

CIA agents acted without permission giving LSD: Olsons

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The dose of LSD secretly given former Ft. Detrick scientist Frank R. Olson nine days before his apparent suicide was administered by CIA agents who had ignored orders from superiors on the possible dangers of the unpredictable drug, according to CIA documents released Sunday by Olson's family.

Access to the once-classified CIA files was granted to the Olsons as part of an out-of-court agreement in which the Frederick family dropped its lawsuit against the agency. Pending federal legislation is to award \$1.25 million to the Olson family as compensation for the biochemist's death.

Information in the CIA files, containing 66 notes and over one inch thick, supports previous testimony of one of Olson's co-workers.

"I recall it as being a serious mistake in judgment on the part of the men there (a mountain retreat meeting in Western Maryland where as many as seven Detrick scientists were covertly given LSD in after-dinner drinks)," said co-worker Ben Wilson.

"It was not an act approved by superiors, who had advised that the drug not be used for that purpose," Wilson said.

Robert V. Lashbrook, one of the two CIA agents present at the retreat meeting, accompanied Olson to New York a week after the incident to visit a psychiatrist after Olson suffered a nervous breakdown. According to police records, Olson "jumped or fell" from a tenth floor hotel window on Nov. 28, 1953.

Olson's family was never told the true details of his death until they discovered the facts, as related in the Rockefeller report on the CIA released last June.

The CIA documents show that six

months before Olson's death, Richard Helms warned that LSD could prove to be "dynamite" and cautioned against experimentation with the drug.

An order from Frank Wisner, CIA deputy director for plans, prohibited use of hallucinogens without prior permission from superiors and CIA general counselor Lawrence R. Houston reported in a study of Olson's death that the CIA agents failed to take "normal and reasonable precautions."

However, Allen Dulles, then director of the CIA, decided not to reprimand CIA personnel involved in the Olson death because such action might "affect the initiative and enthusiasm so necessary to our (CIA) work."

CIA experiments with LSD and other hallucinogens continued for years after Olson's death as another of the CIA agents present at the Western Maryland

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retreat meeting, Sidney Gottlieb, became head of all CIA drug experimentation programs.

Included in the CIA documents released by the Olsons are mention of hundreds of LSD test subjects who required hospitalization.

The secret administering of LSD and the other drugs was called "Operation Artichoke" in the released CIA files and was continued until the late 1960s. The documents also show that little or no effort was ever made to check on later side effects from the drug experimentation.

When the Olsons announced their intention to sue the CIA last July, they pointed out three reasons for doing so. They said they sought full disclosure of details surrounding Olson's death, wanted public accountability of those involved in the death and cover-up established, and sought monetary consideration for the family loss.

The Olsons received a public apology from President Gerald R. Ford following an Oval Office audience with him last July, and, with the acquisition of the CIA files and the promise of a \$1.25 million settlement, all of the family's three goals appear to have been met.