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Frank Church, chairman of Senate Committee on Intelligence, holding a C.I.A. poison dart gun with telescopic sight as the panel investigated the agency's use of poisons. At right is Senator John G. Tower of Texas.

COLBY DESCRIBES C.I.A. POISON WORK

He Tells Senate Panel of Secret \$3-Million Project That Lasted 18 Years

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WASHINGTON, Sept. 16 —

The Central Intelligence Agency operated an 18-year, \$3-million super-secret project to develop poisons, biochemical weapons and such devices as dart guns to administer them, the agency's director testified today.

William E. Colby, Director of Central Intelligence, told the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence that pursuant to a Presidential order the project,

code-named "MK. Naomi," was halted in February, 1970.

Mr. Colby showed the committee a dart gun patterned on the Army's Colt semi-automatic pistol but electrically fired. He said it could shoot a dart 100 meters and was "almost silent."

The dart gun, brought before the committee at its request, was described in a C.I.A. memo as a "nondiscernible micro-bionoculator."

The committee made public C.I.A. documents showing that the agency had a vast array of poisons, including many that would cause deadly diseases, and systems for destroying crops.

The documents also showed that the C.I.A. had used the New York City subway system.

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as a "trial model" for a study on the vulnerability of subway riders to covert attack.

According to Congressional sources, C.I.A. officials have said they flooded the New York subways with a "harmless simulant" of a disease-carrying gas.

It was in the secret project that two poisons, one a toxin made from shellfish, the other a derivative of cobra venom, were stockpiled by the C.I.A. in violation of President Nixon's directive, Mr. Colby said.

Later in today's hearing—the Senate Committee's first public session — Dr. Nathan Gordon said that, at his direction, the two poisons were not destroyed in 1970. He said that he had received no specific order from the C.I.A. hierarchy to get rid of the material.

Dr. Gordon, a chemist who retired from the C.I.A. in 1973, said that he had been aware of the Presidential directive ordering the destruction of biological and chemical weapons, but felt that the shellfish toxin was not covered because the order was directed at the United States military, not at the C.I.A.

He said that he did not ask permission to save the materials rather than destroy them, nor did he tell his superiors that he had secreted the poisons in a vault at his Washington laboratory. He said that he and two members of his section planned to reveal that they had the poisons if "higher authority" at the C.I.A. had asked them for suggestions for an effective poison.

"We would have informed the requiree, the person who had need, that we could service the requirement," Dr. Gordon said.

Much of what was told to the committee about C.I.A. operations at the public hearing today had been reported previously, based on information from sources familiar with testimony given to the committee in secret sessions.

Mr. Colby said that in May, 1952, the C.I.A. began a joint project with the special operations division of the Army

Biological Laboratory at Fort Detrick, Md. During the course of this project, his testimony and documents disclosed, the C.I.A. stockpiled substances that would cause tuberculosis, anthrax, encephalitis (sleeping sickness), valley fever, salmonella food poisoning and smallpox.

The laboratory at Fort Detrick also had materials that would cause food poisoning that appeared to be botulism as well as supplies of snake venom and a poison that caused intestinal flu, Mr. Colby said.

He said the C.I.A. had developed darts that could shoot poison into a person without an autopsy or physical examination of the victim easily discovering that a dart had been fired.

Tight Secrecy Described

Mr. Colby said that the project had been subject to a high degree of secrecy within the C.I.A. Only two or three officers at any given time were cleared for access to Fort Detrick activities, he said.

Though some C.I.A.-originated documents "have been found in the project files, it is clear only a very limited documentation of activities took place," he added.

Mr. Colby acknowledged under questioning that because of the paucity of records on the project he could not rule out that the poisons had been used for a substantial number of aggressive operations. He said that a technical aide had once suggested to him that poison be used in a C.I.A. operation but that he had rejected the idea.

An October, 1967, memorandum on the Naomi project said that there were silent electrical delivery systems, mechanical launchers and anti-crop "dissemination kits."

New York Subway Project

The memorandum was a standard end-of-year situation report on a project. Among the matters reported on was this section on the New York subway project.

"In anticipation of a future need for information and to establish a capability, a study of vulnerability of subway systems to covert attack was conducted.

"The suitability of the systems was assessed and evaluated covertly, utilizing the New York City subways as the trial model.

"Results provided information on distribution and concentration of organisms which were obtained. The data provided a means of assessing the rate of infection to subway

sengers. The study provided threat model and information on ease of dissemination methods of delivery which could be used offensively." According to the memorandum, the purposes of the project were to "stockpile severely incapacitating and materials for the specific TSD [Technical Services Division] and to maintain in national readiness special

and unique items for the dissemination of biological and chemical materials."

Mr. Colby said that part of the operational use might have been to prepare fast-acting suicide pills for American agents and nonlethal incapacitating substances that would prevent a captive from taking his life or a terrorist from carrying out his intent. He also said that the agency had done substantial research on how to incapacitate guard dogs.

Mr. Colby acknowledged that "these materials" had been prepared for one operation, but said "we are aware that that operation was not in fact completed."