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OSU prof linked to CIA work Mind control pursued in '60s

By Patrick E. Cole
Beacon Journal staff writer

To his friends and colleagues, George Alexander Kelly was a scholar and a gentleman.

He is considered among Ohio State University's top six psychology scholars in this century, and his personality theories earned him a place in the psychologists' International Hall of Fame, along with such legends as Sigmund Freud, Carl Jung and David Hume.



Kelly

His thinking and work are a landmark. Today, his papers are housed in archives named for him at the University of Nebraska.

Those who knew him generously season their comments with glowing adjectives, calling him: honest, ethical, brilliant, patriotic, insightful, Renaissance man.

But there is one trivia item many did not know: The proposal for Kelly's 1960-61 sabbatical research project sponsored by the now-defunct Human Ecology Fund ended up in the CIA's records that document Ohio State's participation in the agency's decade-long search for ways to control the human mind.

This discovery and others, made by the Beacon Journal through the federal Freedom of Information Act, links an Ohio State faculty member for the first time to one of the CIA's most bizarre and controversial bits of once-secret research.

In addition, the circumstances provide a view of the CIA's secret dealings with the academic community, a volatile issue on campuses during the student unrest of the 1960s and an issue that has re-emerged as a source of concern among many in the academic community today.

Earlier this month, Nadav Safran, a Harvard government professor, resigned as director of the Center for Middle Eastern Studies for failing to disclose that the CIA sponsored a conference the center organized on Islam and politics. That sponsorship drew attention in Europe, Asia and the Middle East as well as America.

And last week, the CIA told the New York Times it had re-established ties with universities and is receiving data from an increasing number of professors.

The project done at Ohio State 25 years ago was part of a program code-named MKULTRA — pronounced *M.K. Ultra*. It was the CIA's main research program into the development of chemical and biological agents from 1953 to the mid-1960s. Approved by former CIA Director Allen Dulles, the project searched for ways to develop chemical and biological agents to be used in "clandestine operations to control human behavior," according to Congressional documents.

In August 1977, when CIA Director Stansfield Turner released a ream of documents on MKULTRA to Congress, the program triggered worldwide outrage.

That same month, Ohio State officials announced it was one of 80 U.S. institutions involved, although the CIA would not identify the researchers.

But before the public learned about MKULTRA, it was a well-kept secret even within the CIA — so sensitive it wasn't mentioned in a secret 1968 CIA study of the agency's relationship with the academic community.

The extent of the research remains unknown since a CIA official ordered most MKULTRA records destroyed in January 1973. Yet some research — including ones done by Ohio State professors — had been saved.

Many universities do not view CIA-funded scholarly research as taboo, but in almost all cases they require funding by intelligence sources to be disclosed to the university. It isn't clear whether anyone at Ohio State knew Kelly received a CIA grant.

The research projects

MKULTRA was an umbrella under which 149 known subpro-

jects were conducted at universities, medical facilities and penal institutions. The CIA's Information and Privacy Division said two of those projects, numbered 96 and 101, were conducted at Ohio State.

The most information was released on subproject 96. Called *A Study of the Current Decision Matrices of (deleted) Scholars*, it was proposed by an Ohio State psychology professor July 18, 1959.

The project records, consisting of 30 pages of correspondence, a proposal, receipts and invoices, provide a classic illustration of how the CIA secretly arranged to have scholars do research.

The proposal said the project's purpose was to search for a new theory to explain how people reach decisions:

"Traditionally psychologists have approached the problem of understanding human behavior by attempting to seek out the motives or forces which seem to impel persons willy-nilly along particular lines of action. . . . But there is another approach," the proposal said.

As an alternative, the researcher proposed using a new theory called psychology of personal constructs — patterns perceived by individuals that are used to explain the realities encountered in life.

The researcher sought to discover how a college professor could be inclined to change his personal constructs and hence his position on an issue. The researcher assumed any person can be forced to change his position, so "it becomes important to find out what alternatives are available to him when he must make new choices."

"The firmness of his stand may be reassuring, providing he is never dislodged from it," the proposal said. "But the question is, what direction will he jump if he can no longer stand where he is standing?"

According to the records, the professor's wife accompanied him and helped collect data.

According to a CIA memo dated July 22, 1959, the project had two main goals: 1) to apply the