

The LSD Connection: To National Security

By **JOSEPH B. TREASTER**

WASHINGTON—In the very first series of experiments with hallucinogenic drugs that the United States army sponsored in the early nineteen fifties a man died. Not much later a Central Intelligence Agency experiment with LSD led to another death.

Having obtained such dire results, the Army and the C.I.A. might have been expected to stop their research and carefully examine where they had gone wrong. But the evidence that has emerged so far indicates that they did not. Instead, both the Army and the agency appear to have gone to great lengths to cover-up the embarrassing fatal incidents which the public learned of only in the last few months. Just yesterday the army disclosed that it had covered up the cause of death of three civilian employes who died of anthrax, a rare disease then being studied at Fort Detrick, Md.

The Army and the C.I.A. apparently were de-

termined to press on with the experiments because they apparently believed that national security was at stake. The first reports on hallucinogenic drugs that reached officials indicated that an enemy might be able to use them to break captured American intelligence agents under interrogation. Officials also feared that the nation's military forces could be rendered helpless should an enemy use drugs in an attack. The testing was designed to develop defenses against these drugs.

Up to now more than 4,000 persons have been subjected to experiments with mind-altering drugs, including LSD, mescaline and other chemical compounds that could produce hallucinations and hysteria. Most of the subjects were soldiers, but about 900 civilians received LSD and mescaline at universities and research institutes under military contracts. The civilian experiments ended a few years ago, but testing at Army installations was not suspended until this summer. The Central Intelligence Agency apparently had a smaller program of testing psychochemicals on Government employes, mainly scientists. The C.I.A. says that it ended its tests with LSD in 1967, but whether the agency continued testing other psychochemicals is not known.

The military men were lured into "volunteering" for the tests with three-day passes, an extra \$45 a month in pay and slick films showing girls on the beaches, the Lincoln Memorial and other attractions within easy reach of the Army's main drug testing center at the Edgewood Arsenal in Maryland. The soldiers were assured that there were "no hazards at all."

Sometimes, however, even these enticements were not enough. Army officials sent out regular quotas for "volunteers from posts throughout the country" and the Army has conceded that some commanders apparently coerced their men into "volunteering."

Usually, the soldiers in the Army tests were told nothing more than that they would receive a substance that would "affect their behavior," but some of the drugs were so potent that they would set off vomiting and dizziness and incapacitate a man for up to four days. Sometimes, in the C.I.A.'s experiments, the subjects were told nothing. Both the Army and the agency have admitted slipping LSD into cocktails. A few days after drinking one of these, Frank R. Olson, a Government biochemist plunged to his death from a Manhattan hotel window in late 1953.

What was told the civilian subjects is not clear because the researchers under contract were not monitored and only sketchy records were kept. However, the daughter of the first fatality, Harold Blauer, asserts that her father was not informed that he was part of an experiment paid for by the Army. She also says that he did not give his consent to take the dose of a mescaline derivative that was injected into him at the New York Psychiatric Institute in January, 1953. He died as a result.

Even after the experiments, most of the subjects, both civilian and military, were not told what they had been given. Follow-up studies were done on only a handful of the soldiers.

In late July the Army suspended its testing of drugs on humans and launched an internal investigation.

Why did it take the Government more than 20 years after the initial deaths to look critically at its drug testing programs, doing so only under public pressure? Apparently because officials felt they had been given a mission and must perform it. People may die and that is unfortunate, but the mission must succeed.

"You have to look at these experiments like a combat operation," said one of the few informed military men who would discuss the issue. "You start taking casualties in combat, and you don't stop. You press on. You take the objective. That's the way it was in these experiments. They were very important to national security, and we pressed on. It's unfortunate that somebody died. But we had to know what these drugs could do to people and how we could use them."

Joseph B. Treaster is a New York Times reporter.