

Mind-Drug Tests a Federal Project for

AUGUST 11, 1975

Almost 25 Years

By JOSEPH B. TREASTER

American military and intelligence officials watched men with glazed eyes pouring out rambling confessions at the Communist purge trials in Eastern Europe after World War II, and for the first time they began to worry about the threat of mind-bending drugs as weapons.

Then, a few years later, came the reports of American G.I.'s being brainwashed in Korean prison camps.

"Here were people who had stood up against the Nazis, suddenly standing up and confessing everything to the Communists," one employee of the Central Intelligence Agency recalled the other day. "For the first time, our prisoners of war were denouncing their own country. What in the world was going on?"

No one in the United States knew for certain. So, as the story is now told, the C.I.A. began investigating a wide variety of then little-known, mind-altering drugs, including LSD, which is lysergic acid diethylamide, and trying them out on human beings. So did the Army, the Navy and, eventually, the Air Force.

In the two months since the Rockefeller Commission first disclosed the C.I.A.'s experiments with LSD, there have been many fragmentary reports on drug testing in the military-intelligence community.

From these reports, and new information turned up in interviews and other research, there emerges the story of a vast government program ranging over nearly a quarter of a century, a program that, primarily in the name of national security, subjected more than 4,000 persons to such psychochemical drugs as LSD, marijuana and a number of other chemical compounds that could produce hallucinations, euphoria and hysteria.

Government in Vanguard

The story is one of a Federal Government that played the role of foremost pioneer in research on a family of drugs that in the nineteen-sixties found their way into the streets of America as the seeds of a new counterculture.

It is a story, also, that makes clear that the intent of the drug experiments went beyond the Government's contention that they were merely defensive in nature, aimed at learning how or when an enemy was using the compounds and how to protect against them. In fact, there is ample evidence that military and intelligence planners hoped to add these drugs to the United States' arsenal of offensive weapons.

The Rockefeller Commission reported, for example, that the

C.I.A. considered several "operational uses outside the United States."

And in the late 'fifties there were a number of references in military publications to psychochemicals as "incapacitating agents" that could be used to knock out an enemy for a few hours or a few days without doing permanent damage, a concept that one retired general the other day called, "winning without killing."

Included in the commission's disclosure of the C.I.A.'s drug experiments earlier this summer was an account of the death of a man who had jumped from a New York City hotel window after having been surreptitiously given LSD.

As the identity of the victim, Frank R. Olson, became known, and as other details of the incident emerged, servicemen and civilian researchers who had participated in military drug experiments began telephoning newspapers and television stations.

Several Projects Confirmed

At first the armed forces refused to comment, but eventually spokesmen confirmed several drug projects. In the smallest, and apparently the only effort not directly related to military activity, the Navy said it conducted a single study with 20 persons between 1950 and 1951 to evaluate the therapeutic value of LSD in treating severe depression.

The C.I.A. and the Army, which was the principal researcher for the Department of Defense, say they discontinued their LSD experiments on humans in 1967, but the Army says it went on with other drugs that could cause hallucinations until about two weeks ago. In addition, the Air Force says it continued to sponsor university research in LSD through 1972.

Civilian scientists and medical researchers generally agree that there probably was good reason to test these drugs on humans—given the perceived threat and the fact that there existed no alternative means of determining the impact of the psychochemicals on men. But they have been extremely critical of the procedures followed by the C.I.A. and the Army.

In most of the C.I.A.'s experiments with LSD, the Rockefeller Commission report said, the subjects were unaware that they were being administered the drug—a practice that Dr. Judd Marmor, president of the American Psychiatric Association, says he considers unethical and dangerous.

The standard ethical procedure in human experimentation in the United States is to obtain prior informed consent from subjects. There is a danger, especially with such a potent psychochemical as LSD, that an unsuspecting subject will suddenly feel he is losing his mind and, in despair, attempt suicide, many researchers believe.

Despite the death of Frank Olson, which occurred in the fall of 1953, apparently not long after the C.I.A. began experimenting on humans with LSD, the agency continued to administer the drug to unsuspecting subjects for 10 more years, the Rockefeller Commission reported.

The agency's Inspector General learned of the practice, questioned the propriety of it, and called a halt, the commission said, but the C.I.A. did not finally abandon its test with these drugs for four more years. During that time, the subjects were allegedly informed volunteers at various correctional institutions.

The wife and three adult children of Mr. Olson, who for 22 years had been in the dark about the apparent motivating factors in his death, have taken the first steps toward suing the C.I.A. for what they call the "wrongful death" of the head of their family.

David Kairys, one of the lawyers for the Olsons, says his firm, Kairys & Rudovsky of Philadelphia, has also taken on the case of the survivors of a marine colonel who fatally shot himself nine years ago after a C.I.A. job interview in which he later said he believed he had been drugged.

The Army says it administered experimental drugs only to persons who had volunteered "without the intervention of any element of force, fraud, deceit, duress, over-reaching or other ulterior form of constraint or coercion." The volunteers, however, were rewarded with three-day passes every weekend and given an extra

\$45 a month in temporary duty pay.

The volunteers were told, the Army says, that they were being given a "chemical compound which might influence their behavior," but they were not told before or after the test the specific name of the drug, such as LSD, or that it might cause them to hallucinate or to feel panic or discomfort.

Follow-up studies were done on only a handful of the military men tested, an inquiry over the last three weeks shows, and there was no indication that the C.I.A. had conducted a followup on any of its subjects.

Concerned Over Validity

Dr. Marmor, the head of psychiatric association, said: "One might argue as to whether [The Army] had obtained informed consent, but if you tell the subject everything you might well invalidate the experi-

ment."

Dr. Van M. Sim, who was director of the Army's program of testing drugs on humans for 22 years, and is now being investigated for alleged misuse of the pain killing drug Demerol before he came to the military, used the same rationale in explaining his methods in a recent news conference, saying that to provide more information to subjects might prejudice the experiments.

Dr. Marmor said that in the Army tests there apparently had been "some consent and there was some prior knowledge. And that kind of preparation gives an individual some kind of protection. What I'm concerned about is an in-

dividual quite unsuspectingly given a drug."

Representative Thomas J. Downey, a Long Island Democrat who has called for a Congressional inquiry into the issue, says he finds it "inexcusable" that the Army did not tell its subjects what drug they had received after the experiments so that, in the event of aftereffects, they might have some sense of what was happening.

He is disturbed, too, that there has been no substantive follow-up of the Government test subjects.

Dr. Sim said in an interview at his home in Bel Air, Md., near the Edgewood arsenal, that on its own initiative the Army had done a follow-up in 1971 on two men who had received LSD, and 38 who had received other drugs, and had not been able to distinguish between those subjects and a control group that had received no drugs.

He said he had felt the sample was too small, and that he was not entirely confident about the follow-up techniques employed, but he said he didn't have at his disposal enough money or medical officers to expand and continue the follow-up "and nobody seemed particularly interested in this."

Dr. Sim said he and his staff had themselves taken all of the drugs being tested, and he said since neither he nor the others had experienced any troublesome aftereffects, "we didn't expect the other men to feel anything either."

In 1972, a retired Army lieutenant colonel, William R. Jordan, who said he had been

stricken with epilepsy a year after participating in an experiment with psychochemicals, asked that the Army do a follow-up on his test group of 34 men.

The Army initially turned the colonel down but later reversed itself after Senator Lawton Chiles of Florida wrote a letter in his behalf.

In the ensuing followup the Army said it was able to find only 27 of the 34 men. One had been killed in Vietnam, seven reportedly said they were not interested, and 19 were examined for two to five days each and finally given a clean bill of health.

The Army now says it will attempt to follow up on all of the servicemen it has given the drug, a total of 585 of the more than 3,000 men who participated in the over-all drug program.

Most of the others had received drugs that can cause hallucinations, but the Army said it had no plans to follow up on these men. Even in dealing with only about 600 men, Dr. Sim said he thought the effort would take years, and some Army doctors expressed skepticism that any meaningful results would be achieved.

The Army said it had no intention of attempting to get in touch with the approximately 900 civilians who were given LSD in Army-sponsored experiments at the University of Maryland, the University of Washington and the New York Psychiatric Institute.

The Air Force said it likewise was not planning to review the health of the 102 civilians who took LSD in stud-

ies it paid for at New York University, Duke University, the University of Minnesota, the Missouri Institute of Psychiatry at the University of Missouri in St. Louis, and the Baylor University College of Medicine at the Texas Medical Center in Houston.

In addition to those given LSD by the military and intelligence organizations, the National Institute of Mental Health said that it had conducted tests on more than 3,000 volunteers—prisoners, mental patients and other civilians—for 15 years ending in 1968 in an effort to determine the drug's medical value, particularly in treating psychiatric disorders and chronic alcoholism.

The Food and Drug Administration said its records showed that 170 research projects with LSD had been approved over the last 10 years, but that only six were currently under way at five institutions, including the Veterans Administration Hospital in Topeka, Kan.

The V.A. program, according to officials of the agency, involves an average of two carefully selected mental patients a year, The Associated Press reported yesterday. The patients have been hospitalized for long periods and have not responded to other treatment, the V.A.

said.

Other Tests Listed

The other research, a spokesman said, is being done at the Vista Hill Psychiatric Foundation in San Francisco, the Medical College of Birmingham in Birmingham, Ala., the Langley Porter Neuropsychiatric Institute in San Francisco and the Maryland Psychiatric Institute in Baltimore, which has two projects.

Dr. Sim said he knew of no cases in which participants in the program he directed at the Edgewood Arsenal in northeast Maryland had suffered serious consequences, nor had he heard of any adverse reports concerning the subjects in the experiments carried out for the military at universities and research centers.

However, the Rockefeller Commission said that in a number of instances, subjects in the C.I.A. experiments became ill for hours or days after being given the drug and that one person had been hospitalized.

The commission said the details of the hospitalization and many other aspects of the C.I.A.'s drug testing could not be learned because all of the records concerning the program—a total of 152 separate files—had been ordered destroyed in 1973.

Commission sources say that the chief of the C.I.A. drug testing program, Dr. Sidney Gottlieb, a 57-year-old biochemist who was personally involved in the fatal experiment in 1953, ordered the destruction of the records in an apparent effort to conceal the details of possibly illegal action. Dr. Gottlieb is reportedly in India.

Psychochemicals Defended

Arguing in favor of using psychochemicals as offensive weapons in 1959, Maj. Gen. Marshall Stubbs, the then chief chemical officer of the Army, wrote in the October issue of The Army Navy Air Force Journal:

"We know the concept is feasible because we have run tests using a psychochemical on squad-sized units of soldier volunteers. They became confused, irresponsible, and were unable to carry out their missions. However, these were only temporary effects with complete recovery in all cases."

The Army says it never prepared large quantities of LSD for offensive use and that it discontinued experiments with the drug in 1967 because "all necessary work to define the chemical warfare threat from this compound" had been completed. Several other military sources, however, said the Army stopped work with the drug because its effects were regarded as too unpredictable.

A few years earlier, the Army adopted a psychochemical that it calls BZ as its standard incapacitant, and a department spokesman said that bombs filled with the agent are now stockpiled at the Pine Bluff arsenal in Arkansas. So far, the

Army says, BZ, whose chemical name is 3-quinuclidinyl benzilate, has been used only in experiments. Like LSD, BZ is a derivative of lysergic acid.

An Army training manual lists the symptoms caused by BZ as dry, flushed skin, urinary retention, constipation, headache, giddiness, hallucination, drowsiness and, sometimes, maniacal behavior. Also, researchers say loss of balance and inability to stand or walk are common.

Dr. Sim said that most of the military drug testing took place at the Edgewood Arsenal in laboratory conditions, after the subjects—mostly soldiers, but also some airmen—had gone through a week of medical, psychological and psychiatric examinations.

But he said that he and staff members had also done field testing with military volunteers at several installations in the United States.

In the United States last week to attend a scientific meeting, Dr. Albert Hofmann, the Swiss chemist who accidentally discovered the hallucinogenic effects of LSD in 1943, said he had begun working with lysergic acid, in hopes of developing a stimulant for circulation. He was unhappy, he said, that LSD had ever been considered as a tool of war.

"I had intended to prepare a medicine," Dr. Hoffman said, "not a weapon."