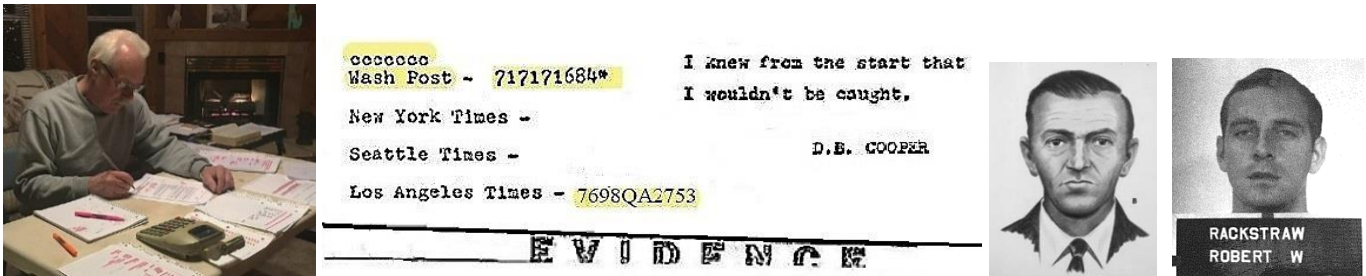


Sleuths Crack Secret Code in Hijacker Letter, Identify “D.B. Cooper”



L to R: Team analyst studies coded entry (above); FBI Cooper sketch and Army suspect’s pic show “*nine points of match.*”

Press Release (1/4/18): A taunting 1971 D.B. Cooper note, released by a judge last November, had “*excited*” agents operating under the assumption it was real, according to old FBI documents. But the “*significance*” of the puzzling numbers and letters at the end of it was “*unknown*” – that is, until now.

The documentarian who filed the FOIA, Thomas J. Colbert, sent the typed letter to various news outlets and his private cold case team, spearheaded by former FBI. That’s when one of the sleuths, Army NCO Rick Sherwood (ret.; above), recognized the closing mishmash as old “code-speak.” The former sergeant was in the Army Security Agency (ASA) in Vietnam, which like the NSA, tracked the enemy’s encrypted radio signals and writings. The team recruited Sherwood in 2015 because its seven-year hijack suspect, **Robert W. Rackstraw Sr.** (now 74), had briefly served in Sherwood’s ASA unit as a helicopter pilot.

Almost five decades later, the analyst still retains 11 of his decryption codes. So with Colbert’s support, Sherwood spent two weeks studying the strings of numbers and lettering, testing arrays and theories until he cracked it: The cypher formula uncovered the names of **three military units solely connected to Rackstraw (1969-70);** his two classified programs were even separated by a “Top Secret” rebuke.

Top Secret

ASA (Army Security Agency)

371st (ASA's 371 Radio Research Unit, AKA "Project Left Bank")

11th GS (The 11th General Support Co.)

ccccccc
 Wash Post ~ 717171684*
 New York Times - TBA
 Seattle Times - TBA
 Los Angeles Times - 7698QA2753

Former FBI Behavioral Analyst Jack Schafer is now a psychologist, three-time author and professor at the Law Enforcement and Justice Department at Western Illinois University. After being walked through Sherwood’s deciphering, Schafer told Colbert the messages are “**the tipping point.** *Since they correlate with identifiers in Rackstraw’s [Army] life, I’m convinced this was written by D.B. Cooper. This is your strongest evidence linking him to the hijacker.*”

The agent who led the 1980 Columbia River Cooper-cash recovery, Dorwin Schreuder, also endorsed the ASA veteran’s decoding: “**I think you’ve arrived.** *No one, yes I admit it, no one has come up with a more complete explanation and thorough documentation. You seem very near the finish line, while I and my [FBI] colleagues did not. Congratulations.*”

The suspect’s 2 former Army commanders – 11th General Support Captain Gary Mossell (ret.) and ASA’s 371st/Project Left Bank LTC Ken Overturf (ret.) – confirmed Rackstraw’s volatile history in all three units.

“*He was a good pilot,*” emailed Mossell, “*but he was seldom interested in the routine [platoon] work.*” On the ground, the rebel drove a stolen commander’s Jeep. And in the air, he easily got bored. Mossell said “Rack” called in once, saying he “*machine-gunned an elephant. Disgusting. He was that kind of guy.*”

Overturf recalled his introduction to the “charismatic” Rackstraw: The flyer had volunteered to leave his 11th GS helicopter repair job in order to replace one of the commander’s Left Bank chopper pilots, just shot down. But after six weeks of good-faith flight training, the “livid” Overturf kicked Rackstraw out for lying about his ability to get a required top-secret security clearance. “That made him a con man.”

Overturf adamantly believes Rackstraw is the FBI’s best hijacker candidate. “He had a basic knowledge and experience in parachuting, appears crazy enough to do it and had nothing to lose by trying.” Having studied Rackstraw’s military file, the career officer also revealed how he had learned his coding: as an Army Reserve sergeant in 1968, the Green Berets at Ft. Bragg’s Special Warfare School had trained him.

Overturf then revealed **the smoking gun**: During the four-year existence of the ASA’s secret 371-Project Left Bank, Rackstraw was the lone pilot recruited from the 11th GS. So that makes him the only American soldier, let alone Cooper candidate, who has the deep knowledge to divulge, boast, exaggerate and lie about these three specialized units. And this wasn’t his first or last time:

Army Airman From SC Wins Distinguished Flying Cross

Army Warrant Officer Robert W. Rackstraw of Santa Cruz has been awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross, the nation’s highest aviation award.


Rackstraw served as a helicopter pilot in “Project Left Bank,” a top security organization in Vietnam. It was his job to make low-level flights over known enemy positions, pinpointing and destroying those locations.

His citation notes that Rackstraw’s “courage and devotion to duty under the most arduous conditions” have provided the Army with a valuable intelligence source for finding and destroying the enemy.

Rackstraw now has been selected as the personal pilot of Gen Robert M. Shoemaker, assistant division commander for the First Cavalry Division.

Rackstraw has previously been awarded the National Defense Ribbon, the Good Conduct Medal, the Overseas Medal, the Vietnam Campaign Medal, the Army Commendation Medal, the Air Medal with 26th Oak Leaf Cluster, the Vietnamese Cross of Gallantry and the Meritorious Unit Citation.

He is one of only a few Army fliers authorized to wear three sets of wings — those of the American Special Forces, Vietnamese paratrooper and Army aviator.




Robert Rackstraw

S.C. Sentinel, 5/17/70

A Top-Secret Leak & Military Award Lies

*Project Left Bank (PLB): Pilot Rackstraw did not receive a DBC for heroics with this classified unit, but for an unrelated rescue; he was soon booted from the elite helicopter team for lying. Also, PLB was a top-secret program until the late 1980s. One of his former 'Nam NCOs, Sgt. Rick Sherwood (ret.), recently described this 1970 revelation to Rackstraw’s small-town paper as “flat-out treasonous. Back then, we would’ve hung him by his thumbs.”

*Three Sets of Wings: American Special Forces had no such medal, and his jump with the South Vietnamese military was not approved by his Army brass.



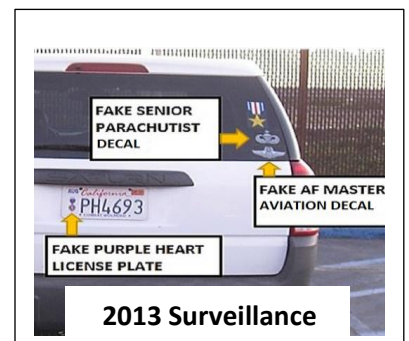
1980s: The Fake Lieutenant-Colonel

In 2016, Rackstraw’s “poser” portrait was spotted online, hanging in his San Diego yacht’s master bedroom. His former 'Nam commander counted 13 unearned units and medals on uniform, like the **ASA** shoulder patch.

Rackstraw, whose ego has been described by a reporter who interviewed him last summer as “almost appalling,” told the Record that the FBI considers him “a James Bond who had gone wrong.”

He said that in addition to being a Green Beret and flying helicopter gunships, he was a member of a “top secret special intelligence organization while in Vietnam in 1969.”

Stockton Record, 2/2/79



NOTE: Code-breaking details are copyrighted, but media can view the deciphering steps by signing an NDA. Team has documented a dozen FBI cover-ups of the facts in this case; list available upon request.

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5/20/13 Rackstraw surveillance; on video ambush day, he hides in shipping container for hour. When driving off (note fake LTC sticker), he explains why he won’t answer Cooper question: “Because you guys would make such a big deal out of it.”