

Spy Report Tells of Secret LSD Tests

Washington

Intelligence officials secretly tested LSD on perhaps hundreds of persons over a ten-year period, a practice which resulted in "massive abridgements of the rights of American citizens, sometimes with tragic consequences," the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence Activities reported yesterday.

Describing a larger drug-experimentation program than was previously known, Senate investigators said the intelligence community had ignored legal and medical ethics and had shown "a fundamental disregard for the value of human life."

Aiming the sharpest criticism of its report at covert drug tests by the Central Intelligence Agency and the Army, the committee said at least two Americans had died and untold others may have been affected.

But because most drug-testing records were destroyed by the CIA in 1973, the identity of many subjects and the exact scope of the drug program remain unknown, the panel said.

"While some controlled testing of these substances might be defended, the nature of the tests, their scale, and the fact that they were continued for years after the danger of surreptitious administration of LSD to unwitting individuals was known, demonstrate a fundamental disregard for the value of human life," the committee said.

The drug subjects — some consenting and some unsuspecting — included U.S. scientists and soldiers, psychiatric patients, prison inmates, drug peddlers and even random Americans found drinking in bars, the investigation showed.

In detailing the CIA's principal LSD-testing program, code named MKULTRA, the committee told how some unsuspecting bar patrons were given dangerous drugs:

"The individual conducting the test might make initial contact with a prospective subject selected at random in a bar.

"He would then invite the person to a 'safehouse' (a secure home or apartment) where the test

drug was administered to the subject through drink or in food. CIA personnel might debrief the individual conducting the test, or observe the test by using a one-way mirror and tape recorder in an adjoining room."

The committee cited an internal CIA memo in 1963 that reported that many of these persons became ill "for hours or days, including hospitalization in at least one case ... The agent could only follow up by guarded inquiry after the test subject's return to normal life."

Sharply criticizing this program, the Senate committee said: "Prior consent was obviously not obtained from any of the subjects. There was also, obviously, no medical pre-screening. In addition, the tests were conducted by individuals who were not qualified scientific observers."

As part of the same CIA program, officials of the National Institute of Mental Health administered hallucinogenic drugs to narcotics addicts who were being treated at the Lexington, Ky., federal rehabilitation center, the report said.

In this instance, the inmate volunteers took a brief physical exam and signed general consent forms, the committee said.

"As a reward for participation in the program, the addicts were provided with the drug of their addiction," it added.

The committee said further that it was "not clear whether individuals in prisons, mental, narcotics and general hospitals can provide 'informed consent' to participation in experiments such as these."

As the result of an investigation in 1963 by the CIA's inspector general, the use of unwitting subjects in drug tests virtually came to a halt, the committee said.

The committee pointed out — as disclosed in official reports last year — that two Americans had died in 1953 from similar drug tests. They were Frank Olson, an Army

scientist who committed suicide two weeks after LSD was slipped into his drink, and Harold Blauer, a New York psychiatric patient who died of circulatory collapse and heart failure following injection of a synthetic mescaline derivative.

Former CIA director Richard Helms, while he was assistant deputy director for plans in 1953, first proposed the CIA's controversial MKULTRA program, the report said.

Twenty years later — in January, 1973 — Helms ordered Dr. Sidney Gottlieb, chief of the CIA's technical services division, to destroy the MKULTRA records, the committee said. This occurred about the time Helms was leaving the CIA to become U.S. ambassador to Iran, a post he still holds.

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