

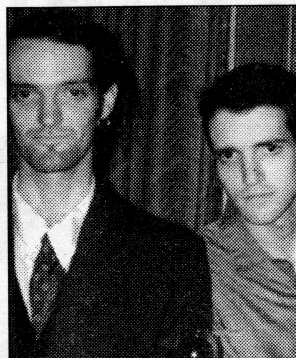
# World's Greatest CIA Hoaxes

Jim Richardson and Allen Richardson

A hoax is a fake event staged as though it were real: in other words, theater. There have been some great ones. We think here particularly of Michel Mourre (who had no CIA connection) stepping to the altar of the Notre Dame Cathedral during Easter High Mass, dressed as a Franciscan Monk, and announcing that God is dead. It made him a hero to various Surrealist groups, whose highest virtues included the subversion of expectations. Well the Surrealists have a gold mine of such subversion right here in our very own CIA, arch master hoaxers. Dig it:

## The Gulf of Tonkin

This was arguably one of the most insidious hoaxes of all time as it precipitated the heavy U.S. involvement in Vietnam that Johnson wanted. "Thank you, boys!" Long passed off as an unprovoked Commie attack on two U.S. destroyers in the Tonkin Gulf, various magazines (*I.F. Stone's Weekly*), newspapers (*U.S. News and World Report*)



Gonzo Scientists

which characterized the neocolonial Philippine "government" (really just a huge American puppet show). Among other things, the Huks wanted to industrialize their country, but don't you know that would be bad for American business, which treated the Philippines like a big playground. So the Huks had to be stopped, and in particular there was this persistent mountain outpost of Huks to get rid of. Playing off of local beliefs in the *asuang*, or Philippine Vampire, the CIA planted some frightful stories and waited for them to spread to the Huk stronghold. Then one night, the last man in a Huk patrol was quietly ambushed, his neck punctured with two holes, his body hung upside-down to drain out his blood, and then the corpse was dumped back on the trail. The Huks fled the region as a direct result of finding this body. God Bless America.

## The ol' Fake Shipment of Communist Weapons

The aim of the hoax is to smear the left-wingers of a government or a revolutionary conflict, and to make it appear as if they have been caught receiving covert arms shipments from the Soviets or Cubans or whoever. This hoax was so successful that the CIA used it again and again to dupe governments and newspapers worldwide. Popular variants of this hoax include the "Fake Communist Attack" (see Gulf of Tonkin, above), the "Fake Scandalous Find of Soviet Literature" and the "Fake Communist Letters-to-the-Editor Saying Stupid or Inflammatory Things.") Then the CIA says to the right-wing side, "See? The Commies

and books (*Truth is the First Casualty: The Gulf of Tonkin Affair—Illusion and Reality*) have laid bare this colossal example of cynical, deadly and treacherous CIA theater.

## The Philippine Vampire

This one's kind of fun. The Huk guerrillas were sick of the corrupt police state,

are gunning for you! You must help us crush them/manipulate your elections/run your government." Quite often, the movements being smeared by the CIA were not actually Communist, but merely a little socialist, or just not totally gung-ho on the West. Wonder why. The CIA used the ol' fake communist arms-shipment trick in Guatemala in 1953, among other places, like Vietnam in 1965.

## The Fake Stamp Trick

The *Washington Post* carried a story in 1982 about how the CIA forged a large number of postage stamps in the early 1960s which were supposed to look like North Vietnamese postage stamps. The stamps bore a picture of a North Vietnamese guy patriotically shooting down an American helicopter. Then the CIA wrote letters in Vietnamese and sent them all over the world using these fake, inflammatory stamps. They made sure the stamps would be seen by journalists, and *Life* magazine did its usual bending over for the CIA and splashed a blow-up of the stamp on its front cover in 1965. (Among other things, *Life* also published some frames of the Zapruder film, out of order, with misleading captions, thus very effectively minimizing legitimate evidence for a second shooter on the grassy knoll.)

## The Counterfeit Money Drop Maneuver

In an effort to wreck the Laotian economy, the CIA dropped bags of funny Laotian money all over the place. The bags were designed to explode before hitting the ground, and the loosely packed money would drift far and wide. Some of the bags exploded in the plane's cargo hold, and the hapless CIA pilots had to spend hours cleaning counterfeit money out of it. Your tax dollars at work.

## The Lone Gunman Hoax

Had to put this one in. There's no way Oswald could have done all that shooting by himself.

Recommended Reading: *Killing Hope: U.S. Military and CIA Interventions Since World War II* by William Blum; *In the Midst of Wars* by Edward G. Lansdale; *Air America* by Christopher Robbins

Next Week: CIA Media Manipulation

the POINT 107.7fm Points Card

Earn Points • Get Prizes

Win cash, mini-vacations, and point gear

Win GRAND PRIZE Trip for 2