

Army Nerve Tests Until '74 Reported

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By JOSEPH B. TREASTER

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WASHINGTON, Sept. 12—

The former chief of the Army's drug testing program disclosed today that the Army was experimenting on soldiers with a potent, incapacitating psychochemical known as BZ until as recently as late last year. As in the Army's LSD tests, he said, the subjects were never told what they were to receive or exactly how it might affect them.

The sworn testimony of Dr. Van M. Sim, at a joint hearing of two Senate subcommittees looking into drug experimentation by the military and the Central Intelligence Agency, contradicted Army spokesmen who have been saying that the Army's experiments with BZ were discontinued in 1964, when the drug was formally made a part of the service's arsenal.

In a closed session late this afternoon, Army officials reportedly disclosed to the Senators details of two Army intelligence corps tests in which LSD was used in "actual interrogation situations."

These experiments are believed to have been conducted in Indochina, but Senator Edward M. Kennedy, chairman of both subcommittees, refused to confirm this. He would only say that the experiments had taken place in the early nineteen-sixties and that the subjects had not been American soldiers.

Earlier this week, Army officials disclosed that the Army had conducted several tests on soldiers with LSD for intelligence purposes between 1958 and 1962.

'Too Unpredictable'

Dr. Sim estimated that since 1967, from 2,100 to 2,800 soldiers had been given BZ, which attacks the nervous system, usually causing dizziness, blurring of vision, vomiting, and finally immobility. The symptoms can last from two hours to as long as four days, depending upon how much of the drug is administered.

The formal scientific name of BZ is 3-quinuclidinyl Benzilate. Dr. Sim said seven variations of the formula were tested in the seven years ending in 1974.

Just as in the LSD experiments, which the Army says ended in 1967 with the conclusion that the drug was "too unpredictable" for military use, the soldiers given BZ were told only that they would "be taking a drug that would affect [their] behavior," Dr. Sim told the Senators.

In the Army form on which the soldiers gave their written consent to take part in the tests, they were told that they might experience "transitory discomfort."

Dr. Sim said that while such



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Dr. Van M. Sim at Senate hearing yesterday.

soldiers spent several days in the testing program and were exposed to several drugs that might have dramatically different effects they had signed only one consent form.

Senator Kennedy said the procedures outlined did not seem like "adequate warning," and noted that even after the experiments with BZ, LSD and other drugs the soldiers were not told what they had received.

"They have really no idea. If they get depressed or have flashbacks or other symptoms, they would not be able to trace them back to your center," the Massachusetts Democrat told Dr. Sim. "They're just loose someplace out there in the country."

Since the early nineteen-fifties, nearly 7,000 soldiers and airmen have been through the Army's drug testing program. In addition to psychochemicals, they have been exposed to nerve and tear gases, barbiturates, tranquilizers and alcohol. But follow-up studies have been done on only a handful of the men.

No Funds for Follow-Up

"We did not have the money and the people to do the type follow-up we felt necessary," Dr. Sim said.

"Are you saying," Mr. Kennedy asked with a rough edge in his voice, "that it has been Army policy to engage in a drug testing program that can have the most dangerous effects—mental and physical—and they don't have the money to follow-up?"

Dr. Sim said follow-up studies had so far been ordered for only the 585 servicemen who the Army says were given LSD—and that order came only after public attention was foc-

used on the drug program this summer.

Dr. Sim conceded that he had not asked for the money to finance adequate follow-ups, but promised Senator Kennedy he would do so now.

Queried On Deaths

At one point, in response to a question, Dr. Sim said there had been no deaths in the program involving soldiers. But Senator Kennedy persisted, asking how the doctor could know that for certain, since there had been virtually no follow-up. "That's a good question," Dr. Sim replied, "a very good question."

In addition to the soldiers in the tests, Dr. Sim said the Army had tested BZ and other chemical compounds on 100 to 200 prisoners each year.

The Army suspended its drug testing program in late July, under mounting criticism and an investigation was begun by the Inspector General. At the same time, Dr. Sim was suspended as head of the program amid allegations that he had improperly prescribed the pain-killing drug Demerol for himself several years before he went to work for the Army in 1954.

BZ has been stockpiled in aerial bombs at the Pe Bluff Arsenal in Pine Bluff, Ark., since 1964. The Army says that so far it has only been used in experimentation.

Earlier this week, Army officials had said that they had been unable to learn any of the details of the drug testing program and that it appeared that many Army guidelines had been ignored, implying, it seemed, that any shortcomings in the program were the fault of Dr. Sim.

Dr. Sim indicated, however, that he had provided his superiors with full information about activities at his laboratory at the Edgewood Arsenal in Maryland. He said he had not only filed detailed monthly reports but also had met with the Surgeon General of the Army four times a year.

Lieut. Gen. Richard R. Taylor, the Surgeon General of the Army, told the Senators earlier that although Army regulations required that authorization for experiments with humans be granted by the Secretary of the Army, he had not been able to find documentation of permission for the LSD testing until three years after it had begun.

Dr. Sim countered under oath today that permission had been requested and granted before any experiment was conducted, listing dates and projects as proof. He said he had gone through the chain of command, up to the Secretary of the Army and on down.