

Senate Panel to Focus on Abuses Linked to C.I.A. Drug Testing

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The following article is based on reporting by John M. Crewdson and Jo Thomas. It was written by Mr. Crewdson.

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WASHINGTON, Sept. 19—A Senate subcommittee reportedly has concluded that of the scores of scientific projects undertaken by the Central Intelligence Agency in its 25-year quest for control of the human mind none represented a greater potential abuse of governmental authority or medical ethics than the agency's testing of LSD-25 and other psychochemicals on unsuspecting subjects.

After an examination of the sparse public record and a score of interviews with past and present Federal officials and others, some new details have emerged of the agency's highly secretive and long-running drug-testing program, the advisability of which seemed uncertain to the agency itself at times.

The new details include an unusual relationship between the C.I.A. and a senior narcotics official—a relationship that was not known to at least one Commissioner of Narcotics.

C.I.A. 'Safehouses' Used

Documents made public by the C.I.A. thus far contain scant information about the experiments, part of a larger operation known by the cryptonym MK Ultra, and the documents have raised more questions than they have answered.

Tomorrow, the Senate Subcommittee on Health and Scientific Research, headed by Senator Edward M. Kennedy, will begin two days of hearings that the panel

hopes will illuminate the C.I.A.'s oblique references to "realistic tests of certain development items not suited to ordinary laboratory facilities."

The documents show that the tests were carried out in New York City and San Francisco between 1953 and 1966, in C.I.A. "safehouses," mainly apartments and motel rooms, that were secretly rented for the agency by an official of the old Federal Bureau of Narcotics, since supplanted by the Drug Enforcement Administration.

Prostitutes, perhaps men as well as women, may have been employed to lure the subjects to the safehouses, where they were offered cocktails laced with various chemicals while unseen C.I.A. officials observed, photographed and recorded their reactions.

Charter Violations Hinted

Several questions remain unresolved, and among them these stand out: How many individuals were subjected to the tests? Were the C.I.A. operatives who slipped them the drugs trained in their proper use? Were qualified medical personnel on hand in the event of an adverse reaction, and did any occur?

Was any attempt made beforehand to insure that the subjects were in good physical and psychological health? Were

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follow-up examinations conducted afterward to determine whether any harm to the victims had resulted?

Were the C.I.A. safehouses used, as some officials have suggested, to introduce foreign intelligence agents into compromising situations, something that would have directly violated the C.I.A.'s charter prohibiting domestic operations?

And most important, why did the C.I.A. continue its inherently risky tests of psychochemicals on what the agency termed "unwitting" subjects after the 1953 death of Frank Olson, an Army scientist who developed a psychotic reaction and committed suicide after having been given a glass of liqueur that he did not know contained LSD?

The Kennedy subcommittee's search for answers has been difficult, hampered by the C.I.A.'s destruction in 1973 of a large portion of the MK Ultra documents and by the intervening deaths of several of the project's key figures, especially George H. White, the flamboyant Federal narcotics official who served as liaison to the C.I.A. testing program.

But not all of those deeply involved in the safehouse project are dead, and tomorrow the Kennedy subcommittee will hear from Sidney Gottlieb, the man to whom Mr. White reported and, at the time he retired in 1973, the chief of the C.I.A.'s technical services division, with administrative responsibility for MK Ultra.

Top-Secret Operation

MK Ultra and its predecessor projects, code-named Bluebird and Artichoke, were among the most sensitive intelligence operations ever undertaken by this country.

Extraordinary measures were adopted to insure that hostile nations remained unaware of their parameters, and the C.I.A.'s concern about adverse reaction at home, both within the scientific com-

munity and without, led it to disguise its role as the source of funding, and to misstate the true intention of some of the research projects and, in a few cases, to mislead the researchers themselves about the beneficiary of their work.

Not all of the agency's drug testing took place in its elaborately equipped New York and San Francisco safehouses. Under the aegis of MK Ultra, a number of substances, including psychedelic mushrooms, mescaline, marijuana and amphetamines were tested on humans under a variety of conditions.

Prisoners were used as subjects, as were drug addicts, hospital patients, Army enlisted men, college students and, in one instance on which the Kennedy subcommittee is also expected to focus, a group of "sexual psychopaths" at Michigan's Iona State Hospital.

A Problem of Supplies

In the early 1950's, when the C.I.A. first became interested in the properties of the newly developed LSD and other relatively exotic substances, the agency was faced at once with the problems of how to obtain such chemicals and how to determine their effect on individuals who were unaware, as the target of an intelligence operation would be, that they had just ingested some.

For assistance the C.I.A. turned to George White, a senior official in the Bureau of Narcotics who had a wartime intelligence background as a lieutenant colonel. Mr. White was described by one former colleague as "sort of a curiosity in law-enforcement" and by another as a "maverick."

An outspoken man who never lost the affection for publicity he first acquired as a youthful newspaper reporter in California, Mr. White alternately distressed his superiors with his bluntness and impressed them with the superb police work of which he was capable.

'Wouldn't Poison Friends'

One longtime friend, who asked that he not be identified, recalled that while the C.I.A. experiments were under way Mr. White once showed him some glass ampules filled with a clear liquid that had come from a Swiss pharmaceutical concern.

Mr. White, the friend said, told him that he had slipped some of the liquid into cocktails at a drinking session with two men of his acquaintance, but that it was "a minimal dose—he wouldn't try to poison his friends."

According to Mr. White's papers, now in the possession of a small California college, the C.I.A. sought to enlist his cooperation in a most unusual way, proposing that he continue his service with the Bureau of Narcotics but enter into a formal, though secret relationship with the agency as a "consultant."

Though his diaries make it clear that he readily agreed to the proposal from Sidney Gottlieb that he sign on as a C.I.A. consultant, it took almost a year before the arrangements were complete.

"A couple of crew-cut, pipe-smoking punks," he wrote later, "had either known me or heard of me during the O.S.S. days and had decided I was 'too rough' for their league and promptly blackballed me."

"It was only when my sponsors discovered the root of the trouble they were able to bypass the blockade. After all, fellas, I didn't go to Princeton."

In another letter in the files, Mr. White suggested that only the late Harry J. Anslinger, then the Commissioner of Narcotics, and various Secretaries of the Treasury had known of his C.I.A. connection.

Inspector General's Report

A report by the C.I.A.'s Inspector General on the drug-testing program made public last year contained a similar suggestion but indicated that Mr. Anslinger was prepared to deny any involvement by his bureau if the existence of the testing program ever became known.

Asked in a recent telephone interview about Mr. White's C.I.A. affiliation, Henry L. Giordano, who succeeded Mr. Anslinger as commissioner, insisted, "I didn't know, and I don't think Anslinger knew."

Mr. Giordano, who retired from the Government in 1968, said he would have been angry if he had discovered the rela-

tionship. "Cooperation is one thing," he said, "but working for someone else while you're working for your own agency is another."

Most of the narcotics agents who worked under Mr. White in New York and San Francisco while the drug-testing programs were under way have said that they, too, were unaware of his dual affiliation, though some said they had suspected it.

It appears from the White diaries that one who may have known something was Jean Pierre Lafitte, a near-legendary police informant and "special employee" of the narcotics bureau who once was dis-

patched by Mr. White to Washington to be interviewed by the C.I.A.

Mr. Lafitte, who was instrumental in developing a number of noteworthy criminal cases for the Bureau of Narcotics, the F.B.I. and other Federal agencies, also appears to have played a role in helping Mr. White to establish the \$215-a-month apartment first used by the C.I.A. for the drug experiments in a six-story red brick building at 81 Bedford Street in a quiet section of Greenwich village.

Mr. Lafitte, a short, chunky man who speaks with a thick French accent, was known to the agents as "the pirate."

One man who knew Mr. Lafitte 20 years ago recalled that the informant had once described for him in detail the apartment at 81 Bedford Street, including its extensive collection of electronic listening devices, although he did not say whether he knew that it was being used by the C.I.A. for drug testing.

Mr. Lafitte, now living under another name in a New England city that he does not want disclosed, said in an interview that although he had worked closely with Mr. White on a number of important narcotics cases, he had never knowingly spoken with or worked for anyone from the C.I.A. and had never known about the Greenwich Village apartment or the drug tests that were conducted there.

Mr. White referred to his "Jekyll-Hyde" existence as a C.I.A. consultant code-named "Morgan Hall" in New York City in 1953 and 1954. In that period he spent much of his time opening bank accounts under pseudonyms for the C.I.A., paying the apartment's rent and utility bills and having electronic listening devices installed and removed.

Shift to San Francisco

When in early 1955 he was transferred by the narcotics bureau to San Francisco, his C.I.A. contract and his identity as Morgan Hall went with him.

The apartment on Bedford Street was sublet to two young women and another apartment was opened by the C.I.A. in its place—a \$160-a-month studio at 105 West 13th Street in a building that has since been torn down and replaced by another.

Like the earlier apartment in New York City and the ones that Mr. White would subsequently arrange for in San Francisco, the 13th Street apartment was used on occasion for business or parties, including one to celebrate the breaking of the "French connection" case by the Bureau of Narcotics during lulls in the C.I.A.'s drug experiments.

Purportedly owned by a man in the import-export business, the 13th Street apartment, according to some narcotics agents who visited it, looked on the surface like a place where a globetrotting businessman might live. According to C.I.A. documents, it remained in use until 1966.

There were books on the shelves, ashes in the ashtrays, food in the refrigerator and even suits of clothes hanging in the closets although, in the words of one former agent, "unless you were blind in one eye like James Joyce" it was difficult not to notice that they were badly worn and of varying sizes, picked up as a hurried afterthought by an agent in a second-hand clothing store.

Much Electrical Wiring

Like most of the other safehouses, the apartment on 13th Street was fitted out with a system of microphones and tape recorders—"So wired," in the words of a former agent, "that if you spilled a glass of water you'd probably electrocute

yourself."

In the middle of one wall was a see-through oil painting that permitted the C.I.A. observers standing in an adjoining apartment to see and photograph the unwitting subjects, who were also being heard and tape-recorded, as they consumed their chemical-laden drinks.

According to Mr. Giordano, the former narcotics commissioner, Mr. White was assisted in setting up the C.I.A.'s California safehouses by Charles Siragusa, another narcotics official who eventually became Mr. Giordano's deputy.

"White and Siragusa had set up those places," Mr. Giordano said. "I know the C.I.A. was using them because we could only use them when they weren't."

Mr. Siragusa, who as a Washington-based narcotics official was the bureau's official liaison with the C.I.A., said in an interview that he, too, had been called to testify before the Kennedy subcommittee tomorrow.

The White diaries show that, in addition to Mr. Gottlieb, other C.I.A. officials and research consultants, including Robert V. Lashbrook, one of Mr. Gottlieb's aides, Dr. James A. Hamilton, a San Francisco psychiatrist, and John E. Gittinger, a professional psychologist working for the agency, were occasional visitors to the safehouses in San Francisco.

Mr. Gittinger testified before the Kennedy subcommittee last month and Mr. Lashbrook, a biochemist, who was with Frank Olson shortly before he died, is scheduled to appear tomorrow.

The first safehouse opened by Morgan Hall, atop San Francisco's Telegraph Hill, had a stunning view of the Golden Gate and San Francisco Bay. Ira C. Feldman, who worked in the 1950's as a narcotics agent there, recalled in an interview that he had frequently been dispatched by Mr. White to pick up visiting C.I.A. officials at the airport and take them to the apartment.

Many Visits by Officials

Mr. Feldman, the tough-looking former narcotics agent with a penchant for flashy clothes and long cigars who specialized in his years with the bureau in playing the role of an out-of-town mobster, said that Mr. Gottlieb and the other C.I.A. officials "were in and out of there like flies."

"I picked them all up," Mr. Feldman recalled. "The only guy I didn't pick up was Hamilton, because he was already in San Francisco."

In contrast to the drably furnished safehouses in New York, the first San Francisco apartment was scintillating, its walls hung with reproductions of paintings by Toulouse-Lautrec (the name by which Mr. Feldman, who is barely 5 feet tall, was known to some of his colleagues) and animal skins, the furniture draped with black velvet and the bay windows covered with yellow draperies.

Godfrey K. Waters, the owner of the Telegraph Hill building at the time and a friend of Colonel White's, has since died. But his nephew Sandy, who manages a wine shop near San Francisco, said he had once been told by his uncle's wife that one of the apartments in the building was being used for "undercover work" by the Government.

Mr. Walters, who was a young boy at the time, remembered having been disappointed that no arrests or gun battles had ever taken place in the building. "Whatever they did there," he said, "they did nicely and quietly."

The only indication so far of what went

on inside the apartment is contained in a C.I.A. document that refers to the conduct of "experiments involving the covert administration of psychologically active materials to unwitting subjects."

"They just looked in the door and saw all the decorations straight out of Playboy magazine," the man said, "and figured they must have come to the right place."

Fluency in Languages

Mr. Feldman, who associates say became a favorite of Mr. White's in part because he was fluent in six languages including Chinese, a useful skill in San Francisco, was described by one man who knew him as having played the tough-guy role to the hilt, "always standing around

picking his fingernails with a big switchblade knife."

But Mr. Feldman said that although he and Mr. White had been close, he had never known of his superior's work for the C.I.A., although "you didn't have to be an Einstein to realize that the guy had to be something else besides a district supervisor, O.K.?"

Mr. Feldman, who declined to say whether he was still with the Government—"for all you know I still am, O.K.?"—said it had been something of an open secret among his fellow agents that the C.I.A. was paying for the apartment, although for what purpose remained a mystery.

The narcotics bureau, he said, was perpetually short of funds. "Sometimes we didn't even have gas for our cars," he said. "We'd sit around and say, 'Who's paying for the booze?' You start to put things together, O.K.?"

Resentment About Drugs

Although he chuckled over what he termed the naivete of the C.I.A.—"LSD will no sooner work as a truth drug than an aspirin," he said—Mr. Feldman expressed a sentiment shared by other narcotics agents who have recently learned about Mr. White's involvement with the C.I.A., a resentment that while they had been working long hours to keep illicit drugs out of circulation another arm of the Government had been freely dispensing them under their noses.

Still, Mr. Feldman said, he could understand in retrospect the C.I.A.'s interest in exploring the frontiers of biochemical research at a time when it was presumed that the Soviet Union was making progress in that field. "When you're working in the garden," he said, "you got to get some dirt under your fingernails, O.K.?"

In 1956, Mr. Feldman put together a major narcotics case using the Telegraph Hill, apartment as a cover. The C.I.A., deciding that the apartment had been "burned" as a secure location for its drug experiments, moved the testing program to a secluded house in Mill Valley, Calif., across the Golden Gate Bridge in affluent Marin County.

That house was owned by Page Secor, a merchant marine officer with a top secret clearance who was working under contract to the Navy. Mr. Secor said in an interview that he had spent a long period of time away from home in Bikini Atoll during the testing program of the hydrogen bomb and in Alaska while the DEW radar system was under construction and that he had rented the house during his absence.

Mr. Secor said that he had never had any connection with United States intelligence and that the house had been rented in 1959 through a local realtor to Mr. White, who he said he had never met.

When he returned from sea after about

a year, Mr. Secor said, his neighbors regaled him with stories of the "wild parties" that had taken place there, attended by "men with shoulder holsters running in and out."

Just a Recreation Place

He said he had assumed that the house had been used as "just sort of a rest and recreation place for the agents" and that his only complaint was that Mr. White had "walked off with some of my furniture" when he departed.

From the house in Mill Valley, which the C.I.A. had disliked because of its inaccessibility, the drug experiments were moved to the Plantation Inn, a small, plain-looking motel in San Francisco's Marina District near the entrance to the Golden Gate Bridge.

The Plantation Inn, which advertises itself as "very quiet," was owned during that period by John E. Milonas, a prominent San Francisco lawyer. Mr. Milonas said that Mr. White had been a tenant of his "for several years" but that he had never inquired into what the rented rooms were used for.

"He paid his rent," Mr. Milonas said, adding that he could shed no light on an entry in Mr. White's diary for Oct. 19, 1961 that refers to an afternoon meeting at the Plantation Inn of the "civil liberties and rubber hose society."



United Press International

Adm. Stansfield Turner, director of Central Intelligence, arriving at Senate intelligence panel session yesterday. He has termed agency's drug experiments "abhorrent."