

## **COLONEL FRANZ H. ROSS US Army, Retired (Deceased)**

COL Ross had a distinguished 35-year military career in Human Intelligence (HUMINT), with service in World War II, the Korean War, and the Cold War. He rose in the ranks from Private to Colonel. As the commander of the 513<sup>th</sup> Intelligence Corps Group, he directed a major realignment of the Army's intelligence effort in Europe. During this time, a Czechoslovakian Communist Party newspaper published an article attacking "American secret service gangsters," in which COL Ross was referred to as "the gray ghost." The moniker had been coined by a KGB general stationed in Prague, who was quoted as saying Ross would appear at trouble spots and disappear as suddenly as he had arrived. Ross was proud of the label, and it became a badge of honor.<sup>1</sup> He established a permanent intelligence liaison system with NATO allies. He was also the Army representative to the Central Intelligence Agency in Europe and later he was a key consultant to the Department of Defense HUMINT Planning Group.

COL Ross is mentioned several times in John Koehler's book Stasi: The Untold Story of the East German Secret Police, a history of the powerful and brutal East German police. One section of the book describes a major intelligence breach within the 522<sup>nd</sup> MI Battalion and the 513<sup>th</sup> MI Group in Europe for which COL Ross was named the investigating officer. The author provides a good description of the Colonel:

Like the general [MG Boniface Campbell], Ross was new to Fort Holabird and to military intelligence. The general had picked Ross as his chief aide when the colonel was discharged from Walter Reed Army Medical Center after having stomach surgery. The crusty artillery officer from Savannah, Georgia, who had enlisted in 1940 and worked his way up from buck private, was ideal for the job ahead. He was well known to dozens of general officers for his professionalism, integrity, and no-nonsense approach to any job he had ever held. He was also known as a straight shooter, never hesitating to tell the truth to his superiors when he encountered mismanagement or lack of leadership. Standing just under six feet tall, Ross exuded confidence and experience. Had he lived a century earlier, he probably would have been a sheriff or a US marshal, six-shooters strapped to his hip, chasing outlaws. His men called him a 'tough bird'; his four bronze stars for valor and three air medals had earned him respect.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Koehler, John, Stasi: The Untold Story of the East German Secret Police, Westview Press, 1999, p. 216. The information on Ross came from an interview the author had with retired Col Ross in Port Charlotte, Florida in 1991.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid, pages 208-209.

The author goes on to describe that in this particular incident, COL Ross' investigation was so thorough and professional that he was selected by the Assistant Chief of Staff for Intelligence in the Pentagon to become the 513<sup>th</sup> MI Group commander, in charge of 3,000 officers, enlisted men, and US civilian intelligence specialists. In effect, all espionage operations in Europe and all operational funds were put under his command.

COL Ross retired to Port Charlotte, Florida in 1962 where he continued to serve his community through public service. The County recognized his many years of service when they dedicated the Franz Ross YMCA Park in his honor. He received a Legion of Merit for service from June 1958 to November 1962.

COL Ross was inducted into the MI Hall of Fame in 1988. He passed away in 1994, and his obituary in the Sarasota Herald-Tribune on 8 June 1994, by Jefferson Flanders was titled: "Bidding Farewell to the Gray Ghost – We'll Remember Franz Ross."