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(18 Jan 1969)

From: Colonel William W. WHITE 031 562/9910 USMC  
To: Commanding General, III Marine Amphibious Force

Subj: Investigation into the circumstances of the demise of 13 North Vietnamese Army (Regular) soldiers of 22 December 1968

Ref: (a) JAG Manual, par. 5017

Encl: (1) Statement of Corporal Alvin L. BLACKBURN Jr. 23 13 039/0311 USMC  
(2) Statement of Lance Corporal William E. MARCOTT 24 13 049/0351 USMC  
(3) Statement of Private Steve A. KEARNS 24 84 625/0351 USMC

1. As required by reference (a), an investigation was conducted to determine the feasibility of bringing charges of first degree murder, 13 separate counts, against Corporal Alvin L. Blackburn Jr.
2. Follow-up patrols confirm the count of 86 enemy dead and five friendlies at coordinates 82514316. Ten enemy dead were confirmed at 70132921. The ten confirmed at 70132921 were in addition to two decapitated bodies and thirteen enemy forces; hands tied, blind-folded and gagged. Each one had one shot hole in the temple area. Calibre unknown.
3. Friendly casualties consisted of five dead, two wounded and the miracle (explanation to follow). Lance Corporal MARCOTT, one gunshot wound to left thigh, numerous cuts and scratches. Private Kearns, numerous shrapnel wounds in back, buttocks and legs in addition to scratches and cuts. Both men suffered from exposure and malnutrition. The team leader, Corporal BLACKBURN, had no visual wounds other than scratches, cuts and abrasions over the entire body area. Medical examination revealed major concussions and severe internal bleeding; exhaustion, malnutrition and was suffering from shock. Medical records indicate a prior weight of 147 pounds after weight of 102 pounds. That this marine was alive is a miracle.
4. Statements from the soldiers who first came into contact with the Marines (soldiers were from sub unit of 1st Air Cav) validate the initial condition of the Marines. Corporal BLACKBURN was carrying Private KEARNS over his shoulder and had Lance Corporal MARCOTT on a stretcher made of two branches, belts and jackets. KEARNS and MARCOTT were not coherent. Corporal BLACKBURN was, at first impression, coherent,; however, it became apparent that he was in some state of shock and exhaustion. Extracts of the aforementioned statements on the condition of BLACKBURN are indicative: "piece of ground meat" "walking dead" "zombie".

5. The facts in this case are self-explanatory. (Refer enclosures). It is the undersigned's opinion that to bring charges against this Marine would destroy what the Marine Corps and this Country stands for. It is further Recommended that Corporal BLACKBURN be awarded the Congressional Medal of Honor for his actions on 21, 22, 23, 24, and 25 December 1968.

Respectfully submitted,

W. W. WHITE  
Colonel  
United States Marine Corps

I am aware of my right under the Uniformed Code of Military Justice and the Constitution of the United States, and I voluntarily make this statement. I am aware that the facts presented below may be used in my court. I am aware that I have been charged with thirteen counts of murder in the first degree. The below stated events are true to the best of my recollection.

I was assigned team leader of DAGGER II, a recon insert team with a mission of ambushing enemy probe patrols. Drop point coordinates 81964373. Ambush coordinates 82514316. Extraction was to be at 0320 22 December 1968 at 80403915. I knew that the nearest friendly unit was approximately 40KM southwest. Team consisted of myself and seven others; JOHN R. BAKER, WILLIAM E. MARCOTT, STEVE R. KEARNS, JOHN E. JACKSON, G. WASHINGTON JR (SPOOK), JOHN W. WELLINGTON (DUKE) AND MARK C. BRADLEY. I set the men in a hill position and began watch. Instead of a patrol I spotted a point element of about seven men leading a column of four abreast. I estimated about 100 to 110 enemy. We were in the direct line of march. It was too late to retreat so I decided just to fight it out. I did not break radio silence as it would have given our position away. I was action man. When the enemy point had passed, I waited for what I hoped to be the command element. The forces were not Viet Cong but regular NVA forces. When the one with the most brass showed up, I started shooting. Steve was on my left and was blasting the flank, John covered the rear, and got the point team before getting cut in half by a LAW. Jack took right flank and was firing .45s from both hands, he was shot 37 times that I could count. Duke was braced against a tree with his BAR before a grenade got him. Mark got about three shots off before he was shot to death, 18 holes in chest and stomach. Spook was backing with Bill and pumping buckshot like crazy. He was shot to death, undetermined number of hits to head and 19 to body. About 27 NVA surrendered after about five minutes, but Bill lost his cool when Spook bought it and kept firing. I knocked Bill down and he came around okay later. I had 2 men left, 15 POW's and a fucked up radio. I knew all the firing would bring gook reinforcements, so I tied the POW's together and booby trapped them, each with a M26. I buried our rounds and then we started to march out. We marched until I thought I had found a defendable spot and then camped. Steve was on watch about 4:00 am when sappers hit us. There was about 10 of them. The fight didn't last long but Bill caught a round in the thigh and Steve was covered with shrapnel all over his back. Two POW's had attempted to run and had been decapitated. I treated my men the best I could. I had a choice, save my men or bring out the POW's. I knowingly shot each POW in the head. I made a litter for Bill and started dragging and carrying my men out. I do not remember how long I walked or even if I ever stopped. I remember following the sun or stars and I knew I had to get Bill back before infection took his leg. I did not encounter the enemy again. We finally made it to some Army outfit who took Steve and Bill to Danang and me to Hill 63, our CP. I was then sent to a hospital ship where I made (MISSING SENTENCE)

I'd do it again given the opportunity. I have no other statement to make at this time.

ALVIN L. BLACKBURN  
CORPORAL  
23 13 039  
UNITED STATE MARINE CORPS

WILLIAM W. WHITE  
COLONEL  
031 562  
UNITED STATES MARINE CORPS

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I, William E. MARCOTT, make the following statement on my own free will, fully aware of the consequences of false or incomplete statements:

I was a member of a seven man recon insert team on 21 December 1968. I don't know exactly where we were other than behind known enemy forces. We were to be parachuted in and set up an ambush and then be heli-lifted out. My team leader was Cpl A. L. BLACKBURN. I have been on about eleven missions with Cpl BLACKBURN. After we all landed, Cpl BLACKBURN insured that nothing was broke and he put us in position. I was the third man on the right and in the beginning was supposed to waste the rear guards of the enemy patrol. Mark was on my left. Spook was across from me. Brutus (investigator's comment - "Brutus" was an alias by which the accused was identified by his counterparts) passed the word that instead of a patrol, a whole fucking company was drawing in on us. We couldn't call for a lift-out cause the gooks were too close, so we just laid in and waited. The next five minutes happened so fast I can just relate what I saw and did. If I was thinking, I don't remember it. There was about 100 to 120 of the fuckers and only 8 of us, but it was sort of a shit or go blind situation. Brutus let the point go by and just as the command element came within the area of fire, he stood up and started throwing lead. He was firing the BAR off his thing with one hand and throwing grenades with the other. All I remember was Brutus running through the bodies blowing the slant-eyed fuckers away. It was really happening too fast, but I know he got at least 50 of them by himself. Somehow Spook and I got back to back and were cutting them down with our blasters when Spook caught some in the face and I guess I wiggled cause all I remember for awhile is Spooks brains running all over my feet. The next thing was I was sitting against a tree and Brutus was shaking the shit out of me. There was blood all over him and me. He had blood pouring from his ears and nose and mouth. I finally got my shit together and there was only three of us left. Me, Brutus and Steve. Steve was going around easing the wounded's pain with the .45. We tied the 15 gooks together with parachute cord and booby-trapped each of 'em with a M26. We marched for about 14 hours before he finally let us stop. We were taking turns standing watch that night. I didn't know what time it was but shit started going off everywhere. I just started shooting when I saw this little fucker right in front of me. He saw me then, too, and I guess we both fired at the same time. I cleaned his ears but caught a solid in my thigh. I thought my balls were blown off. The whole fight didn't last more than a minute. Brutus put a bandage on me. Two of the gooks had tried to run and the grenades had pulled their heads. I was hurting something bad and Brutus gave me some space juice and I took off. The next two days are just spot memories. Sometimes Brutus would be carrying me and sometimes dragging me on this stretcher thing he had made. The one thing that I really remember was the way he looked. Man, the

blood was caked all over him and his eyes were as white as a Spook when he got scared. We hadn't eaten for 3 days but he kept going. Brutus did what he had to do and if it wasn't for him I'd been maggot food. It isn't fair that he should get burned for saving me and Steve.

THIS STATEMENT IS TRUE ACCORDING TO MY MEMORY. IT CONSISTS TO TWO PAGES.

WILLIAM E. MARCOTT  
LANCE CORPORAL  
UNITED STATES MARINE CORPS  
24 13 049  
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I, Steve A. KEARNS, make the following statement on my own free will fully aware of the consequences of false or incomplete statements.

I was a member of a seven man recon team termed DAGGER II. Our mission was to parachute somewhere forward of friendly positions and set up an ambush. We were to be heli-lifted out. The date was 21 December 1968. My team leader was Cpl A. L. BLACKBURN 23 13 039 and had been my leader for six other missions. We jumped on the right coordinates but dumb ass Duke landed in a tree. Brutus (investigator's comment - "Brutus" was an alias by which the accused was identified by his counterparts) had to climb up and cut him down and then he set us in. This was to have been my last mission before skying to the world and I was really shaking my shit. I was set in across from Brutus with Jack, Duke and John flowing left and Mark; Spook, and Bill flowing right. Brutus told us a whole fucking gook company was coming instead of a patrol but, we couldn't call for an extract because the enemy was too close. Brutus told us to lay quiet and wait till he moved. I had a 12 gauge and two .38s but I wish I had a fucking tank. They must've been only an inch away before he stood up and he had the barrel of the BAR in this gook's guts and cut 'em in half. For about five minutes there was nothing but lead, shit and guts in the air. Bill and Spook were backing and blowing gooners left and right. Mark was firing bloopers from about ten feet and blew his own ass to the deck several times. Duke was lying with a BAR and was cutting loose about balls high. I don't remember John or Jack. Brutus had a BAR screaming from his thigh and throwing grenades like candy at a fucking parade. I thought maybe Brutus had cracked his marbles but he just calmly waded through the blood and shit shouting orders for us and melting his BAR. I didn't see it, but Spook bought it and by that time Brutus had made it to where Spook and Bill was. The BAR was actually on fire so Brutus picked up Spook's 16 gauge and with his own K-Bar began kicking ass and cutting throats. We didn't stick around to count but I figure he must've got 40 or 50 by himself. About 2 dozen of 'em threw guns down but Bill just kept blasting them before Brutus knocked his ass down. There was only three of us, me, Brutus and Bill. I finished off the wounded and since the radio was busted and we knew reinforcements would be coming for the gooners, we got out of there fast. We marched for 13 or 14 hours before we stopped. It was my watch, I guess about 4 or 5 in the morning when they hit us. It only lasted a minute or so and all I did was keep shooting. I was so fucking tired I could care less. Bill was hollering that his balls were blown off and two of the POWs had tried to run but the traps had blown their heads off. Somewhere, I don't remember when, I caught shrapnel in my back, ass and legs and the pain started coming on when Brutus got to me from Bill. He kept telling Bill that he would make a cute faggot if he would get false teeth and a beard.

I distinctly remember that cause Bill was bitching that his balls were gone and Brutus was trying to make him feel better and for some reason I felt like laughing. I know it sounds crazy but I was laying face down about five feet from them and Brutus was holding Bill's balls and was calling him all sorts of dumb fucking names trying to convince him that they were still attached. I guess I passed out because the next thing was Brutus standing over me trying to stop my bleeding. It was hard to tell whose blood was whose since he was bleeding all over. neither Bill nor I could walk and we still had 13 POWs so Brutus did the only thing he could. He had a choice, take the POWs out or us. I don't know what I would have done. Brutus just looked at Bill, then me, and I was really scared, more scared than when the whole company of gooks came at us, because he had blood everywhere and was shaking and his eyes, God, man, his eyes were white. I'm not shitting you white. Like a robot he walked up to each one and said "God forgive me" or something like that and shot each one in the head. Then he loaded 2 shotguns, strapped them to each leg. He took off his clothes and ours to reduce weight. All he had was a belt, a .38, 2 shotguns, 2 K-Bars and some ammo. He had used all of our first aid shit. He made a litter out of branches and belts and he alternated between carry one of us and dragging the other. We hadn't eaten for several days and I was flashing off and on but every time I woke up we were still moving. One of the last things I remember before waking up in the cross was staring at his back, I was lying face down on this stretcher thing, and seeing the dried blood caked over the straps on his shoulders. Without bull shitting, I don't think I could have done it. I owe him my life and so does Bill. If they burn him I'll be the first in line to waste the bastards that try it...and that's no threat, that's a blood oath.

THIS STATEMENT IS TRUE ACCORDING TO MY MEMORY. IT CONSISTS OF TWO PAGES

STEVE A. KEARNS  
PRIVATE  
UNITED STATES MARINE CORPS  
24 84 625  
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