

The "Mangino Four"

Article by: Perry Myers

Vessey Discrepancy case# 0646

HASENBECK, Paul Alfred / MANGINO, Thomas A. / WINTERS, David M. / NIDDS, Daniel R.

Missing in Action 670421 (All U.S. Army D-4/31 196th Lgt Inf. Bde.)

Note: Information obtained directly from Jeanie Hasenbeck (SNOK) and edited by her for accuracy.

On April 21, 1967 Mangino, Hasenbeck, Nidds, and Winters were returning from a combat patrol. They had borrowed a sampan from local residents to make the trip to a landing site near their unit in the Binh Son District, Quang Ngai Province. A second sampan, the lead boat, reached the dock but was then out of sight of the other sampan following with only the four men aboard.

The patrol was last seen at approximately 1530 hrs.

Shots were heard a short time later, and originally thought to have come from the area the four were last seen. However, the shots came from the vicinity of BS 623983 - another area altogether, and was automatic weapons fire of approximately 25-30 rounds which sounded as though coming from a single weapon. It should be especially important to note that the 'Reports of the time' during the official inquiries conducted a matter of hours and days following the incident showed that NO ONE (7 people interviewed) thought the shots came from the area of incident. However, later misreporting by USG officials implied that the shots came from the area of loss to suggest "Ambush."

The four were not reported as missing until 17:45 hrs. This was 2.25 hours after having been last seen, and 1 hour and 15 minutes after shots were heard.

Based on available information, the four were last seen talking to some Vietnamese in another sampan. Later reports received stated that the four had been captured by local Viet Cong Forces on April 21st. Other reports were received that 'unidentified' Americans were teaching english to Viet Cong female cadre and that Americans had been buried in the area. All these different reports, over time, were placed in the individual's files as possibly pertaining to them.

In May 1991, a U.S. team was advised by a Vietnamese official that PFC Winters was dead. The story and the Vietnamese official was so ludicrous, even the JTFFA discounted it. In August 1992, a joint U.S./Vietnamese team in the area of this incident interviewed witnesses with first-hand knowledge or hearsay knowledge of it. The sources stated the four men were ambushed, and their bodies were thrown into the river to keep them from being observed by search and rescue (SAR) helicopters. The bodies were later buried, according to other sources, in three separate locations in an area which today is under the Song Tra River.

In Nov. 92, Senate Select Committee Chairman John Kerry received a wartime diary from PAVN Central Museum Director, Col. Pham Duc Dai describing the capture and subsequent death of the four Servicemen. Dai's diary only "Appears" to contain information correlating to this incident in which the four are recorded as having died.

The diary was in U.S. Government hands 18 months prior to being given back to the Vietnamese to use in a media event orchestrated by them and Senator Kerry.

The diary mentions that U.S. soldiers executed many villagers to get them to talk. This was accepted as false by the USG.

Col. Dai states, "On April 21, 1967, he and his soldiers were roused from their sleep by an alert sentry who smelled the distinctive mosquito repellent used by American soldiers. Earlier the soldiers had watched Americans paddling a sampan past the village, but they had been well out in the stream and posed no threat. This new group were on foot. Dai grabbed his weapon and slid into a hiding hole behind the clay fireplace of the village house in which he had been sleeping. The American soldiers,

four tired young men in sweat-soaked fatigues, ambled into the village. When they had passed Dai's hiding place, PAVN soldiers lying in ambush cut them down with a short burst of fire from their AK-47 rifles. Dai took command of the situation. Beyond the nearby paddy dikes and bamboo groves, he heard helicopters flying low, no doubt already searching for the four stragglers. If the aircraft spotted the dead Americans, their battalion stationed across the river, the Song Tra, would encircle the village. Dai's unit would have no escape route. So while Dai slipped away, the villagers submerged the bodies of the dead Americans in the river. A group of village children conducting the normal evening task of washing their water buffalo sat on the bodies to keep them weighted down, while American helicopters and foot patrols swept the area."

Note: This is only a portion of Dai's story (from p.265 "Inside Hanoi's Secret Archives.") It serves to illustrate Dai's talent for 'stories.'

Actually, no search was initiated until 2000 hrs (8:00 p.m.) well after dark when one helicopter was dispatched.

Later a platoon of men were dispatched, and at 0100 hrs Apr. 22nd Lt. Kirkos reported flying 2

Fact is, Col Dai was later proven not to be in the area, and official Board of Inquiry and Government reports confirm Col. Dai's story as a total fabrication. Yet, they use it to 'Debunk' live sightings, etc..

CIA intelligence cable TDCS 314/1008 67 field No. FVS-15,314 dated July 4, 1967, details reports from two sources of the capture of 4 soldiers in Quang Ngai Province on April 21, 1967 on the Thuong Hoa River by a Binh Son district main Viet Cong force. U.S. Intelligence analyst at the time, Major Stafford, in his own hand wrote at the bottom of the report. "Note: Army E4 Mangino, E3 Nidds, E3 Winters, E3 Hasenbeck fit the description in the report.

CIA report # TDCS-314/10073-67 in July 1967 states, "In early June the Viet Cong were using 3 American POWs to teach Viet Cong cadre English at Phu Tho Hamlet, Quang Ngai Province.

One report was that four Americans were captured at coordinates 152118N 1084704E.

The Lieutenant that was on the other sampan had already returned, took a shower, ate dinner and was strolling on the beach when a friend of Hasenbeck's came up to him and inquired as to the whereabouts of Paul and the others.

No evidence of a skirmish was ever found near the area of loss. No shots were heard near the area of loss.

In September 1994, 13 members of the Vietnam Veterans of America traveled to Da Nang. They had information that artifacts reference this incident were at a museum there. The party of VVA members had a "Tactical Plan" whereby they would "Fan Out" in 13 different directions in the museum and search for evidence/artifacts.

When they found none, VVA National President James Brazee asked the curator about the artifacts. The curator appeared confused stating, "Don't you know? Your Government came two weeks ago and collected them all."

Mr. Brazee inquired further, and the curator specifically replied, "It was the 'Joint Task Force' people."

Upon returning to the United States, Brazee made official inquiries. The JTFFA denied any knowledge what-so-ever of the incident.

Brazee notified the SNOK - Jeanie Hasenbeck (also a member of VVA) who in turn later made official inquiries through Congressional channels.

Once question by a Congressman, the JTFFA confessed, "Yes, we were there, but we only took photographs."

The Department of Defense was contacted, and a complaint was made. They promised to check into the matter.

Recently, Feb 12th, 1995, Jeanie did report that she did receive the photographs, as did the other family members of the 'Mangino Four' approximately 8 or more months ago, and they did receive them in a timely manner. But - the actual location of the artifacts remain a mystery. The U.S. Government

still maintains they do not have them. Yet, the photographs prove the Vietnamese had them at one time. So, someone is 'fibbing.'

In an interview today with Miss Hasenbeck, (Paul Hasenbeck's sister and 'secondary Next of Kin') she stated, "The photographs depict the artifacts in pristine condition with no evidence or appearance of water damage, blood, etc., and look in better shape than my personal things I kept in good shape during my own tour in Vietnam."

In the book, "Inside Hanoi's Secret Archives" by author Malcolm McConnell, it is obvious that the author chose only to use the Government's side of the story and Col. Dai's side. It is also obvious to a reader familiar with this case that page 265 and 266 of his book exemplifies the lies and half truths which the book serves as an "instrumentality" to project the "Kerry/McCain" style of reporting, and the Government's deception, subversion and propaganda ploys championed by McConnell.

The "Mangino Four" are still among the 44 remaining discrepancy cases. The families demand the truth, and the fates of the four are certainly known by someone. The fate of the four may be known by Col Dai - but it won't be found in his diary, nor will it be found by anything Theodore Schweitzer III (researcher for "Inside Hanoi's Secret Archives") investigates or Malcolm McConnell writes.

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