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CIA Drug Subjects At Ionia Hunted

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The CIA is attempting to locate 142 mental patients from the former Ionia State Hospital who were the subjects of experimentation with LSD and marijuana derivatives in a CIA-sponsored program.

The experiments, revealed in documents released this week by the CIA, were conducted from 1957 to 1960 on patients classified as sexual psychopaths under a now-repealed law.

Patients at the hospital never were told of the experiments, in which the subjects were given the drugs while being interrogated by doctors.

"We're trying to locate the victims to inform them and advise them of their rights and possibly make restitution," a CIA spokesman said Friday.

All those judged criminally insane were once sent to the Ionia State Hospital, which was run by the Department of Corrections. The program under which sexual psychopaths were committed without trial was ended in the late 1960s, and the hospital was closed in 1975.

One of the drug program's researchers, Dr. John G. Haarer, said Friday that the CIA had not told him it was about to release information on the experiments.

Dr. Haarer, now a general practitioner in Sarasota, Fla., said the victims of the experiments were committed and selected "through legal channels."

He identified Dr. Perry Robertson, now deceased, as the chief researcher. He declined to comment further.

RECORDS OF the Department of Mental Health show that Haarer was medical superintendent of the hospital during two years when the experiments were conducted.

CIA documents indicate that subjects were selected from those committed through the Detroit Recorder's Court psychiatric clinic and that some state judges may have been informed of the program.

Michigan Supreme Court Justice G. Mennen Williams, who was governor during the time of the drug experiments, said Friday that he could not recall being informed of the project.

Charles Wagg, director of the Department of Mental Health during the experiments, said Friday that he had not known of the CIA program.

MRS. SHIRLEY Vaughn, director of the Recorder's Court clinic, said employees from the era of the CIA experiments are either retired or dead. No program, code named MK-Ultra, identify the project manager as Dr. Alex Canty, now dead. Canty reportedly corresponded with the CIA through a double envelope mailing scheme using a pseudonym.

The experiments at Ionia were one of 149 projects at 80 U.S. and Canadian universities, hospitals, research foundations, drug firms and prisons, according to CIA Director Stansfield Turner.

The purpose of MK-Ultra was to determine the ways in which human behavior can be controlled through drugs, hypnotism and psychological torture.

Turner, in testimony before a joint session of the Senate Intelligence Committee and a Senate human resources subcommittee, said he finds such experiments on humans "totally abhorrent."

THE NAMES of researchers in the projects and the names of the non-government institutions were generally not made public but were given to the Senate panels.

This was done, according to a CIA spokesman, "to avoid potential embarrassment to those who were involved."

The experiments were funded through the Society for the Investigation of Human Ecology Inc., a CIA front pretending to study criminal behavior.

In fact, according to the released documents, the CIA's intention was "to exploit the research potential that is represented by 142 criminal sexual psychopaths (who) have the kind of motivation for withholding certain information that is comparable to operational interrogation situations in the field."

This meant, apparently, that mental patients who had something to hide were surrogates for CIA agents who might be captured and interrogated by the enemy with drugs similar to LSD.