

Washington Merry-go-round

EP-24 3/4/76
Dr. Olson's death prods CIA drug controversy

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With Les Whitten

WASHINGTON — The Central Intelligence Agency has hushed up the death of another man who was administered too much medication under a super-secret program code-named MK ULTRA-DELTA.

The case is similar to that of Dr. Frank Olson, who leaped to his death from a New York City hotel window three weeks after the CIA dosed him with experimental LSD. The tragedy made headlines last year, and President Ford personally apologized to the dead man's family.

Olson was assumed to be the only victim of CIA drug testing. But last December, an anonymous caller told us about another drug death from a CIA program bearing the mysterious cryptonym MK DELTA.

We checked with our CIA sources and obtained some top-secret CIA documents. We discovered that Sen. Ted Kennedy, D-Mass., was conducting a parallel investigation and had succeeded in getting other documents declassified. From these records and from testimony before Kennedy, we have put together this much of the picture:

The late CIA director Allen Dulles in April, 1953, approved two related projects — MK ULTRA for testing new drugs and MK DELTA for using them in covert operations.

The projects were so secret that few records were kept, and the normal accounting procedures were waived. Many top CIA officials, in fact, were

never given the suppressed details.

Olson's death in November, 1953, upset some CIA medical experts who tried to cancel the MK drug programs. But the internal CIA files show that higher CIA authorities considered the fatality "just one of the risks" of scientific experimentation. The dosing of unwitting victims, therefore, continued.

Subsequently, there was another death. It was discovered by Dr. Edward Gunn, then a CIA physician, when he walked in on half-a-dozen CIA colleagues unannounced.

"There were conversations which stopped shortly after I entered the room," Gunn has sworn. But he heard enough to learn that the CIA "had trouble with an individual... in a foreign country" whose agents were conducting a drug project "in collaboration with our people."

The victim, Gunn explained, had been given "some medication and had, shall we say, a fatal outcome." The former CIA doctor, now retired in Hilton Head, S.C., told our associate Gary Cohn that he couldn't recall who had attended the meeting except for the late CIA security chief Col. Sheffield Edwards.

It was Edwards who in later years passed on the order for recruiting an assassination team to "eliminate" Cuban leader Fidel Castro.

The CIA files show that the drug programs continued to stir controversy inside the CIA. "In a number of instances," states one document, unwitting subjects "became ill for hours or days. There was one instance of hospitalization."

Some of the drugs were so dangerous that the pharmaceutical companies had

rejected them for human use "because of undesired side effects."

Another CIA document reports that "research in the manipulation of human behavior is considered by many authorities... to be professionally unethical." The report warns, therefore, that "the reputations of professional participants in the MK ULTRA program are in jeopardy."

Still another report declares that "the testing of MK ULTRA products places the rights and interests of U.S. citizens in jeopardy." Some case officers, states one document, "have basic moral objections to the concept of MK DELTA."

Although the insidious MK ULTRA and MK DELTA projects were supposed to be cut off in 1964, they were continued at least until 1967 and possibly years later under the new code name MK SEARCH.

The full extent of CIA drug poisonings may never be known. For in the early 1970s, the limited MK records were destroyed reportedly on the orders of then-CIA director Richard Helms.

Footnote: The CIA refused to comment on the MK drug programs.

QADDAFI'S OVERTURES: Col. Muammar el-Qaddafi, the mad hatter who rules Libya, has been signaling coyly that he would like friendlier relations with the United States.

But there may be an ulterior motive behind his overtures. He is casting longing looks at U.S. military equipment, particularly eight Lockheed C-130 cargo planes which he has purchased but cannot get delivered. Over the past 18 months, the

Tripoli-to-Washington signals have steadily intensified. They began in late 1974 with the lifting of the oil embargo that Libya had imposed against the United States. A few months later, Qaddafi eased restrictions against U.S. ships which use Libyan ports.

Then came a Libyan offer permitting the U.S. to increase the size of its diplomatic staff in Tripoli. Washington accepted and reciprocated.

Seven months ago, the former Libyan Charge d'Affaires Ali El-Gayed visited the State Department with a proposal that the two nations exchange full ambassadors. Although diplomatic relations between the U.S. and Libya have never been broken, neither country has had an ambassador in the other's capital for several years.

A private American businessman, regarded by the Libyans as "a friend," has been attempting to arrange a goodwill junket to Libya for senators and congressmen. The effort has been unofficially endorsed by the present Charge d'Affaires Shaban Gashur.

Within the last month, four individuals who have had audiences with Qaddafi have returned from Libya with the message that the colonel wants rapprochement.

The U.S. however, still looks unfavorably upon Qaddafi's efforts to disrupt a peaceful Arab-Israeli settlement and his support of Arab terrorist groups. Therefore, the delivery of the eight Lockheed planes, for which Libya paid \$60 million three years ago, is still being held up. Qaddafi, a State Department spokesman, told us, is offering too little and asking too much.