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PROGRAM Jack Anderson Confidential

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SUBJECT MK/Ultra

JACK ANDERSON: Two decades ago, the Central Intelligence Agency carried out secret experiments on thousands of American citizens. The purpose was to discover ways to control human behavior. The super-secret program used unwitting victims as living test tubes for bizarre mind-altering drugs. The CIA called the project MK/Ultra.

Now, for the first time, some of the victims have stepped forward. They're former inmates of Atlanta federal penitentiary, where they were given LSD and other drugs as part of the MK/Ultra program. Now they're suing the CIA for lying to them about the true purposes of the experiments, also for the mental damage they say they suffered from the drug sessions.

Last week I sent my associate John Lee Anderson to investigate their story. He traveled to Georgia, Florida, and Kentucky. He interviewed the men involved in the sordid CIA experiment. This is what they told him.

RUSSELL KIRK: After 1960, I was just -- I didn't even know what I was doing at times. And it had to be what they gave me in '57 and '58, 'cause I never, never took any drugs before.

ANDERSON: Farrell Kirk was one of the CIA's unsuspecting human guinea pigs. He was used as a living medical mixing bowl. What happened to him? He was driven to repeated suicide attempts.

KIRK: I got very depressed because I knew something was wrong and I couldn't figure out what it was. And it was just like a voice was telling me, you know, I just soon be dead as to be in this shape or predicament.

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JOHN LEE ANDERSON: So you slashed your wrists?

KIRK: I did. And they took and sewed me up and brought me back and put me in the hole. And I begged them not to put me in the hole. They asked me why did I do it. I said I don't know. And I said I just felt like I didn't want to live any longer. And he said, "Well, we've got to put you in there for safe-keeping.

So I chewed this vein here while I was in the hole.

J.L. ANDERSON: With your teeth.

KIRK: Yeah. And when I passed out -- when they opened the door to check, I just feel out, and they went and gave me a blood transfusion. They put me in a straitjacket then. And when they took me out of the straitjacket, I tried to hang myself with the blanket. And I very nearly suc -- I almost succeeded more with the blanket than I did with the razor blade.

ANDERSON: Kirk is not the only one affected by the drug test. His fellow plaintiffs in the lawsuit against the CIA complain of long-term aftereffects.

JAMES KNIGHT: I go off occasionally. And I've had loss of memory real bad. Several years [unintelligible], some of the experiences that I had while I was on LSD, some of them will come back to me.

ANDERSON: James Knight is back in prison on a parole violation. He comes from a long line of moonshiners. He was doing time for this offense when he participated in the Atlanta LSD experiments. Like Kirk, Knight says the effect was to turn him violent.

KNIGHT: I was a bootlegger when I started, and I never been in no crime of violence or anything like that. And I got convicted. And I've cut several since then and pistol-whipped two or three since then. And it's just changed -- it's just changed me altogether. In fact, no longer than September I was on furlough and I went home and I beat my wife real bad.

J.L. ANDERSON: And you never did this before the experiments.

KNIGHT: No, I've never done anything like that before.

J.L. ANDERSON: You attribute it to the LSD experiments.

KNIGHT: Certainly I do.

ANDERSON: Justice Department lawyers handling the CIA's defense refused to be interviewed. They also counseled defense witnesses against speaking to us. But Dr. Lawrence Bryan did come forth. He's a clinical psychologist who worked in the Atlanta prison at the time of the experiment. He did the psychological screening tests of the prisoners who took part in the LSD project.

J.L. ANDERSON: Do you believe, as a psychologist and as a person who was there at the time when these experiments were conducted, that their claim is justified, that of damages for physical and mental harm done to them as a result of these experiments?

DR. LAWRENCE BRYAN: I cannot see that there was any harm that they sustained. They certainly did not tell me about any harm, either during the project or any time later on.

ANDERSON: This story may never have become known but for the efforts of John Marks. He's an intelligence expert and author of the definitive book on the CIA's attempts to control human behavior. Marks spoke to us about the CIA's reasons for the MK/Ultra project.

JOHN MARKS: There was an age-old dream in the intelligence business about making people do things against their will, to give you information, to perform acts that they didn't want to perform. And the CIA secretly was looking for a pill or a ray or some technique, a panacea, if you will, which would allow them to manipulate people against their will.

What the CIA was doing in Atlanta was trying out LSD on people, on a captive population. But mainly, the CIA was looking for the effect that it would have on certain personality types.

J.L. ANDERSON: Is there punishment that can be meted out to them? Should there be?

MARKS: Well, there's a standard of medical testing which the United States Government established at Nuremberg in 1945 because there had been Nazi experimentation on prisoners in concentration camps during the war. And that standard was very basic. It said that you could not do medical experiments on people against their will. They had to give their consent and they had to understand what they were consenting to. And we, as a country, executed Nazi doctors who had violated that standard.

Three or four years later, by 1950, our own government was doing those same kinds of experiments on unwitting subjects.

ANDERSON: How many men had their lives ruined by the

CIA's secret tests? We may never know.

On February 14th, a pre-trial hearing will be held in Atlanta to determine whether the case can go to the trial court. The CIA's defense? That the statute of limitations has run out. In other words, our government is trying to evade responsibility through legal technicalities.