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CIA Ignored Orders About LSD

Washington

Central Intelligence Agency agents apparently ignored orders and warnings from senior intelligence agency officials when they ran an LSD experiment that caused the 1953 suicide of civilian Army scientist Frank R. Olson, according to CIA files on the case.

The documents were released Saturday by Olson's family. The CIA was ordered to make the documents available to the family last July by President Ford after it was revealed that the CIA kept the circumstances of Olson's death secret from the family for 22 years.

The documents show that six months before Olson's death, Richard Helms, then a senior CIA official under Director Allen Dulles, warned at a staff meeting of agency officers that LSD was "dynamite" and that he (Helms)

should be consulted before it was used by agents.

Not long after Helms' warning another top CIA official, Frank Wisner, who was then the agency's deputy director for plans, sent out a memo to the technical services staff ordering that the drug not be used without his permission.

Excerpts from the diary of the CIA's inspector general at the time of Olson's death show that Wisner and Helms denied knowing anything about the experiment

Neither official was notified, according to the records, before three agents from the technical services staff, with the approval of senior staff officials, slipped LSD to a group of seven unwitting Army researchers, including Olson, who were gathered at a meeting set up by the CIA in

western Maryland.

Nine days after the incident, Olson jumped to his death from a tenth-floor New York City hotel room. The scientist had suffered a mental breakdown, which was caused by the LSD experiment, according to the CIA records.

The files also indicate that at least one top CIA official, the agency's general counsel, Lawrence R. Houston, sharply criticized the agents' handling of the experiment.

In a memo to the CIA's inspector general, who was conducting an investigation into Olson's suicide, Houston noted that the technical services staff and the agents who ran the experiment failed to take "normal and reasonable precautions."

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