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GACarver, Jr.

The attached was sent to me by
Mr. Goodwin's office. Do we know
anything about the Asia Letter, its
sponsors or its background?

George A. Carver, Jr.
Special Assistant for Vietnamese Affairs

Attachment

The Asia Letter, Number 372, dated
10 August 1971

THE ASIA LETTER
AN AUTHORITATIVE ANALYSIS OF ASIAN AFFAIRS

Published by THE ASIA LETTER Co. Tokyo Hong Kong Washington Los Angeles

10 August 1971

Dear Sir:

THE C.I.A. IN ASIA (III): MODUS OPERANDI (Part 1). Every Friday, at precisely 8:30 A.M., a clean-cut young American assigned to the Combined Studies Group in Saigon leaves the American Embassy and drives to a rendezvous house on Saigon's Tran Hung Dao Street.

There, he picks up a briefcase and a Vietnamese accomplice and begins a drive to Tay Ninh, located northwest of Saigon near the Cambodian border.

Inside the briefcase are bundles of Vietnamese piasters, U.S. dollars and Cambodian riels.

The man carrying the briefcase is a C.I.A. "bag man". The money is the payoff for local agents and tipsters who keep tabs on Communist activities and movements in the important area of eastern Cambodia, southern Laos and the western border of Vietnam.

He is one of a dozen or more C.I.A. "bag men" who make regular trips to various parts of South Vietnam, Cambodia and Laos to pay for the services of agents and informants.

The "bag man" never sees what a businessman would call the "end user"--- the men who get the money. He merely turns it over to the C.I.A.'s "control man" in the area. Sometimes he picks up data to take back to the higher-up agents where he works. But more often than not he returns empty-handed.

The "bag man" duty usually goes to junior C.I.A. men in the Indo-China area. It is a colorless, unstimulating assignment that usually leads to frustration and sometimes to resignations.

One day last February, a Chinese cargo junk from Canton sailed down the Pearl River, through the river estuary and tied up alongside Hong Kong's Western waterfront.

It was one of many that made the same trip the same day to the western waterfront of Hong Kong Island and to the waterfront along Macao's ancient Rua das Lorches.

The river junks, which ply between Hong Kong, Macao and Canton daily, carry very ordinary cargo ranging from vegetables to joss sticks.

But the cargo of cabbages carried by that junk last February was no ordinary cargo. Stuffed inside one of the innocent-looking Chinese cabbages was a report giving up-to-date information on China's missile program.

It came from a C.I.A. informant inside China and went through a half dozen intermediaries in Hong Kong before it ended up in the hands of a high-ranking agent, who forwarded it on to Langley, Virginia, for study and analysis.

The C.I.A. frequently receives reports and messages from its agents and informants in China by this method. And it often sends in messages or instructions through the same channels.

The best example of just how effective these channels are came during China's Cultural Revolution (1966-69), which threw the country into turmoil. In addition to a flood of Red Guard documents giving a very accurate picture of the turmoil, the C.I.A. also received hundreds---perhaps thousands---of very valuable documents against government and military offices, and sold.

The Volume of information coming out of China is down from the peak of the Cultural Revolution days. But the agency still gets enough to enable it to come up with some amazingly accurate analyses and predictions about China's capabilities and intentions when used in conjunction with the millions of photographs taken by U.S. spy-in-the-sky satellites and data fed in through a myriad of other channels ranging from radio monitors to East European diplomats in Peking who are on the C.I.A. payroll.

NEXT: THE C.I.A. IN ASIA (III): MODUS OPERANDI (Part 2).

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