

MEMO

To: Jeremy Gunn
From: Manuel E. Legaspi, Bob Skwirot
Subject: MKULTRA
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INTRODUCTION

Of all the indiscretions uncovered by the Congressional investigations into intelligence activities of the 1970's, 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 development of effective 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.³

From its inception, the MKULTRA program 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. These practices ranged from the unwitting use of domestic research organizations to the use of human test subjects, one of whom died 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 involved in the program, and recommended much tighter control over the program. The end result was a significant decrease in the funding allotted for MKULTRA until the program was terminated in the late 1960's. However, continued concerns over the compromise of MKULTRA information led to the destruction of many relevant files in 1973, by the order of then-DCI Richard Helms.

RELEVANCE

The Sheffield Edwards Relationship

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. At this time, the CIA's director of

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.

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security was Colonel Sheffield Edwards. Edwards would later serve as the contact point for mafia “cut-out” Robert Maheu in the attempt to develop a plan to assassinate Fidel Castro.

Additionally, Ranelagh in *Rise and Fall* states 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 BLUEBIRD.