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# Was It All Just A Hallucination? The CIA's Secret LSD Experiments

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Senior Thesis

HS 401

Spring 2015

Was it All Just a Hallucination?  
The CIA's Secret LSD Experiments.

**Introduction:**

Certain times our government takes actions in order to try to protect its people, even when a threat is merely suspected. Many times we do not know about the precautions our country takes in order to keep us safe. Sometimes though, in order to keep us safe, our government might believe it necessary to sacrifice the rights of our people. This was such during the 1950s and into the 1960s when the CIA was experimenting on unwitting U.S. citizens with a new drug called lysergic acid diethylamide often times referred to as LSD or acid, in hopes to outsmart the Soviet Union. However, many times the victims of this unsuspecting experimentation would suffer from short term and long-term negative effects from the drug, impacting their mental health, which would in turn affect their livelihood, and family life. In this paper I explore how the CIA conducted their experiments with LSD, why they felt it necessary to experiment, the impact of these experiments on the lives of the victims, and the consequences of these experiments.

## **Section I: Lit Review**

The question of how could a government that prizes itself on the civil liberties of its people covertly does its citizens with LSD? Is shadowed by an even bigger question; how did the citizens let them get away with it? Scholars have debated on what factors allowed the CIA was able to get away with such atrocities.

Some scholars believe that American citizens prefer to ignore the dark side of the precautions the U.S. takes to protect its citizens. What this means is that American's chose not to be aware of what our government is doing in order to "protect" our liberties.

Other scholars suggest that people accept that the CIA must do what it needs to do in order to protect its citizens. Timothy Melley discusses this "whatever it takes" ideal in his book "*The Covert Sphere: Secrecy, Fiction, and The National Security State*". In the book, Melley uses examples from films and TV shows in order to represent real world rational of national security v. civil rights. He uses an example where the government has implement phone tapping techniques in order to find be "one step ahead" of terrorist.<sup>1</sup> This is a prime example of how people were aware of what was going on but because it was beneficial for the wellbeing of the country they allowed for their rights to be diminished.

## **Section II: Background**

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<sup>1</sup> Melley, Timothy. *The Covert Sphere: Secrecy, Fiction, and The National Security State*. Ithaca: Cornell UP, 2012. 206. Print.

*Part I: LSD is Born*

Basel, Switzerland 1938: Sandoz Laboratories is experimenting with ergotamine, a chemical derived by Arthur Stoll from ergot, a grain fungus, which typically grows on rye. Albert Hofmann, who worked in the pharmaceutical – chemical department of Sandoz Laboratories, was working with ergotamine in order to synthesize a respiratory and circulatory stimulant. His main focus was on researching the lysergic acid derivatives from the ergotamine.

On November 16, 1938, Hofmann was working with LSD - 25. After showing signs that it was not suitable for their intended pharmaceutical needs. It was then placed in a cabinet where it would sit for almost 5 years. Then on April 16, 1943, Hofmann decided to take another look into LSD – 25. While resynthesizing its lysergic acid derivative he accidentally absorbed a small amount of the drug through his fingertip. It was then that he discovered its powerful effects.

Hofmann would later describe his experience:

At home I lay down and sank into a not unpleasant intoxication – like condition, characterized by an extremely stimulated imagination. In a dreamlike state, with eyes closed, I perceived an uninterrupted stream of fantastic pictures, extraordinary shapes with intense, kaleidoscopic play of colors. After about two hours this condition faded away.<sup>2</sup>

On April 19, 1943, Hofmann performed a self-experimentation in the laboratory in order to determine the true effects of LSD – 25. He intentionally ingested 250 micrograms of the liquid. He predicted that this would be the threshold dose. A threshold dose describes the effect on an

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<sup>2</sup> Hofmann, 1980.

organism caused by differing levels of exposure to a stressor, which is usually a chemical. We know today that the threshold dose for LSD is 20 micrograms. Less than half an hour after the initial dose, Hofmann experienced sudden and intense changes in perception. He asked his lab assistant to escort him home. As they were riding their bikes back to Hofmann's residence his condition quickly became very overwhelming. He struggled with anxiety, including delusional thoughts that his neighbor was a malevolent witch, and that he was going insane. When he got home, he called for a doctor to come see him right away. Once the doctor got to his home, he was reassured that had no physical ailments, except for his astoundingly dilated pupils. After finding out that he was in no real danger, his overwhelming terror subsided and gave way to a pleasurable experience.

This time, much like the first, he experienced unprecedented colors and kaleidoscopic images folding and spiraling in and on top of each other. The events of this day would prove to Hofmann that he had made a significant discovery: a psychoactive substance with extraordinary potency giving people the capacity to shift consciousness. Hofmann foresaw the use of this drug as an incredibly beneficial psychiatric tool, due to its intense and introspective nature. What he meant by this was, that LSD allowed people to become more open to ideas, as well as created a sense of self-awareness. It was this self-awareness that Hofmann believed would be able to help people like, alcoholic, and people suffering from OCD. Hofmann also believed that LSD, in higher doses, was able to simulate psychosis. That mock psychosis would be an extraordinarily useful tool for psychiatrists. In theory they would be able to take the LSD and become more aware of what their mental ill patients were going through.

*Part II: Psychiatric Use and Its Growing Recreational Use.*

From the late 1940s through the mid-1970s Sandoz Laboratories as well as an assortment of many countries, including the United States, conducted extensive research and testing on LSD. It was thought that LSD was capable of producing a model psychosis. This was helpful in understanding the mentally ill as well as how they could be treated. During this time over 1,000 scientific papers were written on LSD. There were also 6 international conferences held in order to discuss the use of LSD as a medical treatment.

One study in the late 1950s looked at LSD and its effects on alcoholics. Dr. Humphry Osmond gave LSD to chronic alcoholics in Alcoholics Anonymous. After a year of dosing these people, approximately 50 percent of the subjects had not had a drink. This success rate has never been reproduced by any other means.<sup>3</sup>

In 1949 Sandoz Laboratories brought LSD to the attention of the United States, they believed that because of these clinical applications the United States government and medical communities might be interested in conducting its own research.

However, many psychiatrists began taking the drug recreationally as well as sharing it with friends and associates. According to historian Jay Stevens, in his book "*Storming Heaven: LSD and the American Dream*" in the early days of recreational use, LSD users, who were mostly medical professional and academics, fell into two broadly defined crowds.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Abramson, H., Ed. *The Use of LSD in Psychotherapy and Alcoholism*. P.8

<sup>4</sup> Stevens, Jay. *Storming Heaven: LSD and the American Dream*. New York: Atlantic Monthly, 1987. 26. Print.

Stevens states that the first can be considered the conservative crowd. These people thought that LSD was too powerful and dangerous to allow it widespread production. These people also believed that only the 'elite' members of society, artists, scientists, writers, should be able to have access to it. He thought that these were the people who would have the ability to take full advantage of the powerful creative drive and mindfulness that comes with LSD.

Stevens describes the second group to be recreational users and much more radical about their beliefs in LSD. These people felt that LSD had the power to revolutionize society. They wanted LSD to become accessible to all people. This group then evolved and expanded into a subculture where LSD was often seen as mystical substance. Many popular musicians of the time were categorized into this second crowd, Jimi Hendrix, Pink Floyd, as well as The Beatles.

Due to its growing recreational popularity and the government's mounting concern of its increasing use, in 1965 Sandoz Laboratories stopped all its legal shipments of LSD to the United States for psychiatric use. Despite this halt in legal shipments, the United States government, specifically the CIA, were still receiving LSD to support their covert operations and experimentations.

### *Part III: OSS to CIA*

The Office of Strategic Services (OSS) was a United States intelligence agency formed on June 13, 1942 in response to World War II. It was formed in order to coordinate espionage activities behind enemy lines for branches of the United States Armed Forces. After the United States victory in the Pacific Theater, President Harry S. Truman signed Executive Order 9621 on



September 20, 1945, which ordered the breakup of the OSS. The official breakup of this agency took place on October 1, 1945. The OSS was dissolved and separated into three new organizations overseen by other departments within the government. Two of the new organizations, Strategic Service Unit (SSU), and the Psychological Warfare Division (PWD), were overseen by the War Department; while the final new organization, the Interim Research and Intelligence Service (IRIS), was overseen by the State Department.

However, this division did not last. In January of 1946, just a few months after they were separated, they were consolidated under the power of a newly formed government organization, known as the National Intelligence Authority (NIA). The NIA was established under Presidential authority as an interim institution and was dissolved twenty months later. The NIA was the direct predecessor of what we know today as the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA). In September of 1947, the National Security Act established the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA).

On June 18<sup>th</sup>, 1948, the National Security Council Directive on Office of Special Projects gave the CIA the authority to carry out covert operations. The Department of Defense Dictionary of Military and Associated Terms (Joint Publication JP1-02), defines covert operation as "an operation that is so planned and executed as to conceal the identity of or permit plausible denial by the sponsor."<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Joint Publication JP1-02

They also gave the United States government the right to “plausibly disclaim any responsibility”<sup>6</sup> for any of the covert operations performed by the CIA. What that means is that the government is authorized to breach the law if it deems necessary.

#### *Part IV: The Cold War*

After World War II there was a state of political and military tension. From 1947 – 1991, the United States, its NATO allies, and others in the Western Bloc were at a nuclear stand-off with the powers of the Eastern Bloc, which consisted of the Soviet Union, other communist countries like China and North Korea, as well as its allies in the Warsaw Pact. This tension would be coined the Cold War. It was termed “cold” because there was no large scale fighting directly between the two sides.

During this time the United States believed that the Soviet Union was experimenting with mind control techniques. They specifically thought that they were using chemicals, such as LSD, on spies they captured and kidnapped in order to get information about the Western Bloc.

Because of this speculated “mind control” experimentation, the United States began their own programs for “mind control” as well as projects to help educate their government operatives on how to not divulge any secrets if they were to be captured behind enemy lines. These programs evolved throughout the era.

### **Section III: Experimentation**

#### *Part I: Mind Control Take One*

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<sup>6</sup> "U.S. Department of State: Foreign Relations of the United States, 1945–1950, Emergence of the Intelligence Establishment". Document 292, Section 5.

One of the United States' first attempts at a mind control program took place in 1945, when the Joint Intelligence Objectives Agency (JIOA) was established and given the responsibility of Operation Paperclip. In this program the United States brought over 1,500 German scientists, technicians, and engineers from what had been Nazi Germany. The purpose of this was to hinder the growth of post-war Germany, as well as to deprive the Soviet Union of scientific knowledge and research. Many of the scientists that the U.S. government employed had been working on brainwashing and mind control techniques during World War II. Because of their knowledge in this area a new project was created.

In 1950 Project BLUEBIRD, which was later renamed Project ATRICHOKE in 1951, was born. The purpose of this study was to research mind control, interrogation, and behavioral modification. In a memo dated from January 1952, there was an outline of the scope of the project and one question it posed was:

Can we get control of an individual to the point where he will do our bidding against his will and even against fundamental laws of nature, such as self-preservation?<sup>7</sup>

Much of this project focused on the use of illicit drug in order to gain control of the test subject's mind: for example they forced morphine addiction and then they subsequently forced withdrawal, in order to see what they would be willing to do to get their fix. They also used highly concentrated marijuana in hopes to simulate the coercion of information out of the subject. The CIA also looked into hypnosis as a method to produce amnesia and other states of vulnerability

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<sup>7</sup> Schefflin, A. W., & Opton, E. M. *The Mind Manipulators*. New York: Paddington Press, 1978.

in the subject. This project would later grow into something much bigger with a larger impact on the U.S. government as well as the people who were tested on.

The CIA believed they were justified in what they were doing because they thought that the Soviets were in the process of creating what was known as a Manchurian Candidate. A Manchurian Candidate is someone who has been brainwashed. He would be re-educated with the sole purpose to kill on command, without even knowing he was doing it. The scariest part about the Candidate is that it could have been anyone. As portrayed in the 1959 book called "*The Manchurian Candidate*" written by Robert Condon.

In Condon's book, he writes about Major Bennett Marco, who was the son of a prominent U.S. family. He and a comrade were kidnapped during the Korean War in 1952 and taken to Manchuria. He is brainwashed to believe that his Sergeant Raymond Shaw saved his life while there. When they returned Shaw received the Metal of Honor, for his so-called 'courageous' deed.

Years after coming home to the United States, Marco begins to have dreams of Shaw killing two of his former infantrymen. He learns that another soldier from his platoon is having the same dreams, which leads him to reveal that the Communists had been using Shaw as a secret assassin. He is triggered to kill when he sees the Queen of Diamonds playing card.

This book represents everything that the United States was fearful at that time. The Cold War was in full effect, and this idea that even a decorated military man could be brainwashed and used to do the bidding of the Communists, was a terrifying thought. It was this fear that led the United States to expanding their experimentation with truth serums and mind-control.

*Part II: The CIA and Operation MKULTRA*

MKULTRA was born out of Project ARTICHOKE, another one of the CIA's mind control and brain-training experimentation programs. CIA Director Allen Welsh officially sanctioned the program on April 13<sup>th</sup>, 1953.<sup>8</sup> This program, much like its predecessors, was looking for a way to become more advanced in the fields of mind control, interrogation methods, as well as behavior modification, than its rival at the time, the Soviet Union. Dr. Sidney Gottlieb was appointed head of this program. On June 9, 1953, Dr. Gottlieb sent out a memorandum to inform people about an MKULTRA subproject that would make use of LSD.<sup>9</sup> The use of LSD would come to dominate many of MKULTRA's programs. Officials understood that LSD distorted a person's sense of reality and they felt compelled to learn whether it could alter someone's basic loyalties. They were specifically interested to find out if they could make Soviet spies defect against their will, under the influence of the drug, if the CIA captured them. In order to become more informed about the usefulness of this drug, the CIA employed many different experimental tactics.

At first, the testing of this drug took place in laboratories, but as Dr. Gottlieb saw its potential use in covert operations, they began testing on regular people in a "normal" setting. The first of these tests involved agency workers testing each other and taking notes on the other person while under the influence. As the experimentation progressed, there came a time when

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<sup>8</sup> Church Committee; p. 390 "MKULTRA was approved by the DCI [Director of Central Intelligence] on April 13, 1953"

<sup>9</sup> Gottlieb, Sidney. Memorandum For The Record. Subject: Project MKULTRA, Subproject 8.

outsiders to the operation were being drugged without their consent. Surprise LSD trips became an occupational hazard for CIA operatives.

Another approach was known as Operation Midnight Climax. This operation took place in San Francisco, California in the mid – 1950s. This operation consisted of a string of CIA - run safe houses that were disguised as brothels. The way this worked was the CIA worked the prostitutes who would go out and pick up johns and bring them back to the CIA safe-house under the pretense that they were going to have sex. It was here that unwitting people were dosed with LSD, with the thought that they would be too embarrassed about where they had been to disclose what had happened to them. After the people were dosed with LSD they were monitored and filmed behind one-way glass so their experience could later be studied.

Another way they tested LSD was on unsuspecting people like prisoners, drug addicts and mental patients. One agency officer said they would dose “people who could not fight back.”<sup>10</sup> Many times heroin addicts were bribed into taking LSD with the offer of more heroin.<sup>11</sup> The largest CIA run hospital where this was happening was located in Lexington, Kentucky.

After years of experimentation and testing, MKULTRA was shut down in 1964. The CIA had put their hopes into a new “super hallucinogen” scientifically called 3-Quinuclidinyl Benzilate, or BZ for short. They created a new program to test it called MKSEARCH, however this new program would not last long.

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<sup>10</sup> Tim Weiner (10 Mar 1999). "Sidney Gottlieb, 80, Dies; Took LSD to C.I.A.". *New York Times*.

<sup>11</sup> United States Senate, 95th Congress, 1st session (3 August 1977). "*Project MKUltra, The CIA's Program of Research in Behavioral Modification*". *The New York Times*.

In 1973, amidst the government-wide panic caused by the Watergate Scandal, CIA Director Richard Helms ordered that any records of MKULTRA be destroyed. The destruction of these documents has made understanding the full extent of this project hard. In December 1974, *The New York Times* reported that the CIA had conducted illegal domestic experiments on U.S. citizens during the 1950s and 60s. This allegation prompted the investigations by the U.S. Congress in the form of the Church Committee and by the presidential commission known as the Rockefeller Commission.

In the summer of 1975, both the Church Commission and the Rockefeller Commission revealed to the public for the first time that The New York Times report was true and that the CIA had conducted experiments on both unwitting and willing human subjects as part of an extensive program that looked to control human behavior through psychoactive drugs. During this investigation they also revealed that at least one subject has died due to these experiments. Due to these horrific findings, in 1976 Gerald Ford issued the Order on Intelligence Activities, which prohibits experimentation with drugs on human subjects, except with informed consent, in both written and witnessed form. In 1977 following a request from the Freedom Of Information Act (FIOA) 20,000 additional documents from this project were discovered, despite CIA director Helms' efforts to destroy all material linked to MKULTRA. These documents dealt with the specific financing of MKULTRA and its sub-projects. These documents revealed where specific portions of the budgets were being allocated. It was within these documents that the Commission was able to find out that colleges and universities were on the pay roll for MK Ultra.

*Part III: Lexington, Kentucky*

The CIA funded many individuals in the private sector for their help in LSD research. One such person was Dr. Harris Isbell. Dr. Isbell was the Director of the Addiction Research Center at the Public Health Service Hospital in Lexington, Kentucky. The Public Health Service Hospital in Lexington, Kentucky was known as a place where heroin addicts could go to beat their addiction. Although the hospital was officially a penitentiary, all the inmates were referred to as “patients.” Unbeknownst to “patients” of the time, this hospital was one of fifteen penal and mental institutions used by the CIA in its drug development program, specifically in the CIA’s program MKULTRA.

Dr. Isbell exploited the fact that many people committed to the hospital were there to detox and recover from their opiate addiction. Dr. Isbell and his colleagues at the hospital would offer recovering addicts heroin in exchange for “volunteering” for his experiments that tested LSD.<sup>12</sup> It soon became an open secret for local junkies that if the supply ever ran low, you could commit yourself to Lexington and get your fix for “volunteering” in Isbell’s experiments. Because of this, Lexington had a 90% return rate. Many of his experiments included high doses of the drug as well as tolerance training. What tolerance training meant, was that they would see if the patient would develop a tolerance. This was a crucial part of testing. The United States was fearful of the USSR capturing their soldiers and using LSD to force information out of them. By testing tolerance at Lexington, they were able to record what happens when a person has been trained to deal with specific doses.

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<sup>12</sup> Isbell Harris, Belleville RE, Fraser HF, “Studies of Lysergic Acid Diethylamide (LSD-25). Effects in Former Morphine Addicts and Development of Tolerance during Chronic Intoxication.” *Arch Neurology Psychiatry*, Nov 1956: 76:468-478.



One experiment he conducted looked at how duration affected the recipients of the drug. During this experiment he administered seven men, nearly all black “patients”, with LSD for 77 consecutive days. In order to overcome the tolerance the “patients” had built up to the hallucinogen, Isbell had to administer “double, triple, and quadruple doses.”<sup>13</sup>

The book *From Healing to Hell* by William Henry Wall Jr. explores how Wall Jr.’s father had been a “patient” at the Public Health Service Hospital in Lexington, Kentucky. Wall Jr. describes how his father landed in the hospital as well as how he became a victim of the CIA’s MKULTRA experiment conducted at the facility. As well as, how those experiments changes his fathers mental state and how that inevitably changed his life.

#### **Section IV: William Henry Wall Sr.**

The book *From Healing to Hell* by William Henry Wall Jr. tells the story of his father’s life. Wall Sr. went from being a senator of Georgia, to his struggle with addiction, which landed him in the Public Health Service Hospital in Lexington, Kentucky. His time at the hospital where he was subjected to experimental drug testing, and how, because of those tests, his father’s life was forever changes.

Dr. William Henry Wall Sr. was a physician in Blakely, GA. He was a highly respected professional as well as a community leader. He served on the Georgia State Senate and was a well-known mental health advocate. He was living a normal life with a wife, Hallie, a son, William, and a daughter.

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<sup>13</sup> *Acid Dreams: The Complete Social History of LSD: The CIA, the Sixties and Beyond*, by Martin A. Lee and Bruce Shlain (Grove Press) Copyright 1985. 34

In the late 1940s, Dr. William Henry Wall Sr. was prescribed Demerol for the pain following a dental procedure. Although it was thought to be non-habit forming, he became addicted. Despite this his addiction he was able to still practice medicine. He was even able to establish the first hospital in the town of Blakely.

However, in 1953 he was arrested on federal drug charges. He was convicted and sentenced to serve his time in a prison specifically for drug addicts, the Public Health Service Hospital in Lexington, Kentucky. It was here that William Henry Wall Sr. would become victim to MKULTRA experiments. The LSD he was given here would eventually lead him to insanity. After he was released from the hospital Wall Sr. experienced psychotic episodes that were often violent, as well as delusions, paranoia, and suicidal thoughts.

### **Section V: Dr. Frank Olson**

Frank Rudolph Olson was born on July 17<sup>th</sup>, 1910, in Wisconsin. He earned his PH.D. in biochemistry at the University of Wisconsin in 1938. After graduating he worked at Purdue University in Indiana. After his time at Purdue he joined the United States Army. He specifically worked for the Chemical Corps, which is a branch of the U.S. Army tasked with defending against chemical, biological, radiological and nuclear weapons. He reached the rank of captain before he left the military. In 1943, after he became a civilian, the technical director of the United States Biological Warfare Laboratories (USABWL) Ira Baldwin, who also happened to be his old departmental advisor at University of Wisconsin, recruited him to work with them.

After taking this job with USABWL he moved to Camp Detrick in Maryland where the research laboratories operated. When he first started working there, he experimented with aerosolized anthrax,<sup>14</sup> as well as applying other methods to help modernize warfare technology. The USABWL worked with the CIA's chemical branch of the Technical Service Staff (TSS), which was headed by Dr. Sidney Gottlieb. During this time, the USABWL and the TSS, worked together to help develop covert biological warfare delivery systems. It was this connection that leads to Frank Olson's employment by the CIA as well the USABWL.<sup>15</sup> After a decade of working for the United States Army Biological Warfare Laboratories, he was the senior bacteriologist at the program.<sup>16</sup>

On November 18<sup>th</sup> 1953, Frank Olson, along with other members of his team from Camp Detrick, drove to a two-day retreat being held by Dr. Gottlieb at Deep Creek Lake in Maryland. When they arrived at the lodge on Dr. Gottlieb and a few of his colleagues, including his deputy Robert Lashbrook, greeted them. A report by author Ed Regis notes:

On the second day of the retreat, after dinner, Gottlieb spiked a bottle of Cointreau with a small quantity of a substance that he and

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<sup>14</sup> Ignatieff, Michael [1 April 2001]. "What did the C.I.A. do to Eric Olson's father?". *The New York Times Magazine*. Retrieved 2 January 2015.

<sup>15</sup> Ignatieff, Michael [1 April 2001]. "What did the C.I.A. do to Eric Olson's father?". *The New York Times Magazine*. Retrieved 2 January 2015.

<sup>16</sup> Hersh, Seymour. [10 July 1975] "Family Plans to Sue C.I.A. Over Suicide in Drug Test". *New York Times*. Retrieved 2 January 2015.

his TSS colleagues privately referred to as 'serunin' but which was in fact lysergic acid diethylamide, of LSD.<sup>17</sup>

Olson and his colleagues were unaware that they had been administered LSD.

In a memorandum between Eric Olson, Dr. Frank Olson's son, and his lawyer, a brief background on Olson and the situation that followed after the retreat is stated.

The meeting took place on Thursday and Friday. After the meeting Dr.

Olson returned home. He was very silent over the weekend, and spoke of having made a "big mistake."<sup>18</sup>

On the Monday after the retreat Olson approached his supervisor, Vincent Ruwet and asked to quit his job at the bio warfare program. When Ruwet asked him why he wanted to quit he said, " he was experiencing considerable self doubt."<sup>19</sup> Ruwet, who was also at the retreat and by his own account had also been given LSD, told him that he should go to New York and speak to one of the CIA's collaborating, physicians Harold Abramson. That same day Dr. Abramson was introduced to Dr. Olson as a psychiatrist, when he was in fact an allergist and pediatrician. Dr. Abramson had been serving the CIA as a consultant for MKULTRA.

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<sup>17</sup> Regis, Ed. *The Biology of Doom: The History of America's Secret Germ Warfare Project*. 1st ed. New York: Henry Holt, 1999. P 153. Print.

<sup>18</sup> Huges, Harry, Huges, Theodore H, & Olson, Eric. [12 May 1995] *Memorandum in Support of a Criminal Investigation into the Death of Dr. Frank Olson*. Par 21 Retrieved 23 January 2015

<sup>19</sup> Regis, Ed. *The Biology of Doom: The History of America's Secret Germ Warfare Project*. 1st ed. New York: Henry Holt, 1999. 153. Print.

After two days in New York, Dr. Olson and Vincent Ruwet were planning to go home for Thanksgiving. Sometime after midnight on Wednesday, Dr. Olson left the room he was sharing with Ruwet. In the morning Vincent found him in the lobby of their hotel. Dr. Olson recounts to him that

he had walked around the city most of the night, had torn up all of his money, and had thrown his wallet, containing his personal identification, into a chute somewhere in the city. His explanation was that he felt that he was under orders from Ruwet to do this.<sup>20</sup>

Despite this Olson and Ruwet continued with their plan to head home for Thanksgiving. CIA documents released in 1975, published a statement from Ruwet on what happened that Thursday. According to him, Dr. Olson was worried about seeing his family because he was concerned that he might become violent with his children. He then proceeded to head back to New York with Robert Lashbrook.

When Dr. Olson and Lashbrook got back to the city he went to see Dr. Abramson. The next day, Dr. Abramson decided that Dr. Olson required hospitalization. Abramson was able to arrange for Dr. Olson to be entered into Chestnut Lodge Psychiatric Hospital in Rockville, Maryland after returning home for the weekend.

That night Olson and Lashbrook returned to their hotel room on the thirteenth floor of the Statler Hotel. Dr. Olson called his wife that same evening, (the first time they spoke since

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<sup>20</sup> ;*ibid*'; Par 22

Monday), to let her know that he would be home tomorrow (Saturday) and that he was in good spirits.

It was after midnight on Friday when Lashbrook describes being awakened by the sound of crashing glass and the sound of wind whipping through the blind. According to him he got up and went to the window and saw Dr. Frank Olson lying on the sidewalk below. He was 43 years old when he died, and was survived by his wife, Alice Olson, two sons, Eric and Nils Olson, and a daughter, Lisa Olson.

At the time, his death was considered a suicide. But on June 11, 1975, *the Washington Post* headlined, "Panel Finds CIA Broke Law; Suicide Revealed."<sup>21</sup> The Post referred to the findings of the Rockefeller Commission, which was led by Vice President Nelson Rockefeller and set up by Gerald Ford to investigate CIA offenses. The article stated that in 1953, a government scientist had died after being covertly dosed with LSD by the CIA without his knowledge. Although the paper did not release the name of the scientist, it was later confirmed that they were indeed talking about Dr. Frank Olson.

In July of 1975, The Olson family demanded full disclosure of the facts surrounding the incident and wanted financial compensation. They received 750,000 dollars as well as an invitation to the White House. President Gerald Ford apologized on behalf of the government.

## **Section VI: Rockefeller Commission and Church Committee**

### *Part I: The Rockefeller Commission*

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<sup>21</sup> "PANEL FINDS CIA BROKE LAW; SUICIDE REVEALED." *The Washington Post* [Washington D.C.] 11 June 1975, 188th ed.: 1+. Print.

In the aftermath of Watergate, abuses by the CIA and other intelligence agencies were brought to the public's attention. In 1974, the 'reform Congress' began. President Gerald Ford created the President's Commission on CIA Activities in the United States. He appointed Vice-President Nelson Rockefeller to be the chairman.

This committee was intended to investigate the CIA and other portions of the government, such as the FBI. As well as looking into mail opening programs and the assignation of President John F. Kennedy.

However, the Rockefeller Commission was quickly overtaken by congressional Church Committee, whose scope was much broader. The Rockefeller Commission has been accused of being an (unsuccessful) attempt to keep information about what the government was doing a secret.<sup>22</sup>

### *Part II: Church Committee*

The Senate Select Committee to Study Governmental Operations with Respect to Intelligence Activities, also known as The Church Committee, was formed on January 27, 1975. This committee was formed after Seymour Hersh published a front-page article in the *New York Times* claiming that the CIA had been conducting illegal experiments. This caused former CIA officials and lawmakers to call for a congressional inquiry.

On January 21, 1975, Senator John Pastore, introduced a select committee that would investigate federal intelligence operation and determine

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<sup>22</sup> "Rockefeller Commission." Mary Ferrell Foundation: Preserving the Legacy. Mary Ferrell Foundation, n.d. Web. 07 Mar. 2015.

The extent, if any, to which illegal, improper, or unethical activities were engaged in by any agency of the Federal Government.<sup>23</sup>

The senate approved this with an astounding 82-4 vote. Majority Leader Mike Mansfield cautioned the Senate to not let it become a 'television extravaganza.' He and Republican Leader Hugh Scott made sure carefully select a mixture of committee members. Balancing experienced lawmakers with junior members and they made sure that the members represented a variety of political viewpoints. To head the committee, Senator Mansfield selected Frank Church a Democratic Senator from Idaho. His vice-chairman would be Republican John Tower from Texas, who was a member of the Armed Service Committee.

Frank Church was undoubtedly qualified for the position. He had been a member of the Committee on Foreign Relations for 16 years, as well as a co-chair for a special committee that examined the executive branch's consolidation of power in the Cold War era. He understood the value of these agencies, but was also very mindful that American institutions, like the CIA, needed to work within the confines of the U.S. Constitution.

This committee faced a formidable task:

To conduct a wide-ranging investigation of the nation's most secretive agencies and programs, and based on those findings, write a detailed report including legislative recommendations.<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>23</sup> Senate Resolution 21, 27 January 1975, Sec. 1.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid., 473.



They were given one year to complete this task, although later on it would be extended to sixteen months. In these sixteen months, they were to investigate the IRS, White House domestic surveillance tapes, the FBI's programs to disrupt civil rights and Anti- Vietnam movements, and most importantly examine the CIA biological and chemical agents programs.

After months of closed, executive sessions, in September and October of 1975 the committee held a series of public hearings in order to inform the American public about the unlawful and improper conducted intelligence agencies. These hearings were held on national television and offered the American people an opportunity to learn about the secret operations conducted for decades by the U.S.

On April 29, 1976, the commission published its final report. After sixteen months, combing through 110,000 documents, holding 126 committee meetings, and interviewing 800 witnesses, the investigators determined that "Intelligence agencies have undermined the constitutional rights of citizens."<sup>25</sup>

Their specific findings on the CIA's program to research behavioral modifications were very little in the original final report, due to the fact that many of the documents pertaining to the program had been destroyed. But in August of 1977, after the Freedom of Information Act was passed, the Church Committee received new documents with information on the CIA's drug and behavior control programs.

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<sup>25</sup> U.S. Congress, Senate, Select Committee to Study Governmental Operations with Respect to Intelligence Activities, Intelligence Activities and the Rights of Americans, 94 Cong., 2d sess., 1976, 1.

On August 3<sup>rd</sup>, 1977, the Church Committee held a hearing to review the new evidence. Although they had heard the testimonies of people who had been involved in these experiments, documentation allowed them to fully understand the extent of such programs.

In response to this new information, Senator Kennedy, along with Senator Schweiker and Senator Javits, introduced The National Research Act (Public Law 93348) that was designed to minimize the potential for any similar abuse of human rights in the future. The National Research Act created the National Commission of the Protection of Biomedical and Behavioral Research. They are responsible for all further research that involves human subjects.

The National Commission of Human Subjects of Biomedical and Behavioral Research released its own report in 1976, known as the Belmont Report.<sup>26</sup> The Commission recommended that the Department of Health, Education and Welfare adopt the Belmont Report in its entirety as a state Department policy.

In the report, it sets up the boundaries between practice and research as well as basic ethical principles. The ethical principles they stated include; informed consent; respect for the persons involved in the research; and the proper assessment of risks and benefits. Informed consent is when the person, whom is being asked to become involved in the research knows what is going to be happening to them in full detail. This also defines who may be tested on.

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<sup>26</sup> Department of Health, Education, and Welfare, Office of the Secretary PROTECTION OF HUMAN SUBJECTS. "Report of the National Commission for the Protection of Human Subjects of Biomedical and Behavioral Research." *BELMONT REPORT: ETHICAL PRINCIPLES AND GUIDELINES FOR THE PROTECTION OF HUMAN SUBJECTS OF RESEARCH* (1979). National Commission for the Protection of Human Subjects of Biomedical and Behavioral Research. Web.

People with reasonable judgment, meaning, people who are not mentally handicap, or mentally ill. Informed consent goes hand in hand with proper assessment of risks and benefits. In order for someone to properly consent they need to understand the risks of being involved in biomedical or behavioral research, as well as the benefits.

The Church Committee is still in effect today, and monitors the intelligence agencies within the United States.

**Conclusion:**

After compiling, analyzing, and assessing all the information, it is an undeniable fact that the CIA conducted experiments with LSD-25 on unwilling human subjects. There is no evidence that the Soviet Union was testing or using LSD as a truth serum, or a mind control substance. The fear instilled in the government during the Cold War was the probable cause that allowed the United States to violate basic human rights, in the name of 'protecting' its citizens.

These tests caused many of these people who had been dosed to become something other than themselves. A countless number of these victims faced mental illness, like depression, after the experimentation was conducted. Families were torn apart, livelihoods were taken away, and one life was lost due to these inhuman tests. Project MKULTRA, along with its successors and predecessors, causes' irreparable damage to the lives of the people it involved.

However, from these atrocities rose a new form of checks and balance, though the works of the Church Commission. As well as lead to the creation of new legislation that would help

protect future citizens of the United States from having to experience anything like MKULTRA again.