

MEMORANDUM

October 26, 1995

To: Jeremy Gunn
cc: Mary McAuliffe

From: Manuel E. Legaspi and Robert J. Skwirot

Subject: **MKULTRA**

INTRODUCTION

Of all the indiscretions uncovered by the Congressional investigations into intelligence activities of the 1970s, perhaps the most troubling involved CIA forays into the area of behavioral control. These programs were initiated in 1950 as an attempt to counter suspected Communist gains in mind control techniques, and primarily involved the production of chemical and biological methods to control human behavior in support of clandestine operations.¹ It was felt that the development of new techniques could revolutionize strategies regarding the control and manipulation of agents. However, while the ends may have been driven by legitimate concerns, the means employed raised serious ethical and legal questions. Fueled by a desire to gain every edge in the intelligence game, the Technical Services Staff of the CIA essentially ignored these questions and felt free to utilize dubious tactics in the research and testing of various chemical and biological agents, including LSD.

HISTORY

¹United States Congress. 94th Congress, Second Session. Senate Select Committee to Study Governmental Operations with Respect to Intelligence Activities (The Church Committee), Final Report, Book I, p. 390, April 26, 1976.

MKULTRA originated from concepts based on the CIA's initial research program into chemical and biological methods, BLUEBIRD. Later renamed ARTICHOKE, this first program dealt primarily with improving of interrogation and control techniques.² In 1953, a proposal from Assistant to the Deputy Director for Plans (ADDP) Richard Helms to DCI Allen Dulles outlined a broader program of research into the "use of chemical and biological agents in altering human behavior." The proposal was approved by Dulles in April 1953, and project MKULTRA was born. In line with this broader mandate, as MKULTRA evolved, investigations into additional means of behavioral control were also examined, including the use of radiation and electroshock techniques. Additionally, another procedure (MKDELTA) was created to control the use of MKULTRA experiments abroad.³

From its inception, MKULTRA was treated with a very high level of sensitivity. The secrecy in which this program was treated was not only due to normal security concerns, but also because there was a realization on the CIA's part that the disclosure of experimental practices could lead to embarrassment and even criminal sanctions against the agency and its associates.⁴ These practices ranged from the unwitting use of domestic research organizations to the use of human test subjects, one of whom (Dr. Frank Olson) committed suicide as a result of the improper administration of LSD by CIA staff members.

An Inspector General's survey of the entire Technical Services Division in 1963 uncovered the wide range of abuses and recommended much tighter institutional control over the program. The end result was a significant decrease in funding until the project was terminated in the late 1960's. However, continued concerns over the compromise of information led to the destruction of many relevant files in 1973, by Sidney Gottlieb, working on the orders of then-DCI Richard Helms.⁵

INVESTIGATIONS

²Bluebird/Artichoke was first run by the Office of Scientific Intelligence, later by the Inspection and Security Office, and often relied on other divisions within the CIA for technical assistance. According to the Church Committee, there was little information on Bluebird/Artichoke after 1953. The CIA insists that the program was terminated in 1956. Church Report, p. 388.

³Church Committee, Final Report, p.390.

⁴Church Committee, Final Report, p. 392.

⁵Church Committee, Final Report, pp. 389, 392.

A number of Congressional investigations in the 1970s investigated project MKULTRA as part of their work. Joint hearings on Biomedical and Behavioral Research⁶, 1975, chaired by Sen. Edward Kennedy (Mass.), probed human experimentation programs conducted by the Department of Defense and the Central Intelligence Agency. The Church Committee 1975-76, as part of its wide ranging investigation of foreign and military intelligence, examined the testing and use of chemical and biological agents by the intelligence community. Additionally, a joint hearing before the Select Committee on Intelligence with Sen. Daniel K. Inouye (Hawaii) as chair focused on project MKULTRA. These inquiries exposed the abuses of the project and can now serve as a reliable resource for information and documentation⁷.

The Kennedy Committee report includes many of the surviving documents of the MKULTRA program, including those which probed the Frank Olson suicide and the Inspector General's 26 July 1963 report to the DCI. From this wealth of information it is worth noting that the Department of Defense was in liaison with the CIA in drug experimentation. The Army, Navy, and Air Force used human volunteer subjects in such studies. The Navy, in particular, cooperated with CIA in drug experimentation through the Office of Naval Research.⁸ CIA also worked with the Bureau of Narcotics from 1953-1963 giving drugs such as LSD to unwitting subjects from all social levels. CIA departments involved in the MKULTRA program included the Office of Technical Services, the Office of Research and Development, the Office of Scientific Intelligence, and the Office of Security.

The Church Committee's investigation produced a well-documented history of MKULTRA which cited many of the exhibits included in the Kennedy Committee's report. It harshly criticized the program and "the command and control procedures within the Central Intelligence Agency and military intelligence" and questioned "the relationships among the intelligence agencies, other governmental agencies, and private institutions and individuals."⁹ The report notes, for example, that "even DCI McCone was not briefed on all the details of the program involving the surreptitious administration of LSD until 1963."¹⁰ MKULTRA charged forward without administrative checks. Helms' 1953 proposal for the project called for 6% of the research and development of TSD to be expended "without the establishment of formal contractual relations."¹¹ As the 1963 Inspector

⁶ United States Congress. 94th Congress, First Session. *Biomedical and Behavioral Research*. Joint Hearings before the Subcommittee on Health of the Committee on Labor and Public Welfare and the Subcommittee on Administrative Practice and Procedure of the Committee on the Judiciary. September 10, 12; and November 7, 1975.

⁷ United States Congress. 95th Congress, First Session. *Project MKULTRA The CIA's Program of Research in Behavioral Modification*. Joint hearing before the Select Committee on Intelligence and the Subcommittee on Health and Scientific Research of the Committee on Human Resources. August 3, 1977.

⁸ *Biomedical and Behavioral Research*, pp. 957-959.

⁹ *Church Committee Report*. p. 386.

¹⁰ *ibid.* p. 394.

General's report noted, "present practice is to maintain no records of the planning and approval on test programs."¹² Thus, even before the organized effort to destroy documents, MKULTRA files were far from comprehensive.

¹¹ *ibid.* p. 404.

¹² *ibid.* p. 406.

Nevertheless, more documents existed than those which were available to the Kennedy and Church investigations. CIA's response to a F.O.I.A. request by John Marks uncovered these documents and prompted another Senate investigation. Testifying before the Inouye Committee, DCI Admiral Stansfield Turner stated that the newly found records were mostly financial folders which revealed names of some 115 researchers and 80 institutions, as well as possible improper contributions by CIA to private institutions. These documents were found by "examining both the active and retired files from all of the branches of CIA considered likely to have had an association with MKULTRA documents."¹³ The names of individuals and institutions were provided to the committee on a classified basis.¹⁴

RELEVANCE TO JFK ASSASSINATION

The relevance of the MKULTRA project can be judged within wide or narrow parameters of the assassination story. The link is more certain in the wider view than in a narrow perspective which might focus on Lee Harvey Oswald. MKULTRA and its director, Sidney Gottlieb, engineered some of the plots against Castro, such as the scheme to make his beard fall out; Technical Services Division even considered slipping LSD to Castro.¹⁵

The Sheffield Edwards link

One of the primary actors in the plot to assassinate Castro was the CIA's Director of Security, Colonel Sheffield Edwards. Edwards, who served as the contact point for mafia "cut out" Robert Maheu, was also integrally involved in MKULTRA activities.

According to the Church Report, Project BLUEBIRD was initially led by the Office of Scientific Intelligence (OSI). However, control was transferred in 1952 to the predecessor of the Office of Security, the Inspection and Security Office (I&SO). This move was based on the idea that it was ISO's job it was to prevent enemy penetration of the Agency, and that methods developed under BLUEBIRD would benefit ISO missions. Since MKULTRA was an I&SO project during this time, all project matters would have likely crossed Edwards' desk.

Additionally, Ranelagh states in *Rise and Decline* that BLUEBIRD was first directed by Edwards for a few months in 1950, before a change in DCIs (Hillenkoetter to Bedell Smith) allowed Allen Dulles to assume control of the program. This could not be verified in the Church Report. If this is true, it would add to the time which Edwards would have been in the command structure for

¹³ *Project MKULTRA*. p. 9.

¹⁴ *ibid.* pp. 5-8, 12.

¹⁵ Marks, John. *The Search for the "Manchurian Candidate": The CIA and Mind Control*. New York: Times Books, 1979. pp. 17, 98.

BLUEBIRD¹⁶.

The Yuri Nosenko interrogation

¹⁶ Ranelagh, John. *The Agency: The Rise and Decline of the CIA*. New York: Simon and Schuster, 1987, p. 203-204.

MKULTRA might also be linked to the protracted interrogation of Yuri Nosenko. Though John Marx believes that the CIA abandoned MKULTRA mind control techniques in this interrogation, another less reliable source alleges that LSD was used.¹⁷

Possible links to Oswald

Connections to Oswald are even less certain. Allegations that suggest that Oswald may have been a subject of MKULTRA research remain unsubstantiated. New Orleans assistant district attorney Edward Gillin claimed that in the summer of 1963 Oswald contacted him to inquire about a mind altering drug.¹⁸ It has also been claimed that LSD was tested at Atsugi Naval Air Station in Japan where Oswald worked in the radar bubble.¹⁹ Another tenuous connection might be stretched from Tulane University, a possible MKULTRA research site, to Oswald in New Orleans.²⁰

Finally, Adele Edison, who testified before the Review Board in November of 1994 recounted a fantastic story of a New Orleans connection between Oswald and Dr. (Col.) Jose Rivera of the Institute of Neurological Diseases and Blindness at Tulane.²¹

A disclaimer should be affixed to this laundry list of possible connections to the assassination story. Inclusion here of a link suggested by some writer is not meant to imply indorsement. For most, further research in open sources is required to test their worth before any classified search should be undertaken.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Due to the destruction of records in 1973 and the fragmentary record keeping which characterized the sensitive areas of the project, a review of CIA's MKULTRA records would probably not be useful for furthering our understanding of the issues surrounding the Kenney Assassination. If MKULTRA is John Newman's "smoking file" on Oswald, the record would need to be

¹⁷ Marks, pp. 145- 146. Thomas, Gordon. *Journey into Madness: The True Story of Secret CIA Mind Control and Medical Abuse*. New York: Bantam Books, 1989. pp. 260-264.

¹⁸ Hurt, Henry. *Reasonable Doubt: An Investigation into the Assassination of John F. Kennedy*. New York: Henry Holt and Co., 1985. pp. 302-304. Hurt cites a Rolling Stone article for this allegation.

¹⁹ *ibid.* p.303. Again Hurt cites the Rolling Stone article.

²⁰ In a poorly written and sloppily cited article which appeared in *The Fourth Decade*, Gary Hill cites, for this information, a U.S. News and World Reports article from January 24, 1994. Hill does draw a rough connection between MKULTRA, Tulane University, Dr. Alton Oschner, who was the founder of the Information Council of the Americas, and by "proximity", Lee Harvey Oswald. While Hill does not cite further information, Dr. Oschner's involvement with INCA (largely believed to be a CIA front organization), Tulane University, which was allegedly involved in MKULTRA projects, and his authorship of several publications on the use of LSD has raised questions about his participation in MKULTRA projects.

²¹ Ms. Adele Elvira Uskali Edisen. Testimony before the Assassination Records Review Board. 11/18/94.

reconstructed from the charred ashes left after its immolation.

2. It is likely that CIA currently has in its possession only those documents which it released -- albeit in redacted form -- to the Senate investigations and to Marks' F.O.I.A. request. It would seem that most of this can only offer general information about the program. Records of sensitive programs have likely been destroyed. Certainly, if there had been an Oswald connection, records of it do not or maybe never did exist, yet given the secret nature of these files we cannot say that with any degree of certainty.

3. Only if we can establish more concrete connections to the story should we request records relating to MKULTRA from the CIA. Possibly these connections can be made through additional open source research or through agencies outside of the CIA.

4. Military Intelligence might hold some MKULTRA related records, or at least documents pertaining to the cooperation with the CIA on MKULTRA or parallel military programs. For example, if we can ascertain which programs involved the Navy, a review of Oswald's service or medical records might, as a long shot, establish proximity. Also the confidential lists of researchers and institutions which CIA supplied to the Senate hearings could provide new leads. Lastly, private institutions which participated in the program may still have records of their research.

PRELIMINARY FINDINGS AND ONGOING RESEARCH

The National Security Archives houses the John Marx collection of MKULTRA materials. In our first visit we scanned folders which looked promising in the inventory, finding only one document which was even marginally related to the assassination story, one that refers to Sheffield Edwards. We examined files on a number of subprojects including "MKULTRA Cuba Chapter"-- largely a collection of receipts and invoices, some of which noted attempts at placing a man on a diverted freighter. Also viewed were records from "MKULTRA Defector Study", a program set up in the mid-1950s to handle returnee interrogation and rehabilitation. Again mostly financial information was found here. Such is the case with the records in "MKULTRA Toxin study-- Cuba Chapter." Further, we looked at the "Assassination" file; it contained only 4 documents, these dated from 1949 to 1952, none of value in our investigation. In addition, the "Special Forces" file, another thin folder, was examined; this contains a 1975 memo which references Col. Edwards, along with some MKNAOMI records, and documents describing the drug program at Fort Detrick. Our brief visit only allowed this fruitless inspection of selected files. Since we have viewed only a small percentage of the collection, another visit is suggested for further review of the materials.

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