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OTS/CB Memo #73-76  
2 August 1973**MEMORANDUM FOR THE RECORD****SUBJECT:   Psychical Research**

1. The attached article was published this month in Science. This article summarizes in a complete manner much of the major past and current research areas and their status. As indicated in the article, there has been and continues to be a consideration fraction of the effort in psychical research aimed at understanding the basic roots of the phenomena, i.e. basic research, but that little conclusive evidence and/or theories has resulted. The lack of results from basic research oriented studies is caused by the elusive nature of the evidence. Experiments are not necessarily reproducible. Results vary with the investigators, the subjects, the emotional situation, etc. Given this situation of not even knowing what observations to make or how to reproduce them once they are made, basic research on the subject is likely to continue to be of marginal significance. This is not to say that the ultimate understanding and utility of the phenomena could not result as a direct result of basic research. It is to say that achieving a "break through" in knowledge at the fundamental level in psychical research is such an ill defined task that it should not be assumed that the probability of achieving a break through is proportional to the effort or funding applied. That is, we should not expect doubling the funding and people will double the chances of achieving a fundamental break through.

2. Since the funds that can be made available by us for basic research are a small fraction of these now being spent, why should we consider investigating these phenomena. It is my opinion that the justification for more basic research in psychical phenomena is not that we expect to provide sufficient funds that we are over some threshold of effort and produce the one key experiment or theory

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which will unlock the ultimate theory. Rather our justification is that a small (compare to efforts underway) efforts will keep us informed of fundamental advancements in a timely manner. It may happen that our projects will provide the key experiments or ideas but time is not a reasonable primary goal for such investigations.

3. There is another aspect of psychical phenomena which should be of interest to the Agency, that is the applications. My view, parallels the thinking of the Stanford Research Institute group. This view is that psychical phenomena is assumed to exist. Now what are its properties; its range, power, variation with individuals. This view is a pragmatic one; finesse the question of how or why. What can an gifted individual do and document the ability. If this ability is of interest, explore its limits, determine its characteristics under useful conditions, etc. I believe that such an approach, using gifted subjects, has already produced tantalizing results.

4. I believe that the program psychical investigation previously planned as Stanford Research Institute include both aspects, the basic and applied of research. I feel that a similar program should be initiated again with a like blend of goals. Sufficient evidence of the existence and power of the phenomena has been accumulated for the intelligence community to ignore it would be a mistake which will be regretted.

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Attachment:  
Article

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