

----- Original Message -----

Subject: Fwd: The Yellow Rain

Date: Thu, 7 Jun 2007 12:02:43 -0400

From: Stephen Cunnion <cunnion@comcast.net>

To: Matthew Meselson <msm@wjh.harvard.edu>

References: <002601 c7a8b1 \$606ecb60\$6401 a8cO@Jimslaptop>

Michael,

Jim Bruno has just around to go through his back log of e-mail after returning from a month long trip.

He probably has the best corporate memory for Yellow Rain since he ran the Udorn consulate during that time frame.

Steve

*Subject: **Re: The Yellow Rain*

Steve,

First, please accept my profound apologies for not having gotten back to you on this in April.

I took off much of that month and absconded to Florida for my own personal writer's retreat.

When I returned, the shit had hit the fan on a number of fronts and I just fell behind on

things. In going through my back-up of past emails, I came upon yours along with a couple

dozen others. Anyway, when I read, "Yellow Rain" in the title, I immediately broke out in a

psychosomatically-induced skin rash. Oh, the memories! Oh, the characters -- Denny Lane,

Ed McWilliams, Gary Crocker, Amos Townsend.

Here's my defining moment on Yellow rain. It's early 1980. I'm a 29-year old junior officer on his second tour of duty, in Laos. A great dark veil had closed across that country as of 1975. We had 9 personnel in an embassy barely holding on in a Stalinist satrapy. We were not permitted to travel beyond an 8-mile radius from the center of Vientiane. I spoke good Lao and

"befriended" some younger Lao officials, who, at my urging, got me almost unprecedented permission to travel around the country. First trip (1980) is to northern Laos.

I'm in the central market in Luang Prabang and strike up conversations with people astounded to see an American. These include Hmong. I ask them directly, had they heard of yellow rain? Oh, yes, some said. We heard it over VOA. I pressed Hmong on guerrilla fighting in the north. They gave me a wealth of info, but said there was no "yellow rain." reported this to Washington.

Fast-forward some months. I'm visiting refugee camps in Thailand. There the story is different. Everybody had the yellow rain script and repeated it. Hmm.

Deep in the heart of Hmongland, where no non-East Bloc white man was allowed to venture, the Hmong know nothing of "yellow rain," but in Thailand, everybody does. And there're Denny, Ed, Gary, Townsend and CIA and DATT guys and a steady stream of reporters flooding into Ban Vinay and other camps breathlessly asking about "yellow rain." Vang Pao wasn't a stupid man. He knew well how to capitalize off of a good story. Ergo, Yellow Rain. Worked Afghanistan after that. Same type of story. Bottom Line: NO evidence.

The second Lao "defector pilot" with whom we dealt around '85 just added to my skepticism. The CIA grossly mishandled his case. But he confessed to me that he was lying. Go figure. So, those are my much belated two cents on the subject.

Regards,
Jim

P.S. Thanks for sending my first novel to Don. He called me in Florida to give me his reactions. If you can swing a couple of minutes, please write reviews of the books on Amazon. I'd greatly appreciate it.

/James Bruno
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