

BUDAPEST

402

January 3, 1952

Sections 860, 861 and 862 of the Foreign Service Regulations

RECOMMENDED PRESENTATION OF AWARDS TO MEMBERS OF THE DEPARTMENT'S OFFICE OF EASTERN EUROPEAN AFFAIRS AND OF ITS LEGATION AT BUDAPEST.

I have the honor strongly to recommend the presentation of the following to the persons hereinafter named:

a) The Distinguished Service Award

1. Walworth Barbour, Director, EE;
2. George Abbott, Charge, Budapest;

b) The Superior Service Award

1. L. Randolph Higgs, Deputy Director, EE;
2. John C. Campbell, Officer in Charge, Balkan Affairs;
3. Robert M. McKisson, Hungarian desk officer;
4. William E. Balass, Attaché, Budapest;

c) The Meritorious Service Award

1. Patrick O'Sheel, Political Officer, Budapest;
2. Seymour M. Finger, Second Secretary, Budapest;
3. William H. McLean, Code Clerk, Budapest; and
4. Leah M. Radman, Secretary to the Chief of Mission, Budapest.

The above-named were the shock troops at the front line in the recent case of the four lost airmen, a case which reporters of the UP, AP, INS, the New York Times and Time and Life described to me as the biggest news since Korea. And, I urge, prompt recognition by the Honor Awards Board of their dedicated performance and accomplishment not only would serve the purpose and the policy of Section 861 of the Foreign Service Regulations, but also would provide effective means of obtaining favorable publicity for the Department at a time when the case of the airmen and its implications are still fresh in the memory of an aroused American public and, accordingly, at a time when presentation of awards to those primarily concerned would be useful in the national interest.

CMBavndal/lr

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State Department review completed

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George Abbott, the Charge at Budapest, merits the Distinguished Service Award. For by virtue of distinguished creative suggestions to the Department, and unequivocally firm representations to the Government of the Hungarian People's Republic, he made a notably outstanding contribution in the conduct of our foreign relations.

As reported to the Department on December 28, 1951, Western observers here regard the outcome of the case as representing the worst diplomatic defeat the USSR has suffered in a long time. The airmen did not get the capital punishment threatened by Vishinsky at the UN General Assembly. They were merely fined. The USSR and the NPK found it advisable to back down hurriedly.

The files documenting the case are classified to a degree that precludes specific reference to them in this despatch. But I am hopeful that the Department will authorize their declassification and that Mr. McKisson will be enabled to annex to my recommendations such documentation as may be required.

In the main, the course of the case followed the analysis and the suggestions made by Mr. Abbott, who, endowed with both natural and cultivated gifts, brought to bear upon the handling of a highly dangerous case perception of potentialities, selection of probabilities, sound recommendations for action, and a 24-hour-a-day dedication to his responsibilities.

Mr. Abbott reported to and received instructions from the Honorable Walworth Barbour, Director of the Department's Office of Eastern European Affairs. And while the team, the members of which I named above, made suggestions as to the next play and, when decided upon, frequently carried the ball, it was Mr. Barbour who called the signals. So, in view of his brilliant, daring but sound quarterbacking and the happy outcome of the case--I say "happy" in appreciation of what might have happened--Mr. Barbour like Abbott evidently merits the highest award that is within the competence of the Department to present.

Mr. Barbour was to my personal knowledge ably advised and assisted by Messrs. Higgs, Campbell and McKisson. I have this personal knowledge because I was privileged to listen to some of their deliberations before receiving orders to advance my departure for Budapest from the expected to the immediate. And having such knowledge I may submit, as I do, that their contribution, like that of Mr. Balass at Budapest, merits the presentation to them of the Superior Service Award.

Mr. Balass, officer and gentleman extraordinary, was throughout the case and continues to be a tower of strength. Exceptionally

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versatile, commanding the Hungarian language, being familiar with Hungarian culture and psychology on one hand and with Communist tactics on the other, he was Mr. Abbott's right hand throughout the case. He was invaluable in his knowledge and counsel, his ability to arrange appointments under studiously difficult conditions, his ability to arrange things so that the fines could be paid at the most propitious moment, and his assistance to the Minister and the Air Attaché in interviewing the airmen upon their release and arrival in Austria.

Mr. O'Sheel, Mr. Finger, Mr. McLean and Miss Radman, who with Balazs made Abbott's commandos, unquestionably in my judgment demonstrated outstanding devotion to duty under adverse conditions. They were voluntarily on 24-hour-a-day duty, at the office out-of-hours Saturdays, Sundays, and all holidays including Christmas Day. O'Sheel helped with the evaluation of public opinion and the framing of pertinent suggestions to the VOA. Finger accompanied Abbott to most of his meetings with officials of the Foreign Office, helped as an interpreter and recorder of memoranda, and made perceptive observations that aided Abbott greatly in reaching his wise recommendations. McLean, alone, carried the tremendous burden of coding and decoding an almost continuous stream of classified RINGT telegrams. And Miss Radman, alone, carried what ordinarily would be an intolerable load for one person to carry, taking the dictation and transcribing first in draft and then in final form the volumes of memoranda, telegrams, despatches and notes which are of record in this case and had to be done--not tomorrow, but now.

G. M. Ravndal

CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY
 OFFICIAL ROUTING SLIP

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REMARKS:

This has been noted in DCI log.