

Defecting Agents

To the Editor:

As a former sergeant in Army Intelligence, I have been interested in your news articles on the Green Beret arrests in Vietnam, not unimportantly, because I served in Hawaii with Sgt. Alvin Smith, the only enlisted man charged in the double agent killing.

What is revealed here is a peek into a whole system of operation, disguised beneath the cover of security, which, if investigated, would be found not only abhorrent to American values, but highly dangerous in terms of foreign policy commitments.

The Special Forces, and other military intelligence units, not to mention the C.I.A., are playing games of this type worldwide, and every time there is a goof like the discovery of the slaying of Khac, American prestige gets involved. (What if the agent had been Japanese or Indonesian?)

Khac's fate could befall American agents throughout the world if they were to defect. The system allows for this. Plans for all agents discuss how the agent will be "terminated" if he doubles or proves unproductive. In cases of mere unproductivity, an agent might be dropped from the payroll—"termination without prejudice."

According to The Times, Khac is a victim of termination with extreme prejudice. Killing, however, is not the only way to terminate with prejudice. Blackmailing, kidnapping, threatening the double or members of his family with

death are other wellknown methods.

Military authorities say that the normal procedure in Vietnam is to turn a double over to allied counterparts. It is not hard to imagine what that means. Think what the South Vietnamese counterpart of our C.I.A. is capable of behind the doors of the National Interrogation Center in Saigon.

In the Aug. 16 Times, C.I.A. sources are quoted as saying that "the agency had a strict policy of neither ordering, suggesting nor condoning assassinations." The sources also said the C.I.A. had no current authority over Defense Department personnel and therefore could not "order" an assassination.

It is unthinkable that any covert operation could be run by the American military without the approval of C.I.A. Wires would constantly be crossed without a central coordinating intelligence agency. Likewise, it is unthinkable that any severe termination with prejudice could be carried out without C.I.A.'s approval, unless clear standing orders were disobeyed.

It is amazing that the Army arrested these men for what has been *modus operandi* in the game of intelligence for years. Now that the charges have been dropped with the excuse of security again being used, will the American people allow this system to continue uncurtailed? JAMES RESTON JR.
Chapel Hill, N. C., Sept. 30, 1969

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