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Office Memorandum • UNITED STATES GOVERNMENT

A/B, 1, 815

TO : Chief, Security Research Staff, I&S

FROM : Chief, Technical Branch, SRS, I&S

SUBJECT: Division Memorandum dated 21 November 1952
(Sodium Pentothal).

DATE: 11 February 1953

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1. This Office has studied the subject memorandum and comments are set out immediately following. As you are well aware, the ARTI-CHOKE technique consists not only in studying methods of obtaining information from individuals or from gaining control of their wills but studying at the same time every conceivable technique that can be brought to bear to prevent others from extracting information from our people or gaining control of the will of our people. In studying these problems, this Office is quite well acquainted with the effects of Benzedrine, Picrotoxin, Caffeine, etc., etc. In the subject memorandum, the Division Logistics in Paragraph 2, sub-Paragraphs a, b, and c have in a general sense correctly listed some of the main limitations on counteracting drugs which could be used against the effects of Sodium Amytal or Pentothal. Some comments can be made in this connection.

- A. In reference to Paragraph 2, sub-Paragraph a, the problem has been very accurately stated in that there is no way of knowing how much of the counteracting agent would have to be taken to successfully counter the effect of amytal or pentothal--the subject's physical condition, whether he was hungry or not, suffering from fatigue or nervous exhaustion, etc. would all affect this. In addition, different tolerances to these counteracting drugs are noted in each individual. It may be said that in certain persons a given specific dose of Strychnine might not produce more than a mild stimulating action while in others a given dose might produce a convulsion, coma or possible death.
- B. In connection with Paragraph 2, sub-Paragraph b, it should be stated that the thorough searching of a person is a standard procedure in most interrogation centers and although drugs could be concealed in many places on the person (such as the rectum), nevertheless, competent searching would reveal even this.

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C. In connection with Paragraph 2, sub-Paragraph c, it should also be stated that a physician or quite probably a trained interrogator would immediately suspect the effect of counteracting drugs (or that something was unusual) since in the first place the Sodium Pentothal or Amytal would not be producing the proper reactions and in the second place, Penzedrine and other stimulants usually produce specific effects such as nervousness, trembling, rapid heartbeat, quick breathing, etc., in the person taking them. Any competent interrogator or interrogation team would recognize "unusual" activity on the part of the one being interrogated and would seek the meaning of this and, if nothing else, would delay the interrogation for a day, or week if necessary, to make certain the individual to be handled was reacting properly to Pentothal or Amytal or any other of the hypnotic-type drugs.

2. In addition to comments set out in sub-Paragraphs A, B, and C above, there are other items that would add to the difficulty in this problem. For instance, the subject would have no knowledge of the type of drug he was to be given. The subject might, therefore, take a counteracting drug which would possibly have no effect on the drug given or perhaps multiply the effect and create severe poisoning or bodily disturbances. In this connection, there are numerous reports that indicate that the Soviet Union and their satellites have used Penzedrine as an agent in producing certain desired effects prior to and during interrogation. If the subject did not know he was to be given Penzedrine and took one of the stimulants or took Penzedrine itself, the effect of the two doses conceivably would cause highly noticeable results and probably nausea. If he was given Picrotoxin and he had previously taken Picrotoxin, the results would be dangerous as Picrotoxin is quite toxic. A double dosage of Strychnine might well prove fatal and at the least convulsive.

3. With reference to Paragraph 3 of the subject memorandum, this branch feels that the paragraph is somewhat erroneous in that there is considerable amount of professional opinion that reflects that in certain cases, if the drugs are administered properly and if the interrogator is persistent and clever enough, information, regardless of how sensitive it is, may be extracted from individuals under the influence of various drugs or combinations.

4. It should be noted that the ARTICHOKE Staff recognizes that some individuals are extremely difficult to obtain information from,

but new chemicals, new and more advanced techniques will possibly in the future produce far more valuable and positive results than are obtained today under the old "truth serum" approach. It should always be remembered that often it is only necessary to obtain one small bit of information that is verifiable to break a case wide open.

5. This office would, of course, be delighted if any chemical or combination of chemicals or techniques could be discovered to prevent the extraction of information from our people, but at the present time we are not aware of any technique, device or chemical (other than a lethal dose) that will totally prevent an individual from giving pertinent information while under the influence of chemicals or if subjected to sustained and clever interrogation accompanied by pressures, physical or otherwise.

6. It is suggested that the memorandum of 21 November 1952 be turned over to the Medical Division with the informal comments of this Office. It is believed that they would give further advanced technical reasons why neutralizing agents such as those mentioned in the basic memorandum would be ineffective.