

OPERATION GOLD FILLING

Compiled by Bob Powers from information provided by Gordon Crossman, Stan Fujii and Jack Kaye.

In October 1967 the USS Intrepid left the line off Vietnam for re-supply and R&R at Yokosuka, Japan. On 23 October 1967, while at Yokosuka, four sailors from the USS Intrepid, Richard Bailey, 19, Jacksonville, FL, John Barilla, 20, Catonsville, MD, Michael Linder, 19, Mount Pocono, PA and Craig Anderson, 20, San Jose, CA went on liberty. The four sailors sought help from a Japanese peace group, Beheiren (Citizens League for Peace in Japan), in deserting the US Navy. In late November or early December 1967 the four deserters showed up during a filmed interview on Japanese television denouncing the Vietnam War and stating they were deserting the US Navy. Special Agents Stan Fujii and Gayle Anderson were dispatched from Yokosuka to Tokyo to attempt to learn the location of the deserters in Japan and apprehend them. The four deserters were no longer in Japan and in December 1967 they appeared at a press conference in Moscow, Soviet Union, again denouncing the Vietnam War and stating they had deserted the US Navy. This was a significant embarrassment to the US Navy and the international press named the deserters The Intrepid Four. The story of the desertion of The Intrepid Four was covered significantly in the international press in late 1967 and early 1968. On 29 December 1967, Bailey, Barilla, Linder and Anderson arrived at Arlanda International Airport, Stockholm, Sweden, where they were granted asylum.

After The Intrepid Four, several unsuccessful attempts were made to penetrate Beheiren by other US Intelligence Agencies. In approximately April 1968, after a meeting of US Military Intelligence Agencies at the US Embassy, Tokyo, Japan, CAPT Scovel, the CO of NISO Japan was tasked to mount an operation to destroy the effectiveness of Beheiren. CAPT Scovel tasked Don Gorham, who was then the Code 40 (for the youngsters Code 40 was the Counterintelligence Branch), to conceive and mount an operation and Operation Gold Filling was born. Gorham, who was not a Special Agent, had an interesting intelligence career. Before WWII Gorham's father was brought to Japan as an engineer by Nissan Motors in Opama, Japan, which is located near Yokosuka. As a result Gorham grew up and was educated in Japan and became one of the few, if not the first, Caucasian graduates of Tokyo University, prior to WWII. Gorham returned to the US, prior to WWII where he was employed by ONI and the CIA before eventually being employed by NIS. Gorham was a fluent Japanese linguist and because of his many years in Japan had excellent contacts with high level Japanese law enforcement and government officials. As set forth below, the bulk of the work on developing and implementing the operation fell to Special Agents Gordon Crossman and Jack Kaye, who were assigned to Code 40. The surveillance, liaison and operation

activity were conducted by Special Agents Tad Uriu, Stan Fujii and IOS Frank Yamamoto. Special Agent Bruce Middleton provided some critical technical support. A number of other Special Agents assigned at offices in Japan, to include the writer, played minor parts.

After appropriate Government approvals were obtained, Crossman and Kaye's first task was to recruit and train a source, who would be accepted by Beheiren as a US Navy member dissatisfied with the Vietnam War, who wished to desert. The first attempt at recruitment, after a number of weeks of training, was unsuccessful after the asset felt the assignment was too dangerous. The second asset, a Vietnam veteran, turned out to be a perfect candidate. The source underwent several months of training to include extensive training on the use of the Japanese telephone system, which was to be one of the methods of communication if he was accepted by Beheiren. Bruce Middleton altered a small Japanese transistor radio so that it would continue to work as a radio but the source could receive instructions at designated times, on one channel, from his NIS handlers. The source underwent several dry runs, under NIS surveillance, of being picked by Beheiren. The source made telephonic contact with Beheiren, at a telephone number Beheiren advertised, and arrangements were made for Beheiren to pick up the source for real. The source traveled by train from Yokosuka, Japan to Tokyo, where the source was picked up by Beheiren in front of the Tokyo Imperial Hotel, under both NIS and Japanese Police surveillance. After the initial pickup all surveillance was conducted by the Japanese Police. The source was accepted by Beheiren and moved to a safe house in Tokyo. It was believed, from the previous unsuccessful operations, that Beheiren might take all of source's belongings from him but for some unknown reason they allowed him to keep the transistor radio. At one point one of the Beheiren members was trying to take the radio apart and the source told him that if he broke the radio he would have to pay for it and he quickly returned the radio to the source.

After the source had been accepted by Beheiren he was moved from safe house to safe house for a period of about six weeks. The initial safe house was in Tokyo but the source was also moved to safe houses in Kyoto and Osaka. All of the source's movements, along with his Beheiren handlers, were under surveillance by the Japanese Police. The NIS field team, which accompanied the Japanese Police, but did not conduct the actual surveillance, consisted, at times, of Crossman, Kaye, Uriu, Fujii and Yamamoto. Not only were the Japanese Police able to identify the Beheiren safe houses they were also able to identify the occupants of the safe houses and all the individuals who moved source from safe house to safe house and city to city. Using the transistor radio, that source had been provided, Stan Fujii would send instructions to the source at designated

times, usually late at night, when people in the safe house were asleep. This arrangement allowed Fujii to meet on occasion with the source, once in a Japanese cemetery, and the source would provide information on the occupants of the safe house and Beheiren's plans for his movements. Some of the safe houses were occupied by foreign nationals (professors) of European extraction, who were against the Vietnam War, and the Beheiren operatives were mainly Japanese students, who opposed the war. Fujii would pass the information to the Japanese Police and to Crossman or Kaye, who would relay the information to NISO Japan. Source also had the ability to directly contact NISO Japan through the Japanese telephone system, to a phone manned 24 hours a day. Once in the Beheiren pipeline the source was moved mainly through the Japanese rail system. When moved from safe house to safe house source was disguised, ordered to wear sunglasses and provided a certain magazine to carry. The change of Beheiren members, who were escorting the source, would take place at Japanese railroad stations. Since most of the Beheiren members did not know each other identifying the magazine carried by source was the signal for contact and turn over. When the source unexpectedly left his last safe house in Osaka, Japan and flew to Sapporo, Japan it was recognized that the operation was coming to a conclusion. Fujii, Uriu and Yamamoto flew to Sapporo on a commercial flight. When it was learned that the source and his Beheiren handlers had flown on a small aircraft to the port of Kushiro, located in northern Hokkaido, Japan, where it was expected the source would be placed on a Japanese trawler for transfer to a Soviet vessel and ultimate transfer to the Soviet Union, Uriu, Fujii and Yamamoto hired a small

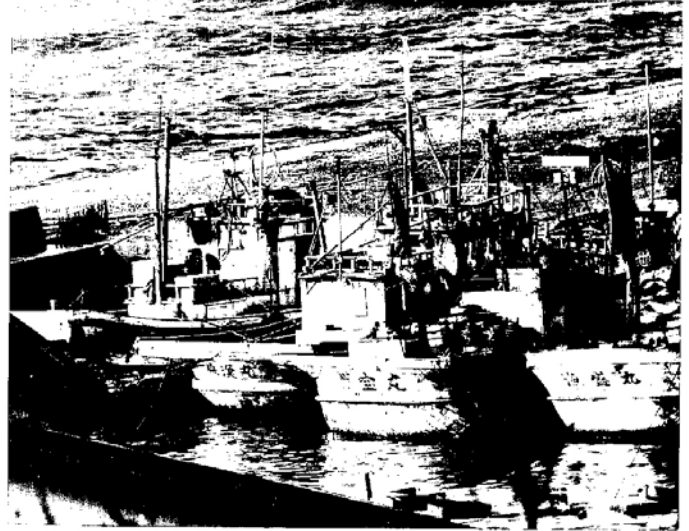


private plane to fly them to Kushiro. The decision had previously been made not to allow the source to board any vessel and it was clear it was time to terminate the operation.

Stan Fujii advised that Frank Yamamoto was instrumental at this stage of the operation because of his liaison with both the local and National Japanese Police. Under Japanese Police surveillance the source, a real US deserter and two Beheiren handlers left the Kushiro Hotel, by car, believed to be headed for the Port of Nemuro in Kushiro. While driving through the city of Kushiro the source's vehicle was stopped and surrounded by Japanese Police vehicles. Swift action by the Police took advantage of the confusion of the vehicle's occupants. The Japanese Police took custody of the two Beheiren operatives and the source and the real deserter were separated. The source was turned over to NIS personnel and returned to Yokosuka. The real deserter was taken to the Kushiro Police Station and detained until arrangements were

made for Uriu and Fujii to transport him to Yokosuka for interrogation. Stan Fujii interrogated the real deserter who, in a lengthy statement, admitted to desertion and stated that he was to be placed on a Japanese trawler for transport to a Soviet vessel for ultimate transfer to the Soviet Union.

The operation achieved all its objectives and was a tremendous success. Numerous Beheiren safe houses and Beheiren personnel were identified during the operation. A real US deserter was apprehended during the operation and most



importantly Beheiren's ability to assist US deserters in leaving Japan was ended. Beheiren, which existed as an organization from 1965 until 1974, never succeeded in transporting another US deserter from Japan. Although Beheiren continued to assist US military personnel, who went UA in Japan, it became obvious which UA personnel had contact with Beheiren while UA, since they would normally turn themselves into US forces with a written statement that they had only been UA and were not deserters. I had one such case in Iwakuni, Japan in 1969. Because of his participation in the operation the source was awarded the Legion of Merit and was placed at the head of his next grade's promotion list.

Through information obtained on the Internet it was learned that in 1992 a former KGB officer told American Intelligence Officials that in 1967 and 1968 the KGB had an operation to aid US servicemen in deserting to Sweden by way of the Soviet Union. The initial objective was to identify US servicemen of high intelligence value, who could be interviewed, while in the Soviet Union. As part of this operation, four US servicemen, who had deserted in Japan, and were assisted by Japanese personnel, were placed on Japanese fishing boats that then rendezvoused with KGB Border Patrol Boats. The deserters were transferred to Sakhalin Island for transfer to Moscow and ultimately Sweden. The deserters were of no intelligence value and were not interrogated by the KGB. The program mainly gave a boost to anti Vietnam War groups and the KGB closed this operation in 1968

As far as the Intrepid Four, my Internet skills were not good enough to track them all down, but I believe at least two of them married Swedish women and still live in Sweden.