

HOMICIDE/VIETNAM

Submitted by Retired Special Agent Bob Powers

In the latter part of my tour in Vietnam, possibly around August or September 1967, NISRA Danang received a message from NISPAC, which was forwarding a message from FMFPAC, wanting to know why the US Marine CID and not NIS was investigating the homicide of a 12 year old Vietnamese female, in which an unidentified US Marine was the probable suspect. It was obvious to Jack Meyer, the SRA, that NIS was not investigating the matter because the Marines had neglected to tell us about the homicide. The CID was fairly good at notifying NIS on matters that fell under NIS investigative jurisdiction, but in those days, Vietnam, or any other place, it did not happen all the time. Jack and I set off for the Office of the PMO in Danang. The PMO, a Marine Col, who was well aware of the homicide, told us he thought his Gunny in CID had notified NIS of the homicide. When it turned out that never happened he advised that the notification probably fell between the cracks because the investigation was being conducted by Division CID and not the CID office in Danang. With a message from FMFPAC, questioning why NIS was not working the investigation, added to the fact that the investigation was over three weeks old and there was little to no progress being made, the PMO was more than happy to turn the investigation over to NIS. I was a little less happy than the PMO, when Jack told me the investigation was mine. That day I made a call to Division CID letting them know I would be at their office the next morning to assume the investigation.



*Jack Meyer, at his desk,
NISRA Danang*

The next morning, with the office Vietnamese interpreter, I set off for Division CID. The Marine CID Investigator, who was handling the investigation, provided me a detailed brief on what had been done on the investigation. The homicide had taken place over three weeks earlier in a small village on Route 1, located outside of the city of Danang, about a mile south of a large Marine Base, housing Force Logistics Command (FLC), the major supply depot for the Marines in I Corps. It was not a hostile area and was within the Danang security perimeter, although I would not want to spend the night there. During the evening, about 2100, a 12-year-old Vietnamese female had been shot in the back while running away from an unidentified US Marine. The investigation developed that the Marine had been in the village, possibly involved in black market activities, however, no information had been developed as to why he had shot the girl. It had been determined, through interviews in the village that the Marine was driving a ¾-ton truck and partial bumper numbers on the truck had been obtained. Attempts to identify the truck, through interviews at Marine Motor Pools in the Danang area, had been unsuccessful. For the last two weeks the CID had Marine MP Patrols, manning static positions at several intersections on Route 1, looking for the vehicle, without success. The CID investigator was of the opinion that the partial bumper numbers, obtained from a Vietnamese witness, were probably incorrect but at this point it was the only lead he had. There was no death certificate. The CID investigator advised that the victim was dead, with a through and through gunshot wound, when he arrived at the crime scene. The victim had been transferred to a Vietnamese hospital and subsequently buried, by her family, at an unknown location. Attempts to locate the bullet had been unsuccessful. The only physical evidence obtained at the crime scene, or during the investigation, was a 45-caliber shell casing, which was slightly crushed because it had been stepped on prior to discovery. The CID investigator suggested I talk to the mother of the deceased, who was the

most cooperative witness he had talked to in the village. I set off for the village with my interpreter and told the CID investigator that I would return to his office at the end of the day to sign over the physical evidence.

As I drove to the village I was thinking of some plausible investigative leads, without much luck, and frankly I thought this investigation would probably not be resolved. The first thing my interpreter and I did when we arrived at the village was locate the mother of the deceased. The first question I asked her, which seemed almost stupid at the time since she had been extensively interviewed by CID, was did she have any idea who had killed her daughter? Not only did she say yes but also she provided me his first and last name and the general location where he worked. To say I was shocked and extremely happy was an understatement. I cannot recall the individual's name so I will

refer to him as Subject, a term familiar to old 152/119 writers. The mother told me that Subject, who worked at a small supply detachment located not far from the village on Route 1, had been black marketing in the village for some time. Initially Subject black-marketed with a family on the other side of Route 1; however, about a month previously he began black marketing with her family. On the night of the homicide Subject showed up at her home, more a wood and cardboard hut, to conduct some black market activities. Subject was intoxicated and at some point during the negotiations he told her the family he had previously black marketed with had let him have sex with their daughter and he wanted the same arrangement with her. She told him that her daughter was only a child and that sex with her daughter was out of the question. Subject became aggressive, with her daughter, and the mother told the daughter to run, which she did. The daughter ran outside away from the home on Route 1. Subject ran after the daughter and the mother followed Subject. Several yards from the house the mother saw that Subject had a pistol in his hand and he shot once at her daughter, who was 5 to 10 meters ahead of Subject. Her daughter fell to the ground and died, shortly after the mother reached her. Subject ran to his vehicle and left the area. During the long interview I had with the mother I asked her why she had not provided this information to the military investigators, the night of the homicide, and she said they wore the same uniform as Subject and she did not trust them. I also believe she might have been fearful that her black marketing activities might have caused problems for her family. I was dressed in my normal Vietnam attire of a short-sleeved sport shirt and chino trousers and she recognized me as a policeman rather than the military. The interview of the mother had taken most of the afternoon and it was beginning to get dark. I felt I needed another Agent to apprehend Subject, so I decided I would make the apprehension the next day. On the way back to NISRA Danang, I stopped at Division CID to pick up the crushed shell casing, my only piece of physical evidence. When I went into Division CID there were four or five investigators there and I took some ribbing about whether I had caught the suspect. The place went dead silent, when I announced that I did not have anyone in custody but that I had identified a suspect and that I planned to apprehend him the next day. Without further comment I picked up the evidence and returned to NISRA Danang.



NISRA Danang 1967

*Back left to right- Pete Segersten, Bob Powers, Bob Hall and Bruce Middleton
Front left to right- Jack Meyer, George Meglemorie, Carl Merritt and Howard Dilkes*