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C.I.A. Documents Tell of 1954 Project to Create Involuntary Assassins

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WASHINGTON, Feb. 8—The Central Intelligence Agency began a study in 1954 to find out whether a person could be secretly induced to commit an assassination against his will, newly released Government documents disclosed today. It was the first documentary evidence that the C.I.A. had contemplated such a situation.

The study was disclosed in a series of 1954 memorandums made public under a Freedom of Information Act request by The New York Times and others. The documents were prepared as part of a project sometimes known by the code name "Artichoke," one of four C.I.A. programs to conduct mind-control experiments from 1949 to 1974.

No Evidence of Attempt

There is no indication in the documents released so far that the C.I.A. attempted to use mind control in an actual assassination attempt. However, the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence reported in 1976 that the intelligence agency had

plotted three assassinations and had become indirectly involved in several others.

According to the documents, a team from the project which usually included interrogation experts, drug experts and psychiatrists or psychologists, was asked to "give an evaluation" of the following "hypothetical problem" in January 1954: "Can an individual of (deleted national-ity) descent be made to perform an act of attempted assassination involuntarily under the influence of Artichoke?"

The memorandum, which like most documents released by the agency has names of individuals, government agencies or locations deleted, described the following "problem." "As a trigger mechanism, for a bigger project, it was proposed that an individual of (deleted) descent, approximately 35 years old, well educated, proficient in English and well established socially and politically in the (deleted) government be induced under Artichoke to perform an act, involuntarily, against a prominent (deleted) politician or, if necessary, against an American official."

At another point it noted that "access

to the subject would be extremely limited, probably limited to a single social meeting." The memorandum went on:

"Because the subject is a heavy drinker, it was proposed that the individual could be surreptitiously drugged through the medium of an alcoholic cocktail at a social party, Artichoke applied, and the subject induced to perform the act of attempting assassination at some later date."

"After the act of attempted assassination was performed, it was assumed that the subject would be taken into custody by the (deleted) government and thereby 'disposed of,'" the memorandum said.

The project team reported that it did not think the plan feasible because it would have insufficient control over the subject. Moreover, it said, he would be "unwitting" and the team's access to the subject would involve both "cleared" personnel — C.I.A. employees — and "uncleared" personnel.

"Whether it was carried out or not under crash conditions and appropriate authority from headquarters, the Artichoke team would undertake the problem

in spite of operational limitations," the memorandum said.

In late January 1954, there is a dispatch accompanying the memorandum that says: "Herewith report of Artichoke team on first assignment. Considering the speed with which we had to operate, I believe it went extremely well. We were ready when called upon for support, even though the operation did not materialize."

Several groups have studied the documents from the standpoint of whether they may provide any evidence in the continuing inquiries into the assassination of President Kennedy or the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Members of a nonprofit group, the Assassination Information Bureau, said that the security officer for the "Artichoke" project, ~~Stanley~~ ~~Edward~~ ~~Stewart~~, was later the C.I.A. man assigned to form the assassination team that made attempts on the life of Prime Minister Fidel Castro of Cuba.

The bureau's conclusion is supported by the Senate intelligence report and C.I.A. documents released under Freedom of Information Act.

File

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