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# CIA FINDS OTTERS MAKE THE BEST ANIMAL AGENTS

By A. J. McILROY in New York

THE Central Intelligence Agency has introduced a programme to train otters, seals, cats and dogs to carry explosives or microphones to places people cannot reach.

This was disclosed in 3,000 heavily-censored pages of study evaluations and documents made public yesterday by the agency at its Langley, Virginia, headquarters as a result of a request by the New York

TIMES under the Freedom of Information Act.

The use of animals in new espionage methods — the otter was regarded best because it travels over land and water — is only one of a large number of disclosures by the agency.

Secret experiments were also carried out on developing weapons like poison pellets, electric stun guns and calibrated blackjacks.

The New York Times, in a report yesterday, said that it had initiated the publication of the agency documents. But, the newspaper added, "which of the ideas were developed and which were discarded is uncertain because the agency refused official comment on the documents."

"In addition, many details and almost every proper name and title were deleted from the documents, so that the projects emerge in general terms. The agency has been stung by earlier disclosures of covert research and development projects that included use of LSD and other mind-altering drugs, as well as elaborate sexual entrapment schemes."

## Opinion switch

The intelligence disclosures secured by the New York Times come shortly after the collapse in Congress and the Senate of attempts to introduce a "charter of conduct" imposing restrictions on the operational methods of the CIA and other agencies.

Public opinion, which had been roused by earlier revelations of "CIA abuses" including reports of undercover operations spying on Americans at home and abroad, has undergone complete change because of the outrage over the holding of American hostages in Iran since Nov. 4.

The lobby opposing restrictions on intelligence operations argued that Iran and events in neighbouring Afghanistan, invaded by Russian troops, demanded unhampered undercover agencies.

Some of the actions described in the newly released CIA papers, the New York Times said, talk of investigations into behaviour modification and mind control. This grew out of research in the 1950s and 1960s, which in turn stemmed from continuing Russian interest in this field.

## Stopping hijackers

An insight is also given into the attention paid by the CIA to anti-sky-jacking techniques.

One method was a giant piston that would be incorporated in the pilot's seat so that when a hijacker entered the airliner's flight deck the pilot could trigger the 25-pound piston and knock the intruder through the door. Another device mentioned but not explained was "an electrified net."

There were references to studies of a "jet-propelled medicine ball," which the New York Times said, was presumably a reference to a murder weapon which has been used by Russian agents to kill several anti-Communist dissidents.

One case involved Georgi Markov, the Bulgarian dissident who died in London two years ago after being struck by a poisoned pellet shot from an umbrella tip. The hollow ball was filled with a deadly poison.

The CIA document discussing this "murder weapon" was written years before the murder in London. This appeared to be an example of how often both sides work on similar techniques simultaneously.

The documents also refer to a study of "incapacitating darts" and "a flash blindness incapacitator" using an extremely bright light source similar to a British device to end a number of hostage seizures.