

COLONEL ERIC VIELER US Army, Retired



Eric Vieler was born on 7 December 1931 in New York City to German parents. His family returned to Germany in 1934 where he attended German schools while living in Westfalia during World War II. At the age of 13, he became an Interpreter first for the US and then for the British occupation forces in Germany. He returned to the United States in 1947. With the onset of the Korean War, Vieler enlisted in the US Army. He attended Officer Candidate School in 1951 and was commissioned a Second Lieutenant in the Infantry at the age of 19.

As an Infantry officer, 2LT Vieler served with the 7th Infantry Division in Korea in 1952 and 1953. He participated in the battles on Triangle Hill, Porkchop Hill, and Old Baldy. He was wounded three times and was twice decorated for valor. He

underwent extensive hospitalization at Walter Reed Medical Center and waived medical retirement to stay on active military duty.

Vieler's intelligence career began in 1954 when he was assigned as Assistant G2, Headquarters, Army Security Agency School, Fort Devens, Massachusetts. In that role, his duties included conducting security inspections, reviewing personnel security investigations, issuing clearances and investigating violations of security regulations.

In 1956, Vieler was invited to join the Field Operations Intelligence (FOI) program. He attended FOI training at Fort Holabird, Maryland and was assigned to the 522nd MI Battalion in Germany, with duty stations at Bad Kissingen and Wuerzburg. Promoted to Captain, he was the Team Chief of a highly successful collection team, conducting cross-border operations against military targets in East Germany.

CPT Vieler returned to the United States in 1960 and became an instructor in the FOI Department of the Army Intelligence School. He taught Human Intelligence (HUMINT) collection techniques to more than one hundred military and Department of the Army Civilians over the next two years, frequently developing course material based on his personal experience.

MAJ Vieler returned to Germany in 1963 as Operations Officer of the Frankfurt Station of the 513th MI Group. In addition to supervising the collection, counterintelligence and liaison missions of the organization, he conducted sensitive collection missions from western European bases against Soviet bloc targets. In 1965 he became Chief of Collection of the 513th MI Group at Camp King, where he supervised all of the Group's special collection and counter-espionage operations.

From 1966 to 1969, LTC Vieler was an assignments officer for the Military Intelligence Branch in Washington, DC, where he was responsible for career management and assignment of all Army intelligence officers in the grades of Major and Lieutenant Colonel worldwide. In 1969, he became the Branch's Executive Officer. A significant event that occurred during this period was his integration into the Regular Army in 1966. Until that time he had been a reserve officer serving on active duty, but was considered to be unqualified for a Regular Army commission due to physical disabilities (loss of sight in the right eye) that he incurred in combat. Due to extraordinary support on the part of his commanders, the Surgeon General granted the medical waiver that enabled LTC Vieler to be commissioned in the Regular Army. In 1969 he was designated a Foreign Area Officer with specialization in Western Europe.

LTC Vieler served with 525th MI Group in Vietnam in 1970, commanding both its 5th and 3rd Battalions. These units conducted unilateral and bilateral (with Vietnamese Army units) tactical collection operations in direct support of combat forces in Vietnam and Cambodia. One of the units in his command was responsible for strategic collection, producing information that accurately predicted the overthrow of the government in Cambodia. That report was briefed to the White House and resulted in a special commendation for Vieler.

Upon returning from Vietnam, LTC Vieler was assigned to the Office of the Assistant Chief of Staff, Intelligence, at Headquarters Department of the Army, where he developed HUMINT doctrine and represented the Army on policy committees with Department of State, Central Intelligence Agency, Defense Intelligence Agency and other military departments. He was selected to attend the Army War College in 1971.

After graduating from the War College the following year, COL Vieler commanded the 115th MI Group with headquarters at the Presidio of San Francisco, California. With more than 50 offices located throughout the 13 western states and Alaska, this counterintelligence organization conducted personnel security investigations in support of Army and industrial security programs; investigated allegations in support of Army and industrial security programs; investigated allegations of disloyalty, espionage, sabotage and subversion related to military personnel and military installations, and provided security to sensitive installations and weapons storage depots. In 1974 the group was redesignated the 525th MI Group as part of a realignment that created the Army Intelligence and Security Command.

COL Vieler was the first MI Officer selected to become a Corps G2. He served as Assistant Chief of Staff, G2, VII Corps in Stuttgart, Germany, from 1974 until 1976, under GENs Blanchard and Kroesen. VII Corps was the Army's largest, most modern tactical organization and COL Vieler was given the green light to modernize the Corps' intelligence collection, production and dissemination functions. During his tenure as G2, the Corps experimented with all-source intelligence integration (a forerunner of the All Source Analysis System), which was successfully demonstrated during REFORGER 75, and began testing and employing new tactical reconnaissance systems such as Guardrail, QUICKLOOK, Interim SOTAS (Standoff Target Acquisition System), UPD-4 and the OV-1D. COL Vieler's major accomplishment, however, acknowledged by the Commander-in-Chief, US Army Europe, was to develop a concept of focusing the total intelligence assets, including those from the national level, to satisfy the needs of the tactical commanders from battalion to corps. Known as Project FOCUS, the concept was a major success in realigning the priorities and distribution of intelligence in US Army Europe.

COL Vieler retired in August 1976 with 26 years of active military service. His awards and decorations include the Silver Star and Bronze Star with V device, which he earned while serving in Korea. For wounds received in combat, he was awarded the Purple Heart (2 Oak Leaf Clusters). He has also received the Legion of Merit (1 Oak Leaf Cluster), the Meritorious Service Medal, the Bronze Star Medal, the Air Medal, and the Army Commendation Medal (1 Oak Leaf Cluster).

COL Vieler has written two autobiographies: Destination Evil: Remembering the Korean War (2004); and A Journey On My Own: A Youth from Hitler's Germany Strives to Claim His American Identity (2009), describing his early life. Both were published by Hamilton Books. His latest book, a novella titled Trust and Betrayal: Tales of Cold War Espionage (2014) was inspired by events which took place in Germany in the late fifties and early sixties; events in which the author himself participated. While many of the dates and names were altered, Vieler's intent was to tell a compelling story, drawn from firsthand experience.

COL Vieler was inducted into the MI Hall of Fame in 1988. He is also a member of the Infantry School Hall of Fame. COL Vieler passed away in August 2015.