

Olson: Agent believes father killed

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WASHINGTON - The son of Fort Detrick germ warfare researcher Frank Olson told a congressional panel Wednesday that a former CIA officer believes the scientist's 13-story fall from a New York hotel room in 1953 was not an accident, but murder.

Dr. Eric Olson, 49, told federal lawmakers he talked recently with a former agent who worked with an

intelligence team headed by Dr. Sidney Gottlieb, one of two CIA agents responsible for secretly dosing Dr. Olson with LSD several days before the scientist plunged to his death.

"This source has confirmed that the members of that small group (of CIA agents) all believed that my father was murdered," he said.

Dr. Olson's testimony came before the House Government Operations subcommittee on legislation and

national security which is investigating the federal government's role in using thousands of unwitting human subjects for scientific research during the Cold War. As many as half a million Americans were subjects in government experiments, according to evidence presented to the committee.

Dr. Olson would not identify his CIA source, whose allegation is the

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Detrick tests continue, GAO says

From Staff and Wire Reports

WASHINGTON - Thousands of Americans were subjected to secret chemical and germ warfare tests during the Cold War era, but their names and fates remain largely unknown, a congressional panel was told Wednesday.

"Today individuals who were injured in these experiments, and their families, are still trying to find out the truth about what happened," said Rep. John Conyers, chairman of the House Government Operations Committee.

Some people died as a result of secret tests that "sound like something out of a science fiction novel," Mr. Conyers, D-Mich., said at a hearing by the Government Operations subcommittee on legislation and national security.

The victims of those experiments deserve the same attention now being given to the victims of radiation tests, Mr. Conyers said.

Secret experiments continue today, some of it at locations such as Fort Detrick in Frederick, Frank C. Conahan, assistant comptroller general of the GAO, told the sub-

committee.

"It's clear that this research continues. Hopefully it continues under the ground rules the 1974, as amended, regulations," he said.

He said the scope of his investigation did not allow him to review current practices at Fort Detrick, however. "We have not reviewed they are complying with the current ground rules which requires them to provide accurate information as to what the subjects are involved in and

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FRANK OLSON

Detrick

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to gain their consent."

Since 1974, federal regulations have required that people used in experiments be told the risks and freely give their consent.

Early this year, President Clinton created an advisory committee to uncover information about secret radiation tests, notify the people who were exposed, and help them seek compensation.

Mr. Conyers urged the president to extend that committee's power to cover other types of Cold War tests as well.

Between 1940 and 1974, experiments were performed on at least a half-million individuals, including 210,000 people exposed to radiation, according to research by the General Accounting Office, the investigative arm of Congress.

The tests were conducted on prison inmates, hospital patients, mental patients, members of the military and others. Some had no idea they were subjects of experiments; others volunteered but weren't told of the risks involved.

In addition, Army researchers

sprayed zinc cadmium sulfide - a chemical now associated with cancer - over more than 200 cities, GAO investigators found.

A study by the federal Centers for Disease Control and Prevention found the spraying probably didn't harm residents. But Mr. Conyers called on the Army to release a list of all the cities, which include Minneapolis, St. Louis, Detroit and Springfield, Ill.

The existence of many of the tests was revealed in the 1970s. People were unwittingly given LSD or other mind-altering drugs, soldiers were exposed to skin-blistering chemicals and people were exposed to pathogens as part of biological warfare tests.

Mr. Conahan said it is difficult for those who believe they were harmed to seek compensation from the government, because so few records are available.

For example, the GAO found that some 100 people received LSD at five universities through tests financed by the Air Force, he said.

It is unclear who the subjects were, or whether they knew they were being given the drug, he said.

Olson

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most recent development in the strange case of his father's death.

But Dr. Olson, a psychologist living in his family's home in Braddock Heights, said the man has said he would be willing to testify publicly on the matter in court or before Congress.

If true, it would be the first time someone from within the CIA has admitted the possibility that Dr. Olson's death was not an accident.

The death was first ruled a suicide, but was later determined to be "accidental" after it was learned in 1975 that he had been given LSD just days before the fall.

"It proves we aren't on a wild goose chase," Dr. Olson said after the hearing. He and his brother Nils, a local dentist, had their father's body exhumed this summer. It is being studied by a team of forensic scientists for evidence Mr. Olson's fall was part of an effort to murder him.

The Olsons contend the LSD experiment left their father, whose top-secret work was supported by the CIA, so despondent and depressed that his overseers at the spy agency deemed him a security hazard and had him eliminated. Days after giving him the LSD, the agents took Dr. Olson to New York to see an allergist who was considered an expert on the drug. Dr. Olson fell to his death three days later.

The "investigation is not yet complete," Eric Olson told lawmakers, "but its preliminary results, which increasingly point toward the likelihood of homicide, are tending to confirm our most dire suspicions."

Dr. Olson's testimony also focused on other tragic fallout from the CIA's decision to use his father as a guinea pig.

After his father's death, his mother

"began a 20-year descent into alcoholism, from which, after repeated hospitalizations, she only narrowly escaped with her life," he said. Alice Wicks Olson died a year ago.

Then his sister, Lisa, her husband and 2-year-old son were killed in a small plane crash in 1978. They were enroute to Saranac Lake, N.Y., to see a property they were considering buying with their share of the \$750,000 the federal government awarded the Olsons after it was revealed Dr. Olson had been the unwitting subject of a CIA experiment that led to his death.

"My father's case, still unresolved after four decades, illustrates what can happen when civil liberties are violated in the name of national security research," Dr. Olson said. "Once one starts on the dangerous path of poisoning one's own citizens in order to develop the weapons allegedly needed to protect them, one enters a zone of lunacy where anything is possible, where sadists can disguise their maliciousness as patriotic duty."

"This is more than just a sensational hearing," said committee Chairman John Conyers, D-Mich. "This really goes to the fundamental nature of a government's relationship to its citizens. It's important, not only because the rights of so many people were blatantly disregarded, but it's important if there is to be any trust in this system. If there is to be a contract between our citizens and this government, then this has to be diligently exposed and finally resolved."

"Sadly, this chapter from the Cold War is not over," Mr. Conyers said. "Today, individuals who were injured in these experiments and their families are still trying to find out the truth about what happened and to secure assistance from the government."