

Major General John K. Singlaub
The Representative, Apt #314
1101 South Arlington Road
Alexandria, VA 22202

Monday, 6 June 1994

Dear Sir,

Today is a fitting time of remembrance and reflection for each of us.

As a historian, I enjoyed your book and am looking forward to your future projects. In the furtherance of the ideals and principles of unconventional warfare, Malcolm McConnell has captured the attentions of a general mass audience. His recent article in the Reader's Digest, May 1994 (Page 126), "True Face of the Vietnam Vet" is well pointed.

Sir, in the spirit of exposing charlatans who profess to be combat weary veterans from special operations units, I am asking for your assistance, so that I may provide information to Malcolm McConnell and to an executive of Ballantine Books. In a recent book "the autobiography of First Sergeant Donald N. Hamblen, USMC (ret.), ONE TOUGH MARINE", Ballantine Books, New York (1993), I see many bizarre and unsubstantiated claims which will reflect negatively on the memory of SOG brothers who paid dearly for their defense of freedom.

I have no difficulties with this man gaining recognition or realizing monetary gain from his book. And, I certainly have no qualms about "You can lie all you please when you tell other folks about the rangers", but I have to side with historical accuracy and the completed phrase which ends with "but, don't lie to another ranger or officer." Well, Sir, he's lied to another ranger and I won't have peace of mind until he admits his book is fiction, or is denounced publicly.

The vice-president of Random House feels they may have been falsely contracted by Hamblen and will consider court actions if it is reasonably certain that he had misrepresented his story as a history rather than fiction.

During his stated time with SOG, Mr. Hamblen's service (May 1965-November 1967) overlapped with your tenure as Chief, SOG. With your first-hand knowledge of the 'authorities' and SOG operations behind enemy lines, I am asking that you assist Malcolm's and my research with a brief memo which might indicate whether Mr. Hamblen actually went, at SOG (your sanctioned) direction, into North Vietnam.

I was assigned with MACSOG 35,34,35,36 (Sep 67-Aug 70) during a portion of the time that Mr. Hamblen was assigned with SOG, and my friends in the NAD, MACSOG 31 (SEALs & Force Recon) never spoke of him, or his daring do exploits. I also have a statement from the Camp Fay, C&C Det(N), C-E Officer (1966-1967; USSF) who worked closely with the NAD C-E office. He writes that he neither heard about nor saw any messages which could substantiate Mr. Hamblen's claims of NAD operations into North Vietnam. General Singlaub, with your past position as Chief, SOG, you can put this matter to rest.

Thank you for your time and considerations,

Harve Saal

Mr. Hamblen, needs to be challenged, then possibly exposed, for his blatant statements which include that;

1). He claims that his "primary responsibility was to accompany the (NAD) team on most of its missions". (Page 266)
While I agree that he would have participated in an ongoing evaluation of local (South Vietnamese) operations, I was always notified that NO-ONE from NAD could accompany teams north of the DMZ.

2). He had personally led a Naval Advisory Detachment (Operation 31, Maritime Studies Branch) team (Romulus) in operations, above the DMZ, into North Vietnam. (Page 279)
He "is one of the few Americans who can document having fought repeatedly in North Vietnam..." (Dust-Jacket, Inside, Rear). I would like someone of significance from SOG to evaluate the authenticity of his documentation. Also, the falsification of government records is punishable under federal legal guidelines.

3). He claims to have been wounded on two documented occasions on the ground, in North Vietnam. The second occurrence is included here. He claims he was "...selected to go ashore...seventy miles north of the DMZ...in August 1967 (page 308)...two thousand yards from land, two...scout...the Gulf of Tonkin...made their way to shore (and signaled the PT boat)...we got to shore...jumped out of the boats...carried them inland (page 309)...The sound of ...brief firefight (page 311)...I motioned...to move (beach)...started to carry...wounded...when a bullet struck me in my left arm (page 312)."

Upon return to Da Nang "...to the hospital...X-Ray...bullet lodged...against bone...left arm...I received a...message...pay a personal visit to the 1st Marine Division Command Post...MG Nickerson...'Gunny Hamblen, I read about your being wounded again (Comment: In what report?)...Your days in Vietnam are... Even though you are assigned to MACV/SOG. I'm still the I Corps Commander (page 313)...if you should get killed on a mission north of the DMZ (page 314) ...departed...November 15 (1967)...after participating in more than 60 SOG missions-of which forty took me into North Vietnam...during the thirty consecutive months that I served (page 315)..."