not arrived yet, so we didn't catch him. From the interrogation, we found out the locations of three more spider holes that Vinh was using to hide in. We plotted them on one of Abraham's maps.

THE VINH ASSASSINATION (MISSION IMPOSSIBLE IV) (Another chance to die)

I may still have pictures of Vinh, his wife and 13 year old son tied to bamboo poles for display in at least 12 villages. This assassination was recreated in the first 30 minutes of the movie “Platoon”.

“Flowers in the Killing Fields I” by Rick Spangle

In the movie (Platoon), we removed the wife and child and killed Vinh in the spider hole with numerous grenades.

In reality, we suspected his location was one of the three spider holes that Vinh was using. If you will remember, we got that information from the VC that we captured during the operation on Thanksgiving day.

We knew that we had Vinh on the run. He was moving from abandoned spider hole to abandoned spider hole and back and forth from one location to another location quite often.

I was meeting J. Barry (Fred) much more than usual and placing Vinh under extreme pressure.

J. Barry had an Action Agent spotter stationed in hiding near each spider hole. I had trained him pretty well and he had pre arranged meeting sites and times already set up. I met with J. Barry every day for the next few days. After a quick meeting with him on the third or fourth day, we got a location of the spot where Vinh was going to stay. I went straight to see Abraham, no paper work. He said lets go, and we went.

We had about 10 MSS and 10 PRU's. The MSS had M-1 Carbines and the PRU had M-16s. I had the MSS ready to go and Abraham had the PRU's ready to go.

Taking about 6 hours of stealth, cunning, and watching for trip wires and booby traps, my palms were full of sweat. My heart was thumping hard in the jungle for about 2 of those hours. 5 of us got around the latest abandoned spider hole, with the rest of the detail pulling security and watching our six (rear) in a 360 degree circle. Captain Abraham yelled in English: “COME OUT VINH”. One of the troops lifted the lid and 5, or so, grenades went into the thatch covered spider hole. In true arrogant style, CPT Abraham and I pitched in 2 more hand grenades and then let the troops smoke a cigarette.

In about 5 minutes we uncovered the spider hole to see if Vinh was there. There he was. The hole reeked of gun powder. We pulled the bodies out of the hole, one male, one female and one young male about 13 years old. We tied them onto bamboo poles and paraded them through and around 12 villages, just to show the locals that he was really dead. About 50 different people confirmed that it was Vinh.

“Flowers in the Killing Fields I” by Rick Spangle

VINH

Vinh had several first or given names. His family name, the best we could determine, was Vo. He was an old warier friend of Ho. He had killed between 35 and 54 Americans and over 2,000 Vietnamese. He was the head terrorist and fund raiser for the central part of South Vietnam. He was Number ONE on the most wanted list in II Corps. He had killed thousands of his countrymen that supported the war. For us, it was just a matter of hard detailed Intelligence work and getting intelligence to the field in a timely manner. We had to severely violate procedure to rapidly get us and the info to the field.

George R and Major Joe still had no formal approval to release F-6 data without formal written permission to disseminate.

The rest is history.

At the time, I was told by the An Nhon DIOCC that I had made #5 on the VC most wanted list in Vietnam and Vinh reportedly had offered 20,000 Piasters (Dong) for my head. The average wage for a Vietnamese person was 3000 P per year. That was a reward of 6 years pay for killing ME. We got him first. We were paying our sources quite a bit for the information.

I left country about 3 weeks later and set the record of a wait of 121 hours for my flight to Travis AFB in San Francisco, California.

IT IS BLIND DUMB LUCK THAT I’M STILL ALIVE. THE TRAINING THAT I RECEIVED FROM THE UNITED STATES ARMY AND THE CIA HELPED.

REPRECUSSIONS FROM THE VINH ASSASSINATION.

After this Mission Impossible, that occurred on December 3rd, 1970, about two weeks later, there was a major repercussion. That night, a huge team of coordinated sappers crawled into the Qui Nhon Army Ammunition Dump compound and set off a large number of explosions. All of a sudden, as many explosions were going off, there was a seriously huge gigantic secondary explosion. Our compound was 2 miles away from ground zero. My entire ceiling was blown to bits and the ceiling caved in on my mosquito net and bed. It was a pretty big mess. I had to crawl out from all of the sheet rock ceiling debris that was piled up on top of me and my mosquito net. I still have a ringing and partial hearing loss in my left ear.

"Flowers in the Killing Fields I" by Rick Spangle

Ben got knocked out of his bed at the civilian barracks on the airfield. He grabbed his helmet and his .38, now with only 5 bullets, and ran out, half dazed, and shook his .38 in the air yelling "what the fuck is going on?". Several of the nurses tried to calm him down. Ben Said "What the fuck was that?". No one knew at the time, but the explosion was one of, if not the most, powerful explosions of the war. Ben also still has a ringing in his ears and a partial loss of hearing from the episode.

It was a miracle only 3 people were killed and only 7 or 8 people injured.

BODY COUNTS FOR NOVEMBER 1970

During all of this time Major Joe kept up with all of the after action reports being supplied by the PRU's, the MSS and the Korean Marines, the Ruff Puffs and the 173rd.

Ben and Harry had gotten real productive and George R and Fred had also continued to be real productive. With the body counts being furnished by the Air Force security patrols at Phu Cat Air Base, the PRU, the MSS and the KOREAN MARINES, Major Joe presented Ben and I with the overall picture. On one side he tabulated the body counts furnished by the 173rd Airborne Brigade, the only American combat unit in our Province and all of the 300,000, or so, Rural and Popular forces in the Province, the Ruff Puffs.

Their total body count was 88. Not great for 2000 Americans and 300,000 Vietnamese troops.

On our side were me and Ben, McGarth, Abraham, the blond kid, the MSS, the PRU, and the Korean Marines. That was 5 Americans, 80 Koreans, 50 or so MSS and 93 PRUs.

Our body count was 103. Not bad for 5 Americans, 80 Koreans and 140 well paid Vietnamese.

AWARDS AND DECORATIONS

I've been asked repeatedly about the awards and decorations that I received. I received only one officially, it was a BRONZE STAR and it was not even put in my 201 file (my official administrative record).

All of my unofficial awards were highly classified and never formally presented, although they were read in front of the members of our detachment by Major Joe and one was read by a guy named Corey, who looked amazingly like William Colby. I received that one at the PRU headquarters in Qui Nhon. That one was some kind of intelligence medal. Quite a few members of the MSS came to that ceremony.

“Flowers in the Killing Fields I” by Rick Spangle

My other ones, according to Major Joe, the CIA, the MSS and the Korean Marines, were as follows, in ascending order: Sharpshooter Badge, National Defense Service Medal, Vietnam Campaign Medal, 3 Army Commendation Medals. 2 Bronze Star Medals and another recommendation for a 3rd Bronze Star Medal. 1 Cosmic classified CIA medal for overall effectiveness protecting Phu Cat Airbase submitted by Cpt Abraham. I was recommended for one by the Korean Marine Company Commander, I received one from the MSS and one was recommended by the Base Commander at Phu Cat. Finally, I received 2 Presidential Citations from President Nixon, one for finding the Top Secret plans to the USS Savannah and one for Planning and completing the operation that neutralized Vinh and his entire family.

The Army barely recognizes that I was ever in Vietnam and the fact that I was in the 525th Military Intelligence Group under Col. Barber has been permanently redacted (blacked out) on my DD-214, final discharge paper work. They have disavowed any knowledge of my actions.

THE PRESENTATION OF MY FINAL OER (OFFICER EFFICIENCY REPORT)

When I was about to leave country and be discharged from the United States Army, Major Joe called me into his office and said that he wanted to present me with something special and he wanted to present it to me in front of the entire detachment and make it a part of my permanent military record for everyone to see. He told me that Ben and I could wear our Mickey Mouse Ears if we choose to. I said “What is it???” He said “This is pretty irregular, but I’m going to present you with your final OER in front of the entire detachment”. I said, “Is it a good one???” He said “It’s the best one that I have ever given in my career and the highest one available to any officer in the entire U S Army.”

“I’M GIVING YOU A 100 OUT OF 100 AND I WOULD LIKE TO PRESENT IT TO YOU IN FRONT OF ALL OF THE MEN”.

I BROKE DOWN AND STARTED TO TEAR UP AND TOLD HIM THAT “I DON’T THINK THAT I WANT TO WEAR MY MICKEY MOUSE EARS THIS TIME”.

Later that month Major Joe gave Ben a 99% efficiency report.

Those were the 2 best OERs that Major Joe gave during his entire career as an Intelligence Officer.

CHAPTER 7

Decent Interval

An Insider’s Account of Saigon’s Indecent End.
Told by the CIA’s Chief Strategy Analyst in Vietnam.

by Frank Snepp

Published by Random House in 1977

INTRODUCTION

By Rick Spangle

The following narrative, highlighting the events examined in Decent Interval, is adapted from a television documentary featuring Frank Snepp. It condenses and summarizes approximately 700 power packed pages of part of the history of the Vietnam War that the CIA has attempted to keep classified and out of the view of the American people, and still do, to this day.

April 29, 1975: the evacuation of Saigon. It’s every man for himself; thousands of panic-stricken Vietnamese clawing at the Embassy gates, begging not to be left behind as the last of the Americans save themselves

If you were there that last day it was like being at a funeral where all the mourners are battling each other to avoid being abandoned at graveside.

I was one of those mourners: an operative for the Central Intelligence Agency and the CIA’s chief strategy analyst on the scene. I’d been in Vietnam five and half years when the end came. It was one of the most shameful moments I’ve ever lived through.

The reason it ended that way was wishful thinking on the part of a lot of American officials. Few wanted to admit the war was lost. So we waited too long to plan for the exit.

The final unraveling began two years before with the ceasefire negotiated by White House National Security Adviser, Henry Kissinger. It got the last of the American troops out of South Vietnam, but left 140,000 North Vietnamese forces in the south. They wouldn't get out because we hadn't beaten them. And now they turned on the Saigon government itself...a government corrupt, inefficient, riddled with Communist spies, possibly as many as fourteen thousand of them according to intelligence estimates. A government about as solid and durable as Swiss cheese.

The first year of the so-called “cease-fire war” Congress tipped the odds hard against our allies by halting all U.S. bombing in Indochina, and a year later President Nixon resigned because of Watergate. The Communists were particularly encouraged by that event. They'd always seen Nixon as a madman whose unpredictability terrified them. With his departure they decided the road to Saigon was open.

In early 1975 they began chipping away at real estate close to the capital to test U.S. resolve and Saigon's resiliency. The president of South Vietnam, Nguyen Van Thieu panicked, and in mid-March without telling any of us in the Embassy he ordered his forces to pull back in two crucial areas, the northernmost provinces of the country and the western highlands. The withdrawal -- meant to preserve his best forces and strengthen his hand against potential coup-makers -- quickly turned into a rout as terrified civilians became entangled in the retreating units. Over the next two weeks their Communist pursuers sliced the country in two and obliterated half of Saigon's army.

It was too much for some Embassy officials to believe, including Ambassador Graham Martin. He was a Cold Warrior of the old stripe. He'd lost a son in Vietnam and he wasn't going to lose Saigon to the Communists.

In early April, a month before the collapse, I briefed Martin, who had long considered me a trusted protégé, on the destruction of government forces. He wouldn't believe me. He insisted Saigon still had a chance.

In the next four weeks, he convinced himself and many in Washington that the Communists could be lured into another cease-fire and a new negotiated settlement that would leave South Vietnam intact though shorn of less “productive” territory. He refused to plan in earnest for an accelerated evacuation and many of us in the Embassy were forced to begin sneaking Vietnamese friends out of the country on cargo aircraft.

Four days before the end, in an effort to appease the Communists and sweeten the prospects for a last-minute political deal, the Ambassador persuaded President Thieu himself to step down and get out of Vietnam.

That night I drove Thieu to a secret airbase outside Saigon to catch his “black” flight out. Tracers lit the night sky, small arms fire crackled along the perimeters, and rumors of a murderous coup, like the one that had toppled and killed President Diem in 1963, were rampant. When Thieu showed up at the pick-up point, he was wearing a gray sharkskin suit, his hair slicked back and he looked like a model for an Asian edition of *Gentleman’s Quarterly*. He’d been weeping and drinking, but he had one consolation: he’d just slipped most of his gold out of the country.

As it turned out, Thieu made his escape safely. But it didn’t give the Communists a moment’s pause, any more than I’d expected it to. Indeed for weeks our intelligence had indicated they would stop for nothing, though the Ambassador wouldn’t believe it.

The latest and most definitive report had come two weeks before from a Vietnamese agent who’d never been wrong. This time he’d met with me at a safehouse near the capital and after chugging a beer – he loved Budweiser – had given me the bad news straight up: the Communists were going to overrun Saigon by the end of April, bringing in airstrikes and artillery, without any pause for a political fix.

That’s exactly what happened.

On April 28 Communist aircraft bombed the Saigon airbase, and that night their artillery began pounding the edges of the city, the concussion hurling many of us out of bed.

But still Ambassador Martin was hopeful. He thought we could evacuate by fixed-wing aircraft at a leisurely pace. He wouldn't even chop down a large Tamarind tree in the embassy courtyard to make way for helicopters. That was a mistake. The landing strips were soon blown apart, and with one hundred forty thousand Communist troops now within an hour's drive of downtown Saigon, we clearly had not a moment to waste.

Mid-morning of the 29th, the White House finally overrode Martin and decided to send in helicopters from the evacuation fleet offshore. The signal to evacuate: a Saigon radio broadcast of Bing Crosby's "I'm Dreaming of a White Christmas."

For all of the advance warning the evacuation order caught the Embassy staff off guard – so much so we didn't even have a master list of the Vietnamese employees, agents and collaborators who desperately needed to be rescued. So we spent the day rescuing ourselves and whatever lucky Vietnamese could sneak, beat or cajole their way onto a U.S. helicopter or sailing vessel.

At the Embassy walls Marine guards played God, picking those who would be saved, kicking back those who wouldn't. Mothers were separated from children, some were trampled, others abandoned just outside the gates

Meanwhile remnants of the South Vietnamese army and air force fled into our arms, abandoning boats and aircraft at sea as they struggled to reach the evacuation fleet.

By mid-afternoon the Embassy compound itself was jammed with desperate Vietnamese waiting to be choppered off the roof or from the courtyard which had now been cleared of Martin's Tamarind. I walked among them, handing out water and often- vain encouragement. At one point, the downdraft from an overladen chopper tore open bags of secret documents discarded in the courtyard and flung them into nearby treetops. The North Vietnamese would later use these and other abandoned files to identify agents and collaborators we'd left behind.

As the pace of the airlift accelerated, more and more Vietnamese were crammed inside the Embassy to hasten departures from the roof. Some were cradling animals, others clutched wailing children and as the air conditioning system broke down the heat and stench became unspeakable. Explosions rocked the building periodically as thermite grenades were used to destroy sensitive equipment, and through much of the day the walls shook as from a creeping case of nerves as rooftop incinerators gobbled up tons of classified files that had been left till the last moment to be destroyed.

From time to time I stopped by the CIA operations room to listen in horror at the radios as stranded Vietnamese agents pleaded over the circuits for help, begging not to be forgotten. Some would be picked up by Air America helicopters that CIA colleagues and I sent shuttling around the city. Most would be forgotten.

At one point a Vietnamese woman who had borne a child she said was my own called to say she would kill herself and the boy if I couldn't rescue them. I told her to call back in an hour -- I'd help her then. But when she called back I was downstairs briefing the Ambassador on another useless piece of intelligence, and she made good on her promise, adding two more deaths to those already weighing on my conscience.

When my time came to leave that night, with the last CIA contingent in the Embassy, we had to push Vietnamese out of the way in the halls to get to the chopper on the roof. I couldn't look into their eyes.

Retreat is the most difficult of all military operations. But as a matter of honor you do not leave friends on the battlefield. In the evacuation of Saigon over half of the Vietnamese who finally got out escaped on their own with no help from us until they were far at sea.

The last CIA message from the Embassy declared: Let's hope we do not repeat history. This is Saigon station signing off.

Frank Snepp

FRANK SNEPP, III

***Always under the shadow
of CIA censorship!***

CIA Career, 1968 - 1976

Recruited into the CIA out of Columbia University's School of International Affairs in 1968, Snepp worked on NATO and European security matters for the Agency until he was hand-picked for two tours of duty at its Station in Vietnam, 1969 - 1975.

Doubling as an analyst and counter-intelligence officer, he interrogated the highest-ranking North Vietnamese spy ever captured, helped coordinate and debrief informant networks, served as the Embassy's principal press briefer, and rose during his last year at the Saigon Station to become the CIA's chief analyst of North Vietnamese strategy there, a position that afforded him access to the most sensitive intelligence and the ability to predict with uncanny accuracy what the Communists were planning. Among the last CIA officers to be helicoptered off the Embassy roof in April 1975, he was awarded the CIA's coveted Medal of Merit for his performance.

The accompanying citation, written by the Saigon station chief himself, declared: "During the final weeks of the Vietnam station, Mr. Snepp exceeded his own previously established peaks of achievement...The importance of [his] work during the final days and indeed hours of the American presence in Vietnam could hardly be overemphasized. His total unflappability, his ability to organize the necessary material along with his own thoughts during periods of the most intense pressure, his courage under fire and above all, the perspicacity of his analysis were such that it is my opinion they deserve and indeed demand special recognition...In summary, during the most critical final days of the American presence in Vietnam, Mr. Snepp turned in a kind of performance which I have never seen equaled nor even approximated during my long years with U.S. Intelligence. Special recognition, in the form of the Intelligence Medal of Merit, is definitely in order."

Such accolades notwithstanding, Snepp quickly became disillusioned at the CIA's unwillingness to rescue Vietnamese left behind or even to acknowledge that the evacuation had been a disaster. Unable to prompt any sort of internal after-action report, he resigned in 1976 to write a public one of his own in hopes of generating support for the abandoned Vietnamese.

His book, **Decent Interval**, was published by Random House in total secrecy without CIA approval. But the firestorm of publicity it ignited turned it into an instant bestseller and sparked a government lawsuit against Snepp that culminated in a landmark U.S. Supreme Court First Amendment decision with far-reaching implications.

Though he was never accused of publishing any secrets, the Supreme Court held that his failure to seek official clearance for his memoirs had created the "appearance" of a breakdown of discipline within the CIA that had frightened U.S. intelligence sources and thus "irreparably harmed" the nation's security. Despite the lack of any evidence to support this allegation, Snepp was placed under a lifetime gag order preventing him from ever writing again without CIA permission, and was forced to surrender to the government all his "ill-gotten gains," every cent he'd made from **Decent Interval**.

The Court further ruled that any responsible official could be forced to submit to censorship simply as a matter of trust and in the interest of preserving the "appearance" of airtight government security. This dictat has led to the application of clearance and censorship rules throughout the Federal bureaucracy and the attendant trust theory has been used by private industry to justify a crackdown on whistleblowers within its own ranks. Legal scholars view *U.S. v. Snepp* as the most important censorship ruling since the Pentagon Papers case of 1971.

Snepp's latest book, **Irreparable Harm**, is about his legal battles with the CIA over *Decent Interval* and the Supreme Court decision that changed the meaning of free speech in America.

Special Awards

1975: **CIA's** Medal of Merit

1982: **Hugh M. Hefner** First Amendment Award
J. Roderick MacArthur Foundation Grant

1983: **Society of Professional Journalist's** National First Amendment Award

1984: **Emmy Award** (shared) for **20/20's** "Moment of Crisis"

1995: **Genesis Award**, for "Canned Hunt," **The Crusaders**

1996: **Greater L.A. Press Club** Investigative Reporting Award, "Mexico: The New Colombia," **KCAL-TV**

1996: **APTV-Radio Association**, Best Documentary, "Deadly Traffic: Mexico's Drug Highway," **KCAL**

1996: **Radio and TV News Director's Association**, Overall Excellence, "Deadly Traffic" **KCAL-TV**

1996: **Emmy Nominations**, Best Feature Story, Best News Writing, "Last Chopper Out," **KCOP-TV**

1997: **Emmy Award**, Best Crime Documentary, "Deadly Traffic," **KCAL-TV**

2003: National Air Disaster Foundation **Investigative Reporting Award**, **KCBS-TV**
2003: Center for California Studies and the Sacramento Press Club, **California Journalism Award** – "Fostering Failure," **KCBS-TV**

2004: California Advocates for Nursing Home Reform, **Advocacy in Media Award** for Senior Scam stories, **KCBS**

2004: Radio and Television News Association **Golden Mike** – "Fostering Failure," **KCBS-TV**

2005: Center for California Studies and the Sacramento Press Club, **California Journalism Award** for reports on the energy industry's influence on the five state public utilities commissioners who determine how much profit the energy companies are allowed to make. **KCBS-TV**

2006: **Edward R. Murrow Regional Award** – "Spy Next Door," **KNBC-TV**

2006: **Peabody Award** – “Burning Questions” broadcast in 2005, **KNBC-TV**

2007: **LA Press Club Award** – "Staples Investigation," **KNBC-TV**

2007: Radio and Television News Association **Golden Mike** – "Staples Investigation," **KNBC-TV**

2007: **Edward R. Murrow Regional Award**, "Staples Investigation," **KNBC-TV**

2008: **Emmy Award**, Best hard news story – "Laundered Elections," **KNBC-TV**

Education

1961-1965: Columbia College, Columbia University, B.A.

1966: New School of Social Research

1966 - 1968: Columbia University's School of International Affairs, Masters in International Affairs

CHAPTER 8

IRREPARABLE HARM

By Frank Snepp III

PART 1

One Man's Worth
"According to the CIA"

INTRODUCTION

This narrative summarizes approximately another 700 pages of history that the CIA attempted to keep out of the hands of the American people and still do.

Rick

When former CIA officer Frank Snepp published his controversial Vietnam memoir, "Decent Interval", in 1977, his intelligence career remained shrouded in official secrecy and critics could tar and feather him without contradiction. But in a subsequent lawsuit, Snepp v. United States -- which is the focus of Snepp's latest book, -- the CIA released classified documents and sworn testimony that confirm what his colleagues always knew -- that he was an exemplary spy and patriot.

As these papers make clear, former CIA Station Chief in Saigon Thomas Polgar might have been speaking for a majority in the Agency when he nominated Snepp for the CIA's Medal of Merit in 1975. Describing Snepp as "a senior intelligence analyst" with "extraordinary knowledge and perception," he wound up his now-public commendation this way:

"The importance of Mr. Snepp's work during the final days and indeed hours of the American presence in Vietnam could hardly be overemphasized. His total unflappability, his ability to organize the necessary material along with his own

thoughts during periods of the most intense pressure, his courage under fire, and above all the perspicacity of his analysis were such that it is my opinion they deserve and indeed demand special recognition ... In summary, during the most critical final days of the American presence in Vietnam, Mr Snepp turned in a kind of performance which I have never seen equaled nor even approximated during my long years with U.S. Intelligence."

For security reasons CIA officers are usually limited in their assignments to either intelligence collection or analysis so they never know enough to betray too much. But during his own eight years in the Agency (1968-1976) Snepp worked, and excelled, in many areas.

Although he was first assigned to Saigon as an intelligence analyst, a job description from his initial tour of duty (1969-1971) notes that he also "frequently takes part in interrogations." When he returned to Vietnam in 1972 for a second tour, it was as a full-time interrogator on the Station's counterintelligence staff. His responsibility, as described in one CIA memo, was to wring out "one of the most important and certainly one of the most hostile counterintelligence sources ever to fall into CIA hands."

To judge from other contemporaneous accounts, he did the job well. "Where others failed," wrote Station Chief Polgar, "Snepp succeeded to a considerable degree and by maneuvering the source into a continuous dialogue he was able to obtain significant information." According to a field evaluation, Snepp also "engaged in other interrogations and was able to produce disseminations of significant strategic import."

When Polgar nominated Snepp for two different promotions in 1973-74, he applauded his work as an interrogator and noted that his operational responsibilities were being expanded: "Because of his demonstrated expertise, he was asked by our [DELETED] colleagues to assist in the exploitation of their own sensitive collection effort in [DELETED] which Snepp accomplished with his usual skill and effectiveness."

By mid-1974 Snepp's involvement in "the debriefing of selected ralliers and other sources" had become routine. "He is a thorough and effective interrogator," a supervisor remarked at the time, "and by his participation in these collection activities he has made useful contributions and produced valuable intelligence reports."

During the final days of the war, despite staggering analytical responsibilities, Snepp continued, according to his Fitness Reports, "to assist in the debriefing and assessment of selected sources and in every case he was able to dig out valuable information from them. His operational reports based on these debriefings were excellent."

In his alternate role as intelligence analyst, Snepp was so highly regarded that he quickly became responsible for top-level briefings and strategic assessments. In mid-1974 Polgar dubbed him "the most able briefer in Vietnam" and a final "Fitness Report" from Saigon portrayed him as "the principal drafter of Station appraisals, presenting the views of the senior officer [Polgar] on political and strategic questions."

Looking back on Snepp's work, Polgar later acknowledged that his analyses of Communist planning and of the final North Vietnamese offensive "have all turned out to be in accordance with the actual circumstances and thus served as the most valuable guidelines to the policy-makers."

Indeed, so celebrated were Snepp's strategic forecasts that news of them seeped into the national media.

Shortly after Saigon's collapse, journalist Robert Shaplen wrote in *The New Yorker* magazine: "Where [Ambassador Graham] Martin was more misguided was in persistently believing that a political solution was possible, though he had in fact been told for weeks by his military analysts, particularly by Frank Sneff [sic], a civilian expert well qualified to judge, that the situation was deteriorating very rapidly" (**The New Yorker, May 19, 1975**).

Similarly, in a June 1, 1976 news story, **Chicago Daily News** correspondent Keyes Beech hailed Snepp's insights.

"From early April onward" wrote Beech, "Snepp predicted with almost uncanny accuracy every move the Communists made, including their decision to rule out negotiations and go for Saigon. The same intelligence was available to top embassy officials, including Ambassador Graham Martin, who apparently chose to believe otherwise and, until the bitter end, hoped for a face saving political solution" (**Chicago Daily News, June 1, 1976**).

REPRODUCED BELOW: samplings of official documents and testimony about Snepp's CIA career. The original references reside in Snepp's personal files and with the National Security Archives, a private Washington repository for declassified government documents.

During his first tour of duty in Vietnam, from 1969-1971, Snepp was officially designated an "intelligence analyst" but his responsibilities were myriad. As a "Field Reassignment Questionnaire" of December 7, 1970 demonstrates, he was charged with producing political reports on Laos, as well as Vietnam, and writing speeches and position papers for the Station Chief. In addition, according to this report, "Incumbent frequently takes part in interrogations focusing on enemy plans and strategy." He also was assigned to a liaison job with the South Vietnamese Special Police Branch and in this capacity conducted training seminars on Communist strategy -- a function for which he was cited by Saigon's high command.

In a "Fitness Report" of July 9, 1971, his immediate supervisor, William Christison, described Snepp as "an exceptionally fine oral briefer and a very effective writer" who "works well under pressure and has produced many fine analytical pieces under deadlines of a few hours or less." Christison also reported that Snepp's perspectives were far ranging: "While he has specialized on North Vietnamese and Viet Cong affairs, he constantly strives to relate whatever he is working on to developments elsewhere in Southeast Asia."

Elaborating on Snapp's work in the 1969-71 period, Christison commented years later: "My assessment was that his [Snapp's] performance was very high quality work ... he wrote papers on North Vietnamese and Viet Cong activities, intentions and capabilities. He was in general one of the two or three, but probably the principal of these two or three analysts working on these areas." (Christison deposition, May 9, 1978, page 12.)

By the time Snapp left Saigon in June 1971 at the end of his first tour, he was, as Christison remarked in a "Fitness Report," "universally regarded -- by others in the Vietnam Station, by the Embassy's political section, by the analysts in MACV J-2, CORDS, and JUSPAO -- as one of the most knowledgeable individuals in Saigon on such subjects as North Vietnamese policy and intentions, strengths and weaknesses of the Viet Cong and Viet Cong infrastructure."

In addition, said Christison, "Subject is very well liked and respected by his colleagues, and also by those Vietnamese with whom he has come into official contact. In sum -- a first class officer who has made a major contribution to the organization in Vietnam and who has all the potential to do likewise in future assignments." ("Fitness Report," July 9, 1971)

Back in Washington, Snapp was assigned to the Vietnam Task Force of the Office of Current Intelligence as an analyst of North Vietnamese political developments, an area which, according to a contemporaneous "Fitness Report," represented a "key and difficult problem in OCI."

At the end of his first nine months in this job, his immediate superiors rated his performance as "highly commendable." "He has quickly developed a solid background knowledge of North Vietnamese affairs and has turned out a daily stream of thoughtful, well written and very useful analysis" ran one evaluation. "He has been operating under the pressure of tight deadlines and long hours associated with the recent Communist offensive in Vietnam. Nevertheless his enthusiasm and application to duty has remained strong." Furthermore, "Mr. Snapp handles himself well in dealing with his superiors and associates, especially in his briefings of senior OCI officers and other agency officials."

The ranking CIA officer who reviewed these remarks went on to say: "I fully concur in the above judgments and comments and would add only that we have also received laudatory comments from the US Paris delegations on production he [Snepp] is responsible for." ("Fitness Report," June 21, 1972)

In October 1972, Snepp was sent back to Saigon, on special assignment to the Station's counter-intelligence branch, to handle a very sensitive interrogation and to prepare "Situation Estimates" as "time allowed." His immediate supervisor reported in a "Fitness Report" of April 1973: "Subject [Snepp] is a young man of undeniable attributes which include an in-depth knowledge of Vietnamese realities, North and South; a sharp, alert, inquisitive and incisive mind; an excellent analytical capability; and a remarkable ability to express his thoughts orally in an orderly, precise, and eloquent manner, and to convert them into excellent prose at the drop of a hat.

"Subject was personally selected by headquarters with the Station's concurrence to proceed to this Station to conduct the interrogation of one of the most important and certainly one of the most hostile counterintelligence prisoners ever to fall into allied hands. Subject met the challenge with great aplomb and determination and succeeded in obtaining significant information from the prisoner by maneuvering him into a continuous dialogue and blocking efforts on his part to recoil into his shell. Subject was able to perform the above through an accurate analysis of the prisoner's personality and careful planning of strategy before each interrogation session, aimed at the exploitation of the prisoner's vulnerabilities. But perhaps the greatest contributing factor was the utilization by Subject of his vast reservoir of knowledge concerning North Vietnamese realities and North Vietnamese leadership which succeeded in titillating subject intellectually and compelling him to discuss matters of interest to the Station. An equally important contributing factor was Subject's dogged determination which succeeded in keeping the prisoner off-balance in a constantly defensive position, and often cornered by the logicity of Subject's argumentation. The signing on the Vietnam peace agreement made it impossible to continue the interrogation of subject, but needless to say Subject's performance was excellent as was the product.

"In addition to the above Subject engaged in other interrogations and was able to produce disseminations of significant strategic import. Because of his excellent grasp of Vietnamese realities subject was requested to prepare certain Station position papers on the enemy, which he performed with alacrity and with unquestioned competence ... I would rate Subject among the top five percent of his grade in competence and effectiveness."

A senior reviewing officer concurred in these judgments: "There is no question he [Snepp] has performed in a very strong manner and is an extremely capable, intelligent and hard working officer ... I consider he has turned in an unusually fine performance compared to officers of his grade whose specialty is interrogation ...

"As a substantive officer I regard him highly as a writer, briefer and analyst. His knowledge of the Vietnam scene is unusually fine and he has applied it extraordinarily well to his basically operational assignments during his TDY [temporary assignment]. I consider the Station was most fortunate to have his services, and as known, he has now been assigned permanently to the Station's intelligence analysis section.

"Subject has excellent potential and value for the organization, and although unable to compare him to other substantive officers in his field, I would rate him among the top twenty percent of comparable GS-12 officers in [DELETED]. In summary, a dedicated, energetic and talented officer whose performance here has been topnotch." ("Fitness Report," April 22, 1973)

In January 1974, Station Chief Polgar concurred in an official "recommendation for a quality step increase" in salary for Snepp: "Subject has been working under my supervision since October 1972. During this period of time his performance has been outstanding. His excellent background in Vietnamese affairs, his analytical ability and his skill as a writer and briefer on political/military matters have made him a key member of the Indications and Analysis Branch team.

"Subject's knowledge of substance and his demonstrated ability in both written and verbal presentation are accompanied by an overall attitude which makes him an exceptionally valuable employee. He has shown strong initiative in identifying analytical problems and has displayed ingenuity in seeking solution for them. A more than willing worker, Subject has shown an exemplary and always cheerful diligence. During the past eleven months, he has taken only five days of leave.

"The high quality of Subject's performance has recently been attested by a formal letter of appreciation from the British Ambassador following a briefing given by Subject for a visiting foreign ministry official and an oral commendation from the Chief East Asia Division [CIA] for a briefing delivered during his visit to Saigon Station in August 1973." ("Memorandum for: Chief of Station, Vietnam, Recommendation for Quality Step Increase -- Frank W. Snepp, 18 January, 1974")

On February 1, 1974 Polgar sent a special message to CIA headquarters, urging a further promotion for Snepp: "The Station has forwarded a recommendation for the promotion of Mr. Frank Snepp to GS-13. Because of close working relationship with Subject and my familiarity with his work since he arrived at this Station in early October 1972, I felt additional remarks may be in order.

"I first met Snepp after he was personally selected by headquarters to conduct the interrogation of one of the most important North Vietnamese counterintelligence sources to fall into our hands. This source, a senior North Vietnamese officer, had consistently refused to divulge any information of value and his attitude toward his several interrogators can be characterized as hostile. Where others failed, Snepp succeeded to a considerable degree and by maneuvering the source into a continuous dialogue he was able to obtain significant information. Mr. Snepp was able to achieve results through an accurate analysis of the target's personality and by his own vast reservoir of knowledge of North Vietnamese realities on the basis of which a degree of intellectual companionship could be established.

"When during his TDY, a vacancy occurred in IAB [Indications and Analysis Branch] for which Snepp then volunteered, we were delighted to give him an opportunity to remain in Vietnam on a permanent basis. In a short time, he succeeded in establishing himself as the most sought after briefer of the Station, particularly on North Vietnam and other Communist affairs. Because of his demonstrated expertise, he was asked by our [DELETED] colleagues to assist in the exploitation of their own sensitive collection effort in [DELETED] which Snepp has accomplished with his usual skill and effectiveness.

"In short, we have here a young man who has demonstrated exceptional ability in interrogation, analysis, oral and written expression, and a forthright and convincing manner of presentation. He is a great credit to the agency in his current assignment. He has the educational background and personality which combined with his diligence and already vast accumulation of knowledge on our primary targets should carry him a long way. His promotion to GS-13 at this time would be in recognition of an outstanding and versatile performance. ("Telepouch: Att. Administrative/Personnel -- Promotion Recommendation for Mr. Frank Snepp, 1 February, 1974")

During a visit to CIA headquarters in early 1974, Polgar gave a personal assessment of Snepp's performance to Paul Walsh, Associate Deputy Director of Intelligence. Recalling his remarks in subsequent sworn testimony, Walsh noted: "He [Polgar] spoke of Frank in just glowing terms. He was very pleased with Frank's performance. I recall that there had been cable traffic in which Mr. Polgar recommended Frank for promotion ... I know that he spoke very warmly of Frank's services, with great praise." (Deposition of Paul Walsh, May 1, 1978, page 20).

A "Fitness Report" prepared in February 1974 reflected Snepp's expanding duties, noting that he "covers military and political developments in South Vietnam, North Vietnam, and in adjacent areas of Cambodia and Laos. As principal briefing officer, [he] prepares and presents oral briefings for ranking Embassy officers, Station personnel, and foreign officials ... [He] writes intelligence memoranda as required, prepares and contributes to the preparation of field appraisals [Station's strategic assessments]."

Snepp's immediate supervisor described him in this evaluation as a "thoroughly seasoned, intelligent, and highly competent current intelligence officer who has made an outstanding contribution to the work of the indications and analysis branch. His five years on the Vietnam account have provided him with a comprehensive knowledge about the country and people, North and South, which constitutes a valuable asset both to subject and to the organization." A reviewing officer added: "Subject is now unquestionably a real expert on Vietnam" and "his potential as a supervisor is high. His capacity for hard work and his expertise should command the respect of subordinates." ("Fitness Report," February 22, 1974)

In June 1974, one month following Snapp's promotion to GS-13, Polgar sent to the chief of the East Asia Division at CIA headquarters and to the Deputy Director of Intelligence a special memorandum commending Snapp's intelligence briefings. "It is indeed with great pleasure that I commend Mr. Frank W. Snapp for his continuing outstanding performance as an intelligence briefer and, in particular, in connection with a demanding set of briefings he gave to widely varied foreign and American audiences during the past two weeks. His forceful and convincing manner of presentation is backed up by a brilliant and highly analytical mind. Mr. Snapp quickly adapts to each audience and perceives how to help each group better understand the situation in Vietnam. He is careful never to overstep proper bounds; he is perceptive of nuances. He defers to his superiors when appropriate; and above all he handles challenges from his audience skillfully and directly with a depth of knowledge of Vietnam which is truly exceptional.

"During the past two weeks, Mr. Snapp, in addition to producing a number of excellently written intelligence reports, has coped magnificently with a grueling briefing schedule of at least eleven appearances before vastly different groups. They include the Indonesian and Iranian ICCS delegation; the new British Ambassador to Vietnam; a delegation of Republican steering committee staff members; representatives of the German, Dutch and Italian embassies; Messrs. Elmer Lower and Frank Meriano, ABC President and ABC Bureau Chief in Saigon respectively; Mr. Larry Green of the Chicago Daily News; a delegation of Young Americans for Freedom and the Freedom Leadership Foundation; the GVN MR 2 Commander, General Toan, and his staff in Pleiku; the U.S. Consul General, Province Chief, and Station officers in Nha Trang; and the Ambassador's Mission Council meetings. In each case the briefing was tailored to the audience, its requirements and its actual familiarity with the situation in Vietnam.

"Mr. Snapp and the Station received accolades from many of these groups for the highly professional presentations. Mr. Snapp personally has established a reputation, justly deserved, of being the most able briefer now in Vietnam" ("To Deputy Director, Intelligence; Subject: Mr. Frank W. Snapp, Commendation for Intelligence Briefings, 12 June 1974")

A "Fitness Report" dispatched to CIA Headquarters a month later, on 31 July 1974, noted, "In addition to his normal duties, Subject has assisted in the debriefing of selected ralliers and other sources with excellent results. He is a thorough and

effective interrogator and by his participation in these collection activities he has made useful contributions and produced valuable intelligence." A reviewing officer also remarked that "over the past year and a half he [Snepp] has been the principal drafter of Station appraisals, presenting the views of the senior officer on political and strategic questions." ("Fitness Report," 31 July, 1974)

Following Saigon's collapse in April 1975 and a month-long interim tour in Thailand where he debriefed select intelligence sources Snepp was recommended for a "quality step increase" in salary by the Associate Deputy Director of Intelligence, Paul Walsh, with the concurrence of the chief of the Office of Current Intelligence, William Parmenter. Describing Snepp as "senior intelligence analyst" in the Saigon's station's Indications and Analysis Branch, Walsh and Parmenter observed that he had turned in a remarkable performance during the final days prior to the evacuation of Vietnam. ("Recommendation for Quality Step Increase for Mr. Frank W. Snepp, 29 July 1975")

Snepp's last fitness report, dated 8 August 1975 and covering his final months in Vietnam, characterized him as "a hard-working, dedicated and highly intelligent officer" with "outstanding skills as an analyst, briefer and writer." According to the reviewing officer: "During the almost two years that I have worked with subject he was the principal station briefer and the major contributor to situation appraisals and to other Station studies, including articles for each issue of the Mission's North Vietnam Bi-weekly ... The unusually heavy demands that developed toward the end of the previous reporting period continued to increase during this one and Subject, like all of his colleagues in the Indications and Analysis Branch of the Reports and Analysis Staff worked exceptionally long hours in the office under constant pressure to keep up with the fast pace of events and to meet the crowded briefing and production schedules. During this period, Station production reached record levels. Subject also continued to assist in the debriefing and assessment of selected sources and in every case he was able to dig out valuable information from them. His operational and intelligence reports based on these debriefings were excellent ... Subject is an exceptionally fine officer with much to offer the agency in a variety of assignments. ("Fitness Report," 8 August, 1975)

In late 1975, former Saigon Station Chief Thomas Polgar, as chairman of a review panel, supervised the drafting of a "Recommendation for Honor and Merit Award for M. Frank W. Snepp 3rd." The memorandum was approved in December 1975 by

Theodore Shackley, chief of the East Asia Division, William Parmenter, Director of the Office of Current Intelligence, and Edward Proctor, Deputy Director for Intelligence. The text reads:

1. It is recommended that Mr. Frank W. Snepp III be awarded the Intelligence Medal of Merit.
2. Mr. Snepp was a senior intelligence analyst in the Vietnam Station's Indications Analysis Branch from 1973 until the evacuation of the United States Embassy from Saigon on 29 April 1975. Throughout this period Mr. Snepp demonstrated that he had a keen analytical mind, great resourcefulness and energy and outstanding area knowledge. He excelled in both oral and written presentations and the contents of his fitness reports need not be repeated here. Suffice it to say that his outstanding performance was recognized by his recent promotion to the grade of GS-13.
3. During the final weeks of the Vietnam Station Mr. Snepp exceeded his own previously established peaks of achievement. With the IAB staff reduced to two men in line with the emergency evacuation of 'surplus' personnel, Mr. Snepp became responsible for daily briefings of station and key Embassy personnel and for the preparation of frequent situation reports and situation appraisals which were essential to keep the intelligence community abreast of the rapid deterioration of the situation. Particularly noteworthy was Mr. Snepp's ability to correlate the current military developments with the overt propagandist lines of North Vietnamese publications and radio transmissions -- an achievement made possible only by Mr. Snepp's extraordinary knowledge and perception of Vietnamese communist thought and political processes.
4. The importance of Mr. Snepp's work during the final days and indeed hours of the American presence in Vietnam could hardly be over-emphasized. His total unflappability, his ability to organize the necessary material along with his own thoughts during periods of most intense pressure, his courage under fire and above all the perspicacity of his analysis were such that it is my opinion they deserve and indeed demand special recognition. From the comfortable perspective of hindsight it should be quite easy to recognize that the analysis initiated by Mr. Snepp on such topics as the significance of the COSVN [Communist command] Resolution for 1975 and the results of the first phase of the communist offensive as well as his prediction for the second phase of the offensive and the subsequent military collapse of the Republic of South Vietnam have all turned out to be in accordance with the actual developments and thus served as most valuable guidelines to the policy-makers.

5. In summary, during the most critical final days of the American presence in Vietnam, Mr. Snepp turned in a kind of performance which I have never seen equaled nor even approximated during my long years with U.S. Intelligence. Special recognition, in the form of the Intelligence Medal of Merit is definitely in order."

Snepp received the Intelligence Medal of Merit from the then Director of the CIA, William Colby, on 16 December 1975, together with the following citation:

"Mr. Frank W. Snepp, III, is hereby awarded the Intelligence Medal of Merit for his performance as an Intelligence Analyst at the Vietnam Station from 1973 until the evacuation of the United States Embassy from Saigon on 29 April 1975. Throughout this period M. Snepp demonstrated great resourcefulness and energy and outstanding area knowledge. During the final weeks of the Vietnam Station Mr. Snepp exceeded even his own previously established peaks of achievement. He became responsible for daily briefings of Station and key Embassy personnel and for the preparation of frequent situation reports and situation appraisals which were essential to keep the intelligence community abreast of the rapid deterioration of the situation. In recognition of his outstanding performance he is awarded the Intelligence Medal of Merit."

On January 27, 1976, four days after Snepp's resignation from the CIA, former U.S. Ambassador to Saigon, Graham Martin, referred to him appreciatively in testimony about intelligence reporting during the last weeks of the war:

"... we did have information from a long-range penetration of the so-called COSVN, the Central Communist Unit in South Vietnam ... which indicated that, regardless of all of the other [diplomatic] byplay, the North Vietnamese were now determined to press a strict military solution ... At that time, that report was not given that much credibility by the CIA station chief ... It was not until he was pressed by the officer who was in direct contact with this particular penetration to do so, that this man was allowed to send it back through operational channels. If you would like confirmation on that, that particular man is sitting here today ... Mr. Frank Snepp, who was the person who was in direct contact with the penetration." (Raw transcript, "The Vietnam-Cambodia Emergency, 1975, Part III--Vietnam Evacuation: Testimony of Ambassador Graham A. Martin, Hearing before the Special Subcommittee on Investigations of the Committee on International Relations, House of Representatives, 94th Congress, 2nd Session, January 27, 1976)

“Flowers in the Killing Fields I” by Rick Spangle

CHAPTER 9

Irreparable Harm

A Firsthand Account of How One Agent Took on
the CIA in an Epic Battle Over Free Speech

by Frank Snepp

Published by Random House in July 1999

PART 2

“Irreparable Harm is Snepp’s well-written, candid, modern version of Kafka’s Trial.”—**The New York Times**

“CIA v Snepp was a constitutional train wreck—and you can’t avert your eyes from Irreparable Harm, Frank Snepp’s hypnotizing and heartbreaking account of his case.”—**Jeffrey Toobin**

“...excruciating honesty...must reading for every law student in America, and for every burgeoning nihilist...He took a courageous stand and paid for it. Snepp, and the Constitution, deserved better.”—**The Los Angeles Times**

“Readers who have been ground slowly and exceedingly small by the justice system will love it ... Relishers of unspeakably painful government ironies will go for it ... First Amendment enthusiasts will applaud it ... At its best, this chronicle of a whistleblower whistled down by a most suspect policeman is a reminder that cannot be repeated often enough of how government agencies hide their occasional malevolence and frequent Keystone Kop stupidities behind the tattered curtain of need-for-secrecy.”—**The Washington Post**

“...a compelling case study...at once a moving personal narrative and a disturbing examination of how claims of national security can have a sledgehammer effect on arguments about free speech, overwhelming all competing claims.”—**Publishers Weekly**

It will haunt him for the rest of his life. It would galvanize him for a battle that would nearly crush his spirit.

The Vietnamese woman who killed herself and their son because he failed to rescue them. The thousands of Vietnamese who were left to torture and murder at the hands of a hostile occupier. Guilt and sorrow would grip him, never to relent, propelling him into a confrontation with the CIA that would cost him everything, even his own father.

Frank Snepp’s moral odyssey began with the fall of Vietnam, and would not end until the United States Supreme Court made him a scapegoat for a generation of protest—the first American ever to be gagged for life simply for taking on the CIA on a matter of principle.

But Snepp’s experiences didn’t touch only him and those closest to him. The fallout has affected the way countless other First Amendment cases are decided in court and has strengthened the power of the White House and even private industry to silence critics.

A searingly candid account of Snepp’s passage from lockstep CIA agent to improbable battler for free speech, "Irreparable Harm" tells of terror and sacrifice, and of the obsessive determination of CIA officials to destroy a man who dared call them on their mistakes.

The narrative...

Among the last CIA agents to be airlifted from Saigon during the closing moments of the war, Frank Snepp returned to CIA headquarters in the summer of 1975 haunted by the loss of his Vietnamese son and lover—and determined to force his colleagues to assist other Vietnamese left behind. But this was the Season of the Reckoning with the CIA under investigation by Congress and unwilling to admit any more

transgressions, least of all its final ones in Vietnam. So when Snepp attempted to prompt an internal after-action report to generate support for the abandoned, his colleagues resisted and reviled him, and finally hounded him out of the Agency in an effort to keep a lid on the truth. But Snepp would not be cowed, and for the next eighteen months, with the help of brave friends who risked both career and welfare for him, he carefully and discreetly assembled the report the CIA didn't want, even as former fellow agents pursued him like a fugitive on the run, attempting to intimidate him into silence.

His expose, "Decent Interval", was published by Random House in total secrecy—the first American book to be brought out this way. But the firestorm of publicity it ignited, including a 60 Minutes exclusive and front-page coverage in The New York Times, drove the CIA and the White House to launch a campaign of retaliation unparalleled in the annals of American law.

While acknowledging that Snepp's book had had compromised no secrets, the government's lawyers insisted that its unauthorized publication alone had “irreparably harmed” the nation's security by creating an impression of a breakdown in CIA internal discipline that could frighten off intelligence sources abroad. They also claimed that it violated an invisible trust and a secrecy agreement Snepp had signed with the Agency, and demanded, as penalty, that he be gagged for life and deprived of all his “ill-gotten gains,” every cent he had earned from his act of “faithlessness.”

They offered no proof to support their allegations of harm, ignored inconsistencies in the six secrecy agreements Snepp had signed, and glossed over the fact that other ex-agents, friendlier to the CIA, had routinely been allowed to publish unapproved books and articles without protest or censure. Even so, a scandalously prejudiced Federal judge succumbed to the CIA's extravagant national security claims and ruled against Snepp at every turn, reducing him to an American version of Colonel Alfred Dreyfus, the Frenchman ruthlessly martyred for his beliefs.

Along the way an outraged U.S. Senator took further vengeance on the ex-agent-turned-author by blocking his father's appointment to the federal bench, thus effectively stalling his judicial career and forever souring his relations with his son.

But young Snepp’s ordeal wasn’t over. Months later, in late February 1980, the U.S. Supreme Court took up his case on appeal—and used it to savage both the defendant and the First Amendment.

While upholding the most draconian of the earlier rulings against Snepp—a lifetime gag and confiscation of every penny he’d made from "Decent Interval"—the Court lowered the standard by which the government can gag you or any other American in the name of national security. With its landmark ruling in The United States v. Snepp, the nation’s highest tribunal made it possible for the CIA or any other government agency to silence critics simply by convincing a court that they’re imperiling the “appearance” of airtight official secrecy, whatever that means.

And don’t suppose that genuine national security interests need be at stake. Remember: Frank Snepp was persecuted, prosecuted, gagged and wrecked financially even though the CIA conceded in court that nothing he had made public exposed any official secrets.

Reverberations from the ruling quickly spread through the government and private industry and continue down to the present. Successive presidents from Ronald Reagan to Bill Clinton have used it to justify placing millions of government workers, from FBI agents to park rangers, under censorship rules that prevent them from writing even novels without official approval. The Reagan administration invoked it to limit the reach of the Freedom of Information Act. The Bush administration used it to discourage government workers from blowing the whistle on bureaucratic waste and abuse, claiming that any such disclosure violates an implicit obligation of trust. The Clinton White House relied on the Snepp to try to squelch an early expose of the president’s romantic peccadilloes and to keep criticism of its mid-east policies out of print. The cigarette maker, Brown & Williamson, turned Snepp against whistleblower Jeffrey Wigand and CBS’ 60 Minutes to discourage them from airing the firm’s dirty secrets.

“An unprecedented vote for censorship” is how The Los Angeles Times described the ruling against Snepp. “No court decision in our history,” observed columnist Nat Hentoff, “has so imperiled whistleblowers and thereby the ability of all citizens to find out about rampant ineptitude.”

Till now only Constitutional scholars and victims of the resulting censorship have appreciated what the Supreme Court did on February 19, 1980.

And no one has ever told the story of how the CIA and opportunistic government prosecutors manipulated the courts -- even the Supreme Court itself -- by withholding evidence and concealing truly dangerous security breaches to score this direct hit on the First Amendment.

But now from the bulls-eye comes a riveting firsthand account of what it's like to go up against the government's Goliath and lose -- not just free speech rights, but family, friends, reputation, even the very ability to survive.

Snepp's harrowing memoir of his ordeals, from his shadowy trench battles with the Agency and the treachery of false sympathizers, to the destruction of friends and family and his historic showdown with the CIA in the courts, will leave the reader wondering how any of this could have happened in America.

Revelations...

Among "Irreparable Harm's" most disturbing revelations is what it tells us about the biases of those who are supposed to be the unbiased arbiters of our most sacred freedoms -- the judges and the courts.

In a narrative worthy of the most outrageous John Grisham thriller, Snepp recounts how the original Federal judge in his case, Roarin' Oren Lewis, prejudiced the defendant's chances by denying his plea for a jury trial, by refusing to let anyone but the CIA's own witnesses expound on the "facts," and by barring any mention of Vietnam in the courtroom, even though the entire case was about the book Snepp had written, "Decent Interval", that exposed CIA failures in Vietnam.

You will also learn how the Supreme Court itself became a party to this travesty of justice. For in the tradition of Bob Woodward and Scott Armstrong's *The Brethren*, Snepp taps into the Supreme Court's innermost secrets to reveal its innermost workings. Drawing on never-before-publicized confidential files of two justices who felt his rights had been trampled -- William Brennan and Thurgood Marshall—Snepp

tells how a less friendly justice, Lewis Powell, railroaded him. The documents, provided to Snepp exclusively by the Brennan and Marshall estates, take you inside the Court's deliberations as Powell, a former intelligence officer himself, shortchanges evidence and twists the facts to assure that the CIA will have its way with the naysayer.

So effective was Powell's heavy hand that the Court disposed of Snepp without allowing his lawyers to file written or oral briefs, a procedure almost unheard of in Supreme Court history.

Alan Dershowitz and the unlikely defense...

And who were the frustrated advocates for the defense? Among them:

A young Alan Dershowitz, the Harvard-based Constitutional expert who would go on to represent (more successfully) Claus Von Bulow and O.J. Simpson.

ACLU lawyer and former anti-war activist Mark Lynch who helped blunt the government's assault on free speech in the non-nuclear-secrets Progressive case, and who originally viewed Snepp as an enemy to the very beliefs that would cause him to forge an uneasy alliance with the ex-CIA agent.

If opposites attract, "Irreparable Harm" proves that opposites can overcome their ideological animosities to make common cause for worthy purpose, even if the ultimate outcome is disaster.

United States v. Snepp

The Making of a Landmark First Amendment Decision by the Supreme Court

Shortly after breakfast on February 22, 1980 Mark Lynch called from the ACLU’s law offices on Capitol Hill to give Frank Snepp the bad news. “Are you sitting down,” he asked his client with not a hint of his usual good humor. And no wonder: The U.S. Supreme Court had just ruled on Snepp’s long running legal battle with the government, and it was a government sweep all the way. Not only had the ex-CIA agent been ordered to hand over to the U.S. Treasury all profits, past and future, from his Agency memoir, *Decent Interval*; he’d been saddled with a permanent gag order, obliging him to submit to CIA censors anything he might write about his professional past or its emotional fallout, classified or not, fiction or non-fiction, for the rest of his life.

Draconian as these penalties were, however, they were just part of the injury inflicted. In addition to relieving Snepp of his freedom of speech and last red cent, the Court found him guilty of “faithlessness” to the CIA, even though the government had never charged him with publishing any secrets. It accused him of writing his book “surreptitiously,” even though the CIA had tracked his every move. And in its most excessive finding, the Court declared that Snepp had “irreparably harmed” the national security, even though no one had offered any proof to this effect.

Beyond these personal implications, *Snepp v. the U.S.* savaged the First Amendment itself by providing the executive branch and even private industry with a legal rationale for imposing censorship on their employees – thus rewriting the age-old rule against prior restraint that had previously governed the law in this country.

How did the Court reach this bizarre calculus of justice? Certainly not from examining the evidence. For in one of the strangest twists of the lawsuit, the Court rendered its judgment summarily, without allowing the defendant’s lawyers, or the government’s, to present any oral or written briefs on the case.

Breaking with the Past

For Snepp himself, the ruling was not only crippling but deeply disillusioning, for he was not a renegade ex-spy given to blowing secrets (as former CIA analyst-turned-author Victor Marchetti had done) or agent’s names (in the manner of ex-CIA officer Philip Agee). He had believed and continued to believe that the nation needs the CIA, even covert action, albeit under strict rules of accountability.

It was in fact Snepp’s orthodoxy that had first made him attractive to the Agency. He’d been recruited out of Columbia University’s School of International Affairs in 1968 and sent to Vietnam a year later precisely because he was possessed of a southerner’s conservative streak and a sense of hierarchy that seemed to make him the ideal “good soldier.” And though he wasn’t particularly taken with the Vietnam war, he was too inured to the chivalric ideals of his southern upbringing to presume to protest.

In Vietnam his conformity won him plaudits, rapid promotions, access to the Agency’s best intelligence sources, invitations to the Ambassador’s table and responsibility for preparing the CIA Station chief’s strategic estimates for Washington. Inevitably, with so many roles to play, he occasionally let his true colors show, as his CIA fitness reports demonstrated. Consider this particularly critical entry: “Sometimes impatient with bureaucracy” his superiors wrote of him early in his first tour of duty. “In his personal relationships both on and off the job, [he] is more idealistic and involved than most.”

Normally such notices would doom a career in the CIA where team-play is everything. But both Ambassador Graham Martin and CIA Station chief Tom Polgar

quickly embraced Snepp as a protégé and indulged his lapses because when he did their bidding, he did it with the zeal of a devoted son.

Some of his more fastidious colleagues deplored this penchant for pandering. But whenever any of them dared upbraid him for it he had an easy rationalization, pointing out that if you’re ever to have enough clout to achieve any good tomorrow, you have to make compromises today.

Such of course is the practiced bureaucrat’s standard line of march, and Snepp might have pursued it all the way to the bureaucrat’s just reward – total moral decrepitude – except for the intervention of the North Vietnamese army. But as Hanoi’s forces closed round Saigon with terrifying inexorability in early 1975 the lies and wishful thinking that had sustained American policy in Vietnam for so long were exposed for what they were. No longer could anybody pretend that Kissinger’s peace, the ceasefire agreement negotiated three years before, had won any more than a “decent interval” before the inevitable Communist takeover.

Obvious though this fact was, Snepp’s superiors refused to concede it. Both Martin and Polgar remained insistent to the bitter end that the Saigon regime could be held together long enough for a last minute political fix. Worse, mired in their illusions, they let evacuation planning idle along, so that on the final day itself there wasn’t even a master list in the embassy of the Vietnamese who were in grave peril and desperately needed to be rescued because of their ties to the Americans.

During the last terrible weeks of the war Snepp worked frantically to disabuse the ambassador and his men by churning out one alarmist report after another, echoing back to them the dire warnings he picked up from his informant contacts. But so obsessed did he become with this self-appointed mission that he lost sight of a profound personal responsibility. Two days before the collapse, a Vietnamese woman who claimed to have borne his son called to beg him to help the two of them escape the country. But Snepp was too busy to help just then, too busy writing another useless report for the ambassador. So he told her, “Call back in an hour. I’ll

help you then.” But when she called back, Snepp was down in the ambassador’s office, briefing him on the report, and the woman killed herself and the boy.

As the chopper lifted off the roof of the embassy on the night of April 29, 1975 Snepp gazed stupefied at the thousands of Vietnamese raging outside the embassy walls below, waiting not so patiently for the help that would never come. Till then, the war had been for him a B-52 strike from sixty thousand feet up, the consequences of his actions only barely visible through the haze of euphemism and illusion he’d conjured to insulate his conscience. But that night, in the wake of the woman’s death and that of the child, there were no euphemisms to disguise what he and his colleagues had done and left undone. They’d betrayed their loyal Vietnamese friends – and those who’d dealt most closely with them – young CIA and State Department officers from the trenches – now had blood on their hands, for it was they who in their daily contacts had convinced those unfortunates to trust us.

Back at CIA headquarters Snepp roamed the halls, trying to prompt an official assessment of the evacuation, desperately seeking to shame the Agency into rescuing those who’d been left behind. It was not entirely a selfless act. Nearly five years Snepp had been out there on the cutting edge in Indochina, doing things a Mafioso would blush at, and rationalizing them by pretending that truth was somehow being served. The Quiet American act – only he’d believed it. And now he wanted somebody to answer for the disaster that had given the lie to the rationale and left him feeling like a bloodsotted capo – except that a capo wouldn’t have left his soldiers stranded as we had.

How else to put it? He wanted absolution, and that meant somebody in the upper reaches of the bureaucracy had to admit guilt too, lift some of it from his shoulders and do penance alongside. But Ford, Kissinger and all the others who’d contributed an illusion or two weren’t about to bend a knee or let anyone else do so either -- not in the Autumn of 1975, not with Congress already rummaging through the Pandora’s box of past Agency sins and Director Bill Colby trotting up to Capitol Hill almost daily to make apologies and his predecessor, Richard Helms trembling out there in Teheran where he was now ambassador because in attempting to protect his own reputation he’d been obliged to lie under oath to Congress about past CIA dirty tricks in Chile.

Nobody wanted any more mea culpas, no public breast-beating by the penitents from Indochina. Be quiet! Snepp was told. Be quiet and forget!

But he couldn't. So he advised the front office that he'd write a book about the whole mess if they didn't do an autopsy themselves on the evacuation.

They wagged their fingers, warned him no active employee can speak or write ill of the Agency or his superiors publicly – and then began canvassing the ranks to see if he'd dared to contact a publisher. Under threat of dismissal a former girlfriend of his, a CIA map maker, conceded to her Agency inquisitors that Snepp had approached Random House. But because of a blemish on her personnel record – an admitted affinity for marijuana – they chose not to believe her and pigeonholed the one piece of intelligence that might have enabled them to stop his book even before it was close to becoming a reality.

Meanwhile Snepp discovered that Martin, Colby and his lieutenants were trying to rewrite Saigon's final horror story to their own advantage by leaking self-serving versions to the press, often with generous sprinklings of classified information whose very whisper outside official channels could mean the deaths of abandoned Vietnamese. If Snepp had any reservations about the moral choice confronting him, this resolved them – definitively.

Writing the Confessional

“Frank Snepp...has resigned from the Agency rather than agree to submit for review a book that he is writing.” So ran the inter-office CIA memo signaling his departure in late January 1976. It's tone was accusatory, but its message accurate. Just a few days before, CIA lawyers and Security men had tried to force Snepp to sign an affidavit pledging them his manuscript under any circumstances. He had categorically refused. The only commitment they could wrench from him was a “termination secrecy agreement” not to publish anything secret or confidential. That obligation he would have assumed even without this formal covenant. The last thing Snepp meant to do was further imperil the Vietnamese left behind.

CIA officials seemed to understand this. In all the four hundred pages of cables and memoranda they wrote about Snepp's book prior to its publication, the worst they said of him was that he might be critical of the ambassador and the CIA.

Still, that was enough. During the eighteen months it took Snepp to complete the manuscript, he was stalked like an enemy spy, his name added to a CIA watch-list for such hostile agents. Three CIA officers were assigned to monitor his progress. Two good friends of his, a husband and wife who'd once worked for the Agency, were persuaded to supply the CIA with tapes and notes of their conversations with him and even pieces of manuscript which he let them read even as they slipped him restricted information from CIA files. And three times the CIA asked the Justice Department to intervene to stop his book. The Attorney General refused on every occasion, since the Agency could offer no proof that what he was writing could irreparably harm the nation's security – the legal requirement for restraining orders recognized by the Supreme Court in the 1971 Pentagon Papers case.

But the Agency wasn't to be deterred. Ten months after Snepp's resignation, CIA lawyers dusted off and sent to him an employment agreement he'd signed his first day on the job in 1968 but which he hadn't seen since then and had long ago forgotten. In their covering letter they claimed that it embodied his current obligations and required him to turn all his writings, secret and otherwise, over to the CIA's censors.

Snepp was incredulous. The pledge he'd signed on leaving the Agency was far narrower, obliging him to clear only secrets. Moreover, as he read through the fine print of this earlier document, it became apparent that the Agency itself had violated it by refusing to let him vent his grievances within official channels, as one of its provisions required. **Conclusion: if the Agency wasn't bound by this piece of paper, neither was he.**

Even so, Snepp did try to placate CIA officials by offering to let them review his manuscript informally, so they could be satisfied that he meant to blow no secrets. But one of those assigned to his case said this wouldn't suffice – that **it wasn't the threat of blown secrets that bothered the CIA but the specter of embarrassment that concerned them.**

THIS CASE DEMONSTRATES CONCLUSIVELY THAT THE CIA (AND THE NSA) USE THE SPECTOR OF NATIONAL SECURITY TO CLASSIFY MUCH INFORMATION MERELY TO AVOID EMBARRASSMENT. THEY ALWAYS HAVE AND ALWAYS WILL.

Rick

Not long afterwards, the Agency’s new director, Stansfield Turner, summoned Snapp to a meeting and demanded that he surrender the manuscript forthwith or sign a new secrecy agreement promising to do so. Snapp came away deeply suspicious. The Agency seemed to be trying to change the rules in the Fourth Quarter to recoup a losing game. In a letter to Turner, he said no.

In the meantime, Snapp and his Random House editor, Bob Loomis, not realizing that their association had been compromised months before, continued to conduct all their contacts sub rosa, in out-of- the-way city parks and Greenwich Village hideaways so no one could link them. Despite the government’s later claims, this cloak-and-dagger routine betokened no disrespect for the law, but rather Snapp’s well-founded belief that even with the law on his side there was nothing to keep the CIA from beating up on his publisher. Indeed, back in 1964, when Random House was preparing to bring out a ground-breaking work on the CIA, Ross and Wise’s Invisible Government, its offices had been burglarized and its editors threatened by operatives from Langley.

Later, when the company’s subsidiary Knopf was about to publish Victor Marchetti’s own CIA memoir, Agency officials had stolen the manuscript, obtained a restraining order and then deliberately over-censored the book, cutting out perfectly harmless material (as they admitted in a brief on the case) so they’d have extra bargaining chips to play against him in court. Neither Snapp nor his editor wanted to risk a replay. Hence, their determination to keep collaboration under wraps until publication.

Going Public

Snapp’s book, Decent Interval, appeared amid massive publicity in November 1977. The timing couldn’t have been worse. Director Turner was in the process of firing 800 surplus employees, and he quickly concluded that any number of them might take out their resentments in print if an example weren’t made of Snapp. So he urged the Justice Department to reconsider mounting a lawsuit. The new attorney general, President Carter’s old Georgia crony Griffin Bell, agreed.

The government’s charges against Snapp amounted to a Chinese menu of mismatched law. Though prosecutors conceded there were no secrets in his book,

they accused him of breaching a secrecy agreement – not his last one, but his first one as if no other existed. To be on the safe side, they also insisted that, whatever agreement existed on paper, Snepp was implicitly obligated, as a matter of trust, to submit all his writings for clearance, even though no such obligation had ever been mentioned to him or anyone else in the Agency. And finally, to justify a gag order against him, they argued that his unauthorized book had done irreparable harm to the national security, not by compromising secrets, but by compromising the “appearance” of reliable CIA security – a transgression which they claimed (without offering any proof) had frightened off a number of our spies abroad.

Confusing? You bet. Nothing like the government’s case had ever been seen in the annals of American law. There were no legal precedents for any of allegations against Snepp, let alone for the penalties demanded.

The drumfire that preceded the trial was enormous. Turner and the CIA planted stories in the press and Congress that Snepp had slipped into print “surreptitiously,” that he’d falsely promised his manuscript to the Agency, that the Agency had made no attempt to monitor his activities, and that the identity of his publisher had never been known.

At a press conference President Carter himself linked Snepp by innuendo to people guilty of “revealing utmost secrets.”

The final nail was driven in his coffin just days before the trial when another ex-CIA officer, John Stockwell, published an indiscreet anti-CIA expose of his own and declared himself ready with “Snepp, Marchetti and Agee” to bring the Agency to heel. If the CIA needed proof for its jeremiads about leaks and leakers, Stockwell provided it. Even the most even-handed judge might now have been persuaded that an example had to be made.

Snepp’s judge, a seventy-two year old Virginia conservative named Oren Lewis, was neither evenhanded nor in need of any such persuading. Before examining one shred of evidence he announced to Snepp’s lawyers that they’d undoubtedly want to know how to get to the Federal appeals court in Richmond – “just take I-95 and go south.” Then in two days of stormy hearings he ruled out a jury trial, arbitrarily redefined the charges to suggest that Snepp had published secrets, dismissed his termination secrecy agreement and the First Amendment itself as irrelevant to the case, and on twenty- seven different occasions cut short his lawyers’ questioning by howling “Objection sustained!” even before the government’s attorneys had raised an objection.

And when time came for Lewis to consider the alleged damage Snepp had done, he declined to let the defendant’s lawyers pry from the government’s star witness, CIA director Turner, whether it was Decent Interval or something else (like Agee’s or Stockwell’s disclosures) that had unsettled CIA sources, if indeed any had been unsettled. In the end Lewis gagged Snepp, directing him forever to submit to CIA censorship, and ordered all profits from Decent Interval to be surrendered to the US Treasury, just as the government wanted.

Long Road to Disaster

Snepp’s lawyers immediately filed an appeal, and over the next year and half pursued it all the way to the U.S. Supreme Court. At one point the government’s attorneys, fearful that they might lose what they’d gained, offered to guarantee Snepp forty percent of his profits if only he’d give up the legal fight. He said no. He’d been too battered, his honor called into question too often, and he was fearful that any compromise might discredit the message by discrediting the messenger, providing his former CIA colleagues with a pretext for turning their backs on the abandoned Vietnamese forever.

Meanwhile his isolation deepened. Snepp’s father, a state judge whose hopes for advancement to the federal bench had been dashed by congressional reaction to the case, kept him at arm’s length. Agency acquaintances, who before and after the trial had voiced their support in quick calls from pay phone booths, suddenly grew silent for fear of contracting guilt through association. And worst of all, Snepp’s long suffering helpmate, a black girl from Antigua, who’d kept his body and soul together during the months he’d been writing, broke off their relation out of concern that she’d become too much of a burden to his already overtaxed emotions.

For awhile afterwards, a variety of courtroom groupies floated into Snepp’s life, attracted by his dimming aura of celebrity, and just as quickly floated out again, after discovering that this “celebrity” was dirt poor, living on small loans from friends as his book royalties drained away into an escrow account set up to keep them safe for the government pending the outcome of the appeal.

By the time the Brethren got around to considering the case, the political tides had turned inauspicious. Philip Agee had outraged just about everybody by publishing two more books rife with agents’ names, and because of a change in the national mood, precipitated by the Iranian hostage crisis and the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, the public had grown abundantly solicitous of the CIA, to the point of treating all its critics like bad apples fallen from the same tree. To make matters worse, the Supreme Court itself had just come under scathing attack in a newly published book, *The Brethren*, based on leaks from the Justices’ own private clerks. Six of the indignant nine began scrabbling about for a way to serve warning to their own leakers. The case against Snepp was it.

Fallout

Shortly after the Court’s ruling, and using the legal authority it conferred, the government brought Snepp-type suits against Stockwell and Agee for their unauthorized disclosures. Stockwell, having shrewdly spent his book profits, pleaded financial hardship and won an out-of-court settlement that spared him the burden of paying any of his previous earnings to the government. Agee likewise escaped penury because the judge in his case decided there was now abundant evidence that the CIA was picking only on its critics, even though various “loyal” ex-employees had published unauthorized books of their own. To try to convey an impression of even-handedness, the government then sued William Colby for his memoir, *Honorable Men* which he’d passed to his publisher before getting it cleared and which he’d allowed to slip into French translation with many secrets sprinkled throughout. But like Stockwell, Colby struck a sweetheart deal with the government that all but got him off the hook financially.

In the meantime, the mainstream press tried to convince itself that the Court’s ruling against Snepp was but one man’s misfortune with no relevance for the First Amendment or anyone outside the CIA. But such confidence was misguided. In March 1983 the Reagan Administration used the precedent to justify extending official censorship to tens of thousands of non-CIA bureaucrats – a gag regime that has been perpetuated by subsequent presidents -- and two years later the Supreme Court itself cited Snepp as the basis for a ruling that made it harder for everyone to use the Freedom of Information Act.

Most astounding of all, private companies, like the cigarette manufacturer Brown and Williamson, have used the Snepp decision to enforce non-disclosure agreements with their own employees to keep potential whistleblowers among them from speaking out. They’ve also turned it against the media giants like 60 Minutes and Dateline to discourage them from cooperating with such whistleblowers – at pain of being sued for “tortious interference,” that is, interfering with the execution of a legitimate “contract” (the employee’s non- disclosure agreement).

On a more theoretical level, the Court in Snepp lowered the barrier to prior restraint in all First Amendment cases. Previously, the Court’s ruling in the Pentagon Papers case of 1971 had been seen as the controlling precedent in this area of law, and one that effectively ruled out prior restraint – the use of judicial gag orders to keep certain speech from occurring – except when the government could concretely demonstrate a real and immediate threat of irreparable harm to the nation’s security. But in Snepp the Court declared that such constraints are permissible if a publication merely threatens the “appearance” of reliable government confidentiality. Under this standard, many a secrets-free news story out of Washington could be spiked by the government. Certainly the highly classified Pentagon Papers could be kept out of print. Though no one has ever applied Snepp in this way, directly against the media, the Court’s own ruling limiting the uses of the Freedom of Information Act was based on the “appearance of confidentiality” principle first articulated in its decision against the ex-CIA agent.

(For a chilling first-hand account of the government’s legal vendetta against Frank Snepp – including extraordinary disclosures about how the CIA rigged the case and trampled Snepp’s legal rights and how the Supreme Court itself was railroaded by one of its own members, who happened to be a former intelligence agent, into its devastating final decision, see Snepp’s [Irreparable Harm](#), published by Random House in the summer of 1999.)

CHAPTER 10

DEADLY DECEITS

By Ralph McGeehee

INTRODUCTION

Mr. McGeehee details his 25 year career in the CIA. Mr. McGeehee attempted to “play the game” and be an honest and productive CIA Agent and Case Officer.

He had several tours in Vietnam. He was stationed in Saigon and under the direct control and direction of Ted Shackley who was the CIA Station Chief at the time.

Shackley was into “recruiting more and more Communist agents” the quantity of agents was the key, not quality of information”. McGeehee attempted to do as he was instructed.

Then orders became “provide more and more information reports”. He did as he was instructed, continually requesting a promotion. He had a family to raise, bills to pay and two children in college. He made honest efforts to get ahead.

Then his big break came. One of his agents told him of a high level Communist penetration within President Thieu’s cabinet. One of President’s Thieu’s closest advisors and confidants was a spy. McGeehee bored in on the “agent net”. He worked long days on little sleep with little help. No one seemed interested.

He had the confirmed dirt on 33 communist associates of the “ring leader” and the entire agent net. Finally Shackley gave the “go ahead” to close in on the network of high level spies.

“Flowers in the Killing Fields I” by Rick Spangle

McGeehe had uncovered the highest level spy ring within the entire South Vietnamese government. This network of spies had direct access to the President of South Vietnam, Nguyen Van Thieu, and information reported to the net went directly to Ho Chi Minh himself.

McGeehee quietly went to work preparing to close down the spy ring and pick up the perpetrators of this treachery against President Thieu and the Americans attempting to “win the war” against communism. Quietly, McGeehee organized and implemented the “roundup” of this treacherous ring of spies. MISSION ACCOMPLISHED.

McGeehee could not have been more proud. He began stumping for a promotion. The promotion never came. He seemed to be being “shut out”. He seemed to be an unclean leper among all of the clean CIA bureaucrats. He pulled off the biggest “spy bust” in the history of the war and none of his supervisors, including Station Chief Shackley gave him any recognition or praise for doing a good job.

This left a bad taste in McGeehee’s mouth for the rest of his career. He couldn’t say a word about what he did for the CIA or even that he worked for the CIA. It was forbidden because of the agreement he signed when he went to work for the CIA. He could not even state that he worked for the CIA on an application for a new job outside of the CIA.

His entire story of rounding up this huge high level spy ring and the sad story of his resulting exile into oblivion is told in this chapter.

HE IS ANOTHER FLOWER IN THE KILLING FIELDS

CHAPTER 11

MORE CIA INEPTITUDE

From

THE SECRET HISTORY OF THE CIA

By Joseph Trento

And

From

Legacy of Ashes

By Tim Weiner

These two books are voluminous and are both great histories of the ineptitude of the CIA in general. I will be citing a few instances from each book about some of the ineptitudes of the CIA IN VIETNAM.

CHAPTER 12

SPIES AND COMMANDOES

**From: Spies and Commandoes, How we lost
the covert war in North Vietnam**

By Kenneth Conboy

and Dale Andrade

INTRODUCTION

The title tells it all.

The CIA ran hundreds of covert paramilitary operations none of which had any success. The real reason was because the communists had total control of the hearts and minds of the people in the North and about ¼ to ½ of the people in the south.

Their province, district, village and hamlet level political organization was patterned after the secret police operations that were used in the Communist Soviet Union to keep the population under control under the threat of death.

We will summarize the book.

We won't get into their political organization except to say that the communists knew everything that went on in all of the villages and hamlets around the entire country.

We will detail some of the CIA'S disasters and tell of lives lost at the hands of CIA INEPTITUDE.

In one instance the authors relate the story of an attempted penetration and "stay behind" operation. The agents were well trained for weeks and weeks. They were flown in and the agents were parachuted behind enemy lines with clean weapons. The only problem was that the CIA left the US ARMY SIGNAL CORPS plates on the radios.

WAY TO GO CIA.

The agents of the CIA were easily caught and immediately transferred to HANOI FOR TRIAL. About 500 loyal communists were allowed into the court room while as many as 10,000 remained outside waiting for the results.

The authors show us a picture 9 of the 10 CIA agents in prison garb facing trial.

Upon finding the guilty verdict, uproars were heard all over the area around the court.

The team leader was publicly executed by firing squad. The remainder of the team received prison sentences of between 10 and 20 years.

One participant was set free for RATTING on his team mates. It appears that the CIA hired an existing WELL PLACED communist agent.

This was a common scenario.

THIS WHOLE STORY PLUS SEVERAL MORE WILL BE TOLD IN THIS CHAPTER.

CHAPTER Unlucky 13

THE HEARTBREAK OF THE SOG

From **SOG** by John Plaster.

INTRODUCTION

I had more trouble reading SOG than any book that I have ever read. I term it “wall to wall bad shit”. It contains chapter after chapter of covert paramilitary operations run by the CIA that always seemed to go “bad”, “wrong” or “end up in complete disaster”. In the beginning, 100% casualties was the norm. The enemy always seemed to know when they were coming in, where they were going to and what their intentions were.

The program was conceived of and run by William Colby himself from 1959 to 1965 using actual U.S. military personal as training supervisors and “on the ground” advisors.

The biggest overall mistake was thinking that the CIA could run an OSS/European type operation using thousands of Agents in the countryside of North Vietnam when it was controlled 100% by the Russian Communist trained Ho Chi Minh.

“Flowers in the Killing Fields I” by Rick Spangle

The program started in Laos in where the Ambassador to Laos (William Sullivan) severely limited the area that the SOG could operate within Laos. The Ambassador refused to let SOG troops be air inserted. They had to walk in and walk out. In the beginning, very few troops (including Americans) returned. Thousands of Nung fighters that were recruited and trained by the CIA operatives were slaughtered in operations that were apparently doomed to failure right from the beginning. Most of the operations seemed to be compromised because “the enemy knew that we were coming”.

THESE OPERATIONS WERE NOT DECLASSIFIED FOR 35 YEARS. THAT’S RIGHT; THEY WERE NOT DECLASSIFIED UNTIL 1995.

Also, after Clinton’s wholesale declassification in 1995, the American public was ALLOWED to learn, by way of SOG, that William Colby, as CIA Station Chief, actually began and ran the AGENT ORANGE defoliation program IN LAOS. That’s right, that part of Laos that would be used for the Ho Chi Minh trail had to be defoliated first in order to begin construction of that part of the trail that was not part of the Truong Son mountain range in southwest North Vietnam and northeastern Laos. This is a little known secret that was revealed in the book, SOG.

If you know any of the history and geography of that area, you would know that until this wholesale defoliation of that area of Laos, there was only one route into and out of South Vietnam from the North. You had to go by way of the road that went across the bridge across the Ben Hai River and through the Demilitarized Zone (DMZ), the official border between North and South Vietnam.

The only other way was to go through the impenetrable triple canopy jungles of Laos. The North Vietnamese, under Ho, had begun using the ancient Truong Son Mountain Range trails, but with little success. Most of the mountain range was still not passable and it was still way north of most parts of South Vietnam and could not be completed without the wholesale AGENT ORANGE DEFOLIATION of large portions of the LAOTIAN JUNGLE.

WILLIAM COLBY APPARENTLY ACCOMPLISHED THIS WHOLESALE DEFOLIATION SO THAT THE NORTH VIETNAMESE COULD ACCOMPLISH THE BUILDING AND CONSTRUCTION THE HO CHI MINH TRAIL. HUNDRED OF THOUSANDS OF VIETNAM VETERANS, CITIZENS OF VIETNAM AND LAOS WERE NEEDLESSY EXPOSED TO THIS EXCEEDINGLY TOXIC CHEMICAL THAT HAS KILLED MORE VETERANS THAN ANY SINGLE CAUSE IN HISTORY.

IN FACT THE STATISTICS STILL REMAIN, AT THE WRITING OF THIS BOOK IN 2013, THERE WERE 2.7 MILLION AMERICANS WHO SERVED IN VIETNAM DURING THE 17 YEARS OF THE WAR AND LESS THAN 800,000 REMAIN ALIVE. THIS IS WELL BELOW THE AVERAGE LIFE SPAN OF BABY BOOMER AMERICANS.

MANY VIETNAM VETERANS ARE SUFFERING FROM THE HORROR OF EXPOSURE TO THAT HORRIBLE CHEMICAL.

HURRAY FOR THE CIA AND STATION CHIEF WILLIAM COLBY WHO WOULD GO ON TO BE PROMOTED TO DIRECTOR OF THE CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY IN 1973 WHERE HE SUPERVISED THE DEMISE OF SOUTH VIETNAM AND PUBLICALLY REVEALED ALL OF THE CIA’S MOST PRECIOUS SECRETS, THE “FAMILY JEWELS” !!

The book SOG provides details of dozens and dozens of covert missions into Laos, Cambodia and North Vietnam. Very few of them met with any success at all and most of them ended in disaster.

I will be summarizing some of the highlights and lowlights of these covert disasters. Many of our best covert soldiers from World War II and Korea were lost, killed or captured by the Communists.

CHAPTER 14

PAUL REED

**173rd Airborne Brigade,
Vietnam, November, 1967 to December 1968**

**FROM HIS BOOK "KONTUM DIARY" and
"WHEN FLOWERS BLOOM IN THE KILLING FIELDS"**

Paul met with many serious hard combat experiences and was nearly killed quite a few times. His tour in Vietnam will be recounted in this chapter.

General William Westmoreland wrote the Forward to his book "Kontum Diary" and coined the phrase "Flowers in the Killing Fields" for Paul and many others like him.

NOT COMPLETE

CHAPTER 15

TOM PAUKEN

**525th Military Intelligence Group,
Vietnam, 1969**

**FROM HIS BOOK "30 YEARS WAR"
AND SEVERAL PERSONAL INTERVIEWS**

Tom was a Military Intelligence trained covert operative assigned to the 525th Military Intelligence Group in South Vietnam. He was assigned as an undercover Case Officer into a lack luster existing covert operation. Midway through his tour he was returned to Saigon and attached to the JOINT INTELLIGENCE TASK FORCE (the J-2 IN SAIGON) where he was charged with briefing many of the top Generals in the war.

NOT COMPLETE

Formerly, Tom was running to be the Republican gubernatorial candidate in Texas.

CHAPTER 16

EDDIE JOE DAVIS

FIGHTING TEXAS AGGIE CAPTAIN, UNITED STATES ARMY

**173rd Airborne Brigade,
Vietnam, April 1969 to April 1970**

Eddie Joe Davis is the President of the Texas A&M University Foundation, and the former Interim President of Texas A&M University in 2006 and 2007.

As a senior he was the Commander of the Texas A&M Corps of Cadets and from there he went into the Infantry Branch of the Army and he served with the 173rd Airborne Brigade in Vietnam.

He went back to A&M and began his career as an administrative assistant in 1970 working his way up to be the President of the Texas A&M University Foundation in 1993. In 2006, he became Interim President of Texas A&M University when Robert Gates became Secretary of Defense for George W. Bush. In 2007 he resumed his position with the A&M Foundation. Since 1993, he has raised over 2 Billion Dollars in donations for scholarships for deserving Aggies.

His goal is to leave a superb financial legacy for future generations of **Fightin' Texas Aggies.**

He was, and is, a true Flower in the Killing Fields.

**FROM INTERVIEWS WITH RICK SPANGLE
NOT COMPLETE**