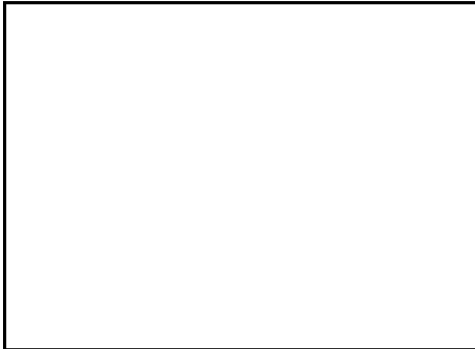


STATINTL



16 January 1973

Thank you for your reply pertaining to the distribution of the "Liberator " pistols in World War 2.

I have inclosed several pages of R. Harris Smith's book to show you the reference to the "100,000 pistols. Since I have proof that several of the pistols were found last year in the central region of Vietnam by some U.S. Special Forces Troops in a cache of old French weapons, I have included page 333 of said book.

Mile's book makes no mention of the pistol. He does mention that two ships, the REYNOLDS and the LA SALLE were headed for his area with supplies for SACO. Unfortunately, both ships vanished without a trace enroute. Several unofficial sources have told me that the ships carried a quantity of the pistols for the early development of SACO.

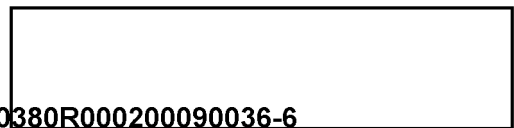
Roy O. Stratton, former supply officer makes mention of the pistols in his book, " SACO, the Rice Paddy Navy." He states that Unit 4 of SACO trained the Chinese (Changs'Soldiers) in the use of various tactics and weapons including "Special Weapons." The term "Special Weapons" was included in the section relating to hand weapons. His original manuscript was published before the pistol was declassified so appearantly he did not choose to refer to it by another name.

Thanks again for your comments.

Sincerely,

R W Koch
R W KOCH

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support for the Kuomintang party and its leader. Everybody is shouting that so loudly, that it has become the goal. . . . Blind to our avowed aims and ends, we talk about all-out support of Chiang which denies support to others, and many feel [this] makes certain that a bloody civil war will follow." 68

Hurley was a poor choice to deal with such a delicate and complex situation. The ambassador was a believer in "personal diplomacy"; as he remarked to one OSS officer, "When I think I can risk telling the Generalissimo a dirty joke, I'll feel I'm really getting somewhere." 69 Hurley was atrociously uninformed about Chinese affairs. His favorite stunt of yelling Oklahoma Indian war whoops branded him as a buffoon. He reinforced that impression by referring to Chiang as "Mr. Shek" and to the leader of the Yenai Communists as "Moose Dung." OSS men responded by assigning Hurley a special code-name—"The Albatross."

Soon after Hurley's arrival in China, the Communists had invited him to visit Yenai. He flew to their stronghold for the first time on November 7 and was given a warm greeting. Hurley's meetings with Mao led to the Communist acceptance of five principles of "coalition government." Returning to Chungking in the company of Chou En-lai, the ambassador presented the proposal to the Generalissimo. He rejected it and suggested a counter-offer which was refused by the Communists. The Yenai leaders also declined participation in any further negotiations.

While this political jockeying was in progress, the military situation had deteriorated so badly that Army strategists were secretly discussing contingency plans for the evacuation of Chungking. Wedemeyer's headquarters also framed new proposals for military cooperation with the Communist armies. These were dutifully discussed with central government officials who just as dutifully rejected them out of hand.

At the end of November, Colonel Heppner's headquarters received word that General Donovan would soon visit China. Wedemeyer planned to take the occasion to present the OSS chief with some comprehensive ideas for assistance to Communist guerrilla forces. Two separate proposals emerged. The Army recommended that five thousand American paratroopers be sent to north China to work with the Communist partisans. OSS set forth its own plan to dispatch Special Operations officers to the north on sabotage missions against the Japanese. In return for the complete cooperation and support of the Communist forces, OSS was prepared to train and outfit 25,000 Yenai guer-

rillas and to furnish Mao's Army with an additional 100,000 pistols. This proposal was strongly endorsed by Captain Colling at Yen-an. He had already requested the immediate dispatch of two plane-loads of medical and demolitions equipment for the Communist troops.

Rather than follow past practice and discuss these plans with the Chinese government, both the Army and OSS decided to first broach their plans to the Communists. State Department advisor John Davies sounded a note of caution. "They'll crucify you the way they crucified Stilwell," he warned Wedemeyer. "I don't care," replied the general.⁷⁰ Wedemeyer's Chief of Staff subsequently instructed Colonel David Barrett of the Dixie Mission, then acting as an intermediary between Hurley and the recalcitrant Communists, to present the Army's proposal to Mao.

Colonel Heppner assigned his deputy, Lieutenant Colonel Willis Bird, to carry the OSS plan to Yen-an. A 36-year-old graduate of the Wharton School of Finance, Bird had been a top executive of Sears, Roebuck in Pennsylvania and New York when he was recruited for intelligence service by his friend Bill Donovan. His fellow officers remember him as a "con-man," an "operator," and a rather vain man (he reportedly carried a set of pearl-handled revolvers). One thing is certain—he could not be accused by Tai Li of liberal idealism.

On December 15, 1944, Colonels Barrett and Bird flew together to Yen-an with their military proposals in hand. The Communists received both propositions suspiciously, but gave their tentative approval. Days later, Tai Li's agents got wind of the discussions. It was just the opportunity SACO had been waiting for. The Communists had repeatedly warned their American contacts that "Tai's agents planned to carry out some plot in Yen-an" against the Dixie Mission, "possibly involving the use of explosives."⁷¹ In January 1945, the SACO men struck, but the explosives were verbal.

Miles had for some time carefully cultivated the friendship (and vanity) of Ambassador Hurley. Greeted by a full-dress parade at SACO headquarters complete with "flags, ruffles, and flourishes," Hurley was then wined and dined by Tai Li. The ambassador was soon convinced to use Navy radio facilities to communicate with Washington, bypassing the anti-Chiang State Department officers in his own embassy. The

⁷⁰ Bird established permanent residence in postwar Bangkok as an exporter and investment broker. In 1959, he was named in congressional testimony as having given a \$25,000 bribe to a foreign aid official in order to secure a government construction contract in Laos.

escorted them to Viet Minh headquarters and then anxiously directed the Americans to a small bamboo hut in the center of the camp. Lying on a mat in the darkest corner of the room was Ho Chi Minh. French intelligence had described him as "cunning, fearless, sly, clever, powerful, deceptive, ruthless—and deadly." But the OSS officers saw only "a pile of bones covered with yellow dry skin." He was "shaking like a leaf and obviously running a high fever."²⁰ Thomas and Prunier did what they could to keep him alive until their China base could dispatch a medic.

Two weeks later, four new OSS arrivals joined the team. One was Paul Hoagland, an OSS medic who had received his training aboard a Swedish prisoner-exchange ship in the early days of the war.¹ "This man doesn't have long for this world," exclaimed Hoagland when he saw Ho. Diagnosing the Viet Minh leader's malady as a combination of malaria, dysentery, and assorted tropical diseases, Hoagland quickly injected him with quinine and sulfa drugs. The medicines proved effective. Within days, Ho was on his feet again, ambling around camp and chatting with the Vietnamese partisans who idolized him.

Not long after Ho's recovery, he met with the American team at a formal military briefing. To Thomas' surprise, Ho pointed to the French lieutenant masquerading as an OSS officer and declared, "This man is not an American." Despite the protests of the OSS major and his men, Ho insisted, in his colloquial English, "Look, who are you guys trying to kid? This man is not part of the deal." He then correctly identified the officer as Lieutenant Montfort of the French army. Amazed by this evidence of Ho's superb intelligence network, the Americans feared for the life of their French colleague. Again to their surprise, Ho simply sent him, under guard, to the Chinese border. "It will be interesting to hear the French reaction," mused Ho after Montfort's departure. "Perhaps they will not think of me as a murderous bandit."²¹

The unhappy incident did not destroy the friendly relationship between the Americans and the Viet Minh. The OSS men appreciatively received (and, according to military custom, sadly declined) Ho's offer of potent jungle aphrodisiacs, together with the company of some pretty young Vietnamese girls from Hanoi who had come to "entertain" the troops. The Americans, who adopted guerrilla garb

¹ Hoagland joined the CIA at its inception and remained with the agency until his death in 1970.

MISSION TO INDOCHINA

333



Ho Chi Minh and guerrilla leader Vo Nguyen Giap (in white suit at left) with the American officers of the OSS "Deer" team who parachuted to Viet Minh headquarters in the Tonkinese jungle and later accompanied Ho on his triumphal march to Hanoi. Paul Hoagland (far left) was the medic (and later CIA official) who saved Ho's life.

and a sparing diet of rice and bamboo shoots, were pleased, in return, to respond to Viet Minh requests for arms and military training. Ho's army commander, Vo Nguyen Giap, a "wiry little man, with large calculating eyes and a perpetually angry look," frequently bemoaned the ragged state of his poorly equipped troops. To replace the antique muskets and homemade knives carried by the Viet Minh soldiers, the Thomas team was able to secure small OSS supply shipments of rifles, mortars, machineguns, grenades, and bazookas. The OSS men held training sessions for 200 troops, the elite of Giap's guerrilla force. "They had an uncanny ability to learn and adapt," recalls Prunier. "They learned to pull a rifle part and put it together again after being shown only a couple of times."²²

The casual military training schedule left much time for idle