

C.I.A. Views on Use
Of Poison Reported
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WASHINGTON, Sept. 10 — The Senate Select Committee on Intelligence has evidence that the Central Intelligence Agency considered "operational use" of the shellfish poison kept in its laboratory, including making suicide pills for agents and "aggressive actions," sources familiar with the events said today.

The poison, these sources said, was kept in a laboratory of the technical services division of the C.I.A., which in 1970 was under the command of Dr. Sidney Gottlieb, the man who conducted LSD experiments for the agency. The

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Senate investigators are expected to interview Dr. Gottlieb in closed session later this week.

Meanwhile, a prominent pharmacologist, Dr. Murdoch Ritchie of Yale University, has asked the agency and the Senate Committee the agency and the Senate Committee to prevent the destruction of the shellfish poison on the ground that it could be extremely valuable for medical research. He said the poison was similar to one once mentioned in the James Bond books by Ian Fleming.

The poison, called saxitoxin, has properties that make it rare and extremely valuable for research on such nervous system diseases as multiple sclerosis, Dr. Ritchie said.

One of the Deadliest

Dr. Ritchie said he believed the C.I.A.'s "saxitoxin" was part of a batch prepared by the Army at the Edgewood Arsenal in Maryland in the nineteen-sixties. He said that it was one of the deadliest poisons known to mankind, but added that because of its value to medical research, "it would be criminal to destroy this material."

Dr. Ritchie contended that careful controls could be worked out to keep the poison from misuse. He said saxitoxin, which is distilled from butter clams, is similar to tetro-

dotoxin, a poison made by the Japanese from puffer fish. The puffer fish poison was mentioned in James Bond novels, he said.

After President Nixon ordered the destruction of chemical and bacteriological weapons in 1969, following the signing of an international treaty limiting biochemical warfare, it became virtually impossible for medical researchers to obtain saxitoxin, Dr. Ritchie said. The commercially manufactured Japanese poison is not as good for research, he said.

Intelligence sources said that there was some documentary evidence to indicate that over the years the intelligence agency "at least considered" using the shellfish poison. The agency also maintained a supply of cobra venom.

Too Fast for Antidote

One potential use of the shellfish poison, because it is one of the fastest acting poisons, was to make suicide pills so that United States agents might be able to kill themselves after being caught, sources said. The poison acts so swiftly, these sources said, that the agents' captors would have no time to administer an antidote.

Other intelligence sources, however, said that there were memorandums suggesting "aggressive actions" in which the shellfish poison could be used. They would not elaborate.

There were also indications that the agency had materials for such uses as disabling guard dogs at a foreign embassy without killing them. This would aid the agency in entering and leaving a premise guarded by dogs without the owner's knowing the intrusion had been made.

The Senate Committee, under the chairmanship of Senator Frank Church, Democrat of Idaho, is investigating why these two poisons were not destroyed by the agency following the Presidential order in 1969. According to intelligence sources, though Dr. Gottlieb headed the division where the materials were retained there was "no implication" that he had violated the order and had them preserved.

Seek Information Order

Senate investigators are seeking to learn, intelligence sources said, whether Dr. Gottlieb could shed any light on how the Presidential order was handled at the agency.

Mr. Church said that in addition to the cobra and shellfish poisons, the C.I.A. had hoarded large quantities of other dangerous chemicals. These may figure in the hearings next week.

Earlier today, the House Select Committee on Intelligence called an unexpected meeting and voted to subpoena briefing papers given to Presidents Lyndon Johnson and Richard Nixon on the eve of

major international crises.

Representative Otis Pike, Democrat of Suffolk, the committee chairman, said he was seeking copies of intelligence briefings given to the President and to officials at lower levels in the weeks prior to the 1968 Tet offensive in South Vietnam, the 1973 Arab-Israeli war, the 1974 Cyprus crisis and last year's military coup in Portugal.