

ARTICLE APPEARED

ON PAGE A-2 THE WASHINGTON STAR (Green Line)

22 September 1977

CIA's Drug Tests Are Defended in Cold War Context

By Jeremiah O'Leary

Washington Star Staff Writer

The man who ran the CIA's covert mind-control and behavior-modification schemes has defended the program as indispensable at the time but said that one case involving the suicide of a CIA employe caused him much anguish.

Dr. Sidney Gottlieb, who was the agency's scientific chief from 1951 until his retirement in 1973, testified before a Senate subcommittee yesterday under a grant of immunity from prosecution.

Gottlieb was heard but not seen by an audience that filled the Senate hearing room while the mysterious former boss of the CIA projects testified in a smaller room nearby.

Senators said Gottlieb's physicians had convinced them his health is precarious and the senators had therefore agreed to question him privately while allowing the audience to listen over a public address hookup.

Soures said Gottlieb had a speech impairment, but it could hardly be detected over the public address system.

GOTTLIEB DID demonstrate remarkable skill at answering questions from Chairman Edward M. Kennedy, D-Mass., and other members of the Health subcommittee with words so vague that the senators found themselves with very little substance when Gottlieb was finished.

Gottlieb also said he resented being "victimized" by the CIA as the mastermind of the agency's drug project now that it has become subject to controversy and investigation. But he maintained the project was indispensable at the time.

"The context in which this investigation was started, about 1952," he said, "was that of the height of the Cold War... with the CIA organizing its resources to liberate Eastern Europe by paramilitary means."

"There was tangible evidence that both the Soviets and the Red Chinese might be using techniques of altering human behavior which were not understood by the United States and which would have implications of national survival."

HE SAID HE suffered personal anguish and considered resigning in November 1953 after the suicide of Frank Olson, a CIA employe who was unwittingly given a dose of LSD as part of the drug-testing program. But Gottlieb decided not to quit when he became convinced the administration of drugs did not cause Olson to leap to his death from a New York hotel window.

He caused a stir when he mentioned that he was once asked to determine whether any of President Nixon's traveling party were drugged during a trip to an unfriendly foreign country in 1971.

According to Gottlieb, Nixon was not drugged but some members of the party exhibited peculiar symptoms, including outbreaks of crying at inappropriate moments. He said the symptoms affected Dr. Walter Tkach, the White House physician.

The records show that in 1971 records show that Nixon traveled only to the Azores, Bermuda and the Bahamas, none considered to be unfriendly countries.

Reporters pursued Gottlieb a fair distance away from the Senate Office Building trying to get more particulars on his testimony, but he did not identify the country he meant.

ONE OFFICIAL who was involved in most of Nixon's trips said that two years after the 1972 journey to Moscow he heard that some members of the White House medical department had become ill on the return flight. But this person said he probably would have known it if anyone had been ill on the Moscow trip, at which the SALT I agreement was signed.

A source, who declined to be named, said he did not believe the Russians would try to drug anyone in the President's party on the same trip which resulted in the arms limitation agreement.

Gottlieb said all the drug programs were cleared with CIA directors but he did not know how much information Congress had about what was going on. He said he considered the drug testing to be in the highest national interests because there was tangible evidence that the Russians and the Red Chinese might be using techniques for altering human behavior.

BEFORE GOTTLIEB finished what he had to say and left to return to his retirement home in California, he came as close as he ever has to justifying what the CIA did in the United States. He said:

"I understand that one of the principal interests of this committee is the degree of protection that was afforded to the subjects used in those experiments where human subjects were used. As far as the Bureau of Narcotics project is concerned, my impression was that there was no advance knowledge or protection of the individuals concerned. Harsh as it may seem in retrospect, it was felt that in an issue where national survival might be concerned such a procedure and such a risk was a reasonable one to take."

The senators tried to find out from Gottlieb what the CIA got in return for all the money it spent on MK-ULTRA and the other drug-testing projects. He never really claimed success or admitted failure. Kennedy therefore did his own summing up as he closed the book on the CIA's drug-testing experiments.

He said, "The bulk of the research led nowhere."

STAT