



DOCUMENTATION

Military funded McGill LSD trial Eight volunteered in '60s

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The Canadian military funded LSD experiments on students and musicians in Montreal in the early 1960s. The tests were part of a larger military-research program to explore the effects of powerful mind-altering drugs at the height of the Cold War. Newly uncovered records show Canada's Defence Research Board sponsored LSD tests at McGill University and studied even more powerful hallucinogens in secret experiments in rural Alberta. In the 1964 McGill tests, researchers injected volunteers - six students and two professional musicians - with LSD and showed them ink drawings to determine the effects on visual perception. At the Defence Research Establishment Suffield in Ralston, Alta., scientists administered doses of LSD and other psychotropic drugs to laboratory rats to explore the potential of the substances to control human behaviour.

The Alberta researchers obtained the most potent of the hallucinogens from the American Army Chemical Centre at Edgewood Arsenal in Maryland, which collaborated with the U.S. Central Intelligence Agency in a race against the East Bloc to develop mind-control drugs.

"It was after the Korean War, when mind control and this type of thing was thought to be very important," said Dr. Herbert (Dinny) Madill, who conducted animal studies with pharmacological agents at Suffield, in an interview. "We researched this family of drugs, and certainly LSD was one."

The documents, obtained by Southam News and the Ottawa Citizen, are believed to be the first public indication the Canadian military tested brain-altering drugs, albeit on a much smaller scale than the Americans.

U.S. author Allen Hornblum, whose recent book, *Acres of Skin*, extensively documents CIA-funded experiments on inmates at a Pennsylvania prison, said he's not surprised by the Canadian military's interest in hallucinogens. "The CIA spent a lot of years and spent a lot of dollars to develop some sort of magic bullet, some potion they could give a soldier, or anyone else, who would then do their bidding." The 1959 novel *The Manchurian Candidate*, by Richard Condon, popularized the notion of military-sponsored mind control. The best-seller, later a movie starring Frank Sinatra, featured a communist plot to brainwash a captured American soldier in Manchuria, programming him to assassinate the U.S. president. Little did audiences know, life imitated art as U.S. scientists clandestinely explored these very concepts. "Very simply," Hornblum said, "they were trying to create the Manchurian Candidate." Hornblum's book describes U.S. military experiments, some involving prisoners, to investigate the effects of potent chemicals such as LSD, BZ, atropine and scopolamine, many of them supplied by the Edgewood Arsenal facility.

The goal: to find a sure means of chemically controlling the mind.

Madill, who worked at Suffield between 1960 and 1973, said he and his Canadian colleagues had regular meetings with their U.S. counterparts at Edgewood Arsenal. But he had no knowledge of CIA interest in the hallucinogenic work. Still, Madill said, the intelligence agency might well have monitored the Suffield studies. “I’m sure if (the CIA) did their work properly, they probably did.”

The test subjects used by Madill and his colleagues came from a colony of rats, mice and guinea pigs at Suffield. Madill said he never gave hallucinogens to humans and shudders today at the suggestion of such experimentation.

However, a 1965 report on the McGill study in the Berlin-based journal Psychopharmacologia said the inquiry was funded in part by a Defence Research Board grant. The study, The Effect of Lysergic Acid Diethylamide (LSD-25) on Perception With Stabilized Images, was conducted by researchers affiliated with McGill’s psychology department. The LSD was injected by two doctors from the university’s Allan Memorial Institute. The institute is known as the site of controversial brainwashing studies carried out by Dr. Ewen Cameron in the late 1950s and early 1960s. The experiments, funded by a covert CIA front organization, involved LSD, electroshock and sensory deprivation. Cameron was never able to persuade the Defence Research Board to finance his work. Until now, there was no hint the Canadian military sponsored research into psychedelic drugs. The newly uncovered McGill study involved two separate experiments.

In one procedure, two male and two female students participated in a series of six tests over several weeks. They strapped on a viewfinder and were injected with the LSD-25, then shown a number of geometric figures. Their ability to recognize certain patterns while under the influence of the drug was plotted on charts and graphs.

In a similar procedure, four more subjects, including two “professional musicians,” were given the drug and shown more drawings.

“It was found that ‘flicks,’ the rapid, jerky motions that compensate for the slow drift of the eye, were twice as frequent,” the researchers noted.

Even though it was helping finance the studies, nowhere in the official account of the experiment does the military say what it hoped to learn.

At that time, LSD research was quite common. It was the subject of more than 1,000 studies and was considered a possible treatment for alcoholism and schizophrenia. Later studies cast doubt on the initial optimism, however. In 1969, the drug was outlawed in Canada. Military researchers in the United States experimented with a host of other powerful mind-controlling substances in programs that continued into the early 1970s. In Alberta, many of these chemicals were pumped into rodents at Suffield. Years earlier, during World War II, Suffield scientists played a vital role in the Allied effort to develop and test biological and chemical weapons. In the postwar era, Suffield researchers continued the close association with their superpower neighbour to the south. A handful of Canadian scientists, including Madill, explored the effects of so-called incapacitating agents on rodents. In a November 1968 experiment by one of Madill’s associates, rats were injected with compounds including LSD and BZ, an even more powerful hallucinogen that could induce week-long highs and maniacal behaviour. A report on the experiment says

the drugs “rapidly affected the animals.” The psychedelics were supplied by Edgewood Arsenal, while another drug used in the tests, BOL-148, came from the Montreal branch of Sandoz, the

Swiss company that invented LSD. “Currently there are at least two compounds, BZ and LSD-25, which have been considered as candidates for military use,” says the report.

“They are extremely potent and have a profound effect on man.” Madill said the research was intended to help understand how the chemicals worked so the military could devise antidotes against them, in keeping with the defensive nature of postwar work at Suffield. Now living in St. Catharines, Ont., the 65-year-old retiree wonders whether it was naive to believe drugs could be used to bend or dictate the human will. “At the height of the Cold War, a lot of this stuff was ‘classified’ research,” Madill said. “I can look back upon it and say I spent a very strange life.”

MULRONEY’S FATHER IN LAW AND MILITARY LSD FUNDING

**By MIKE BLANCHFIELD and JIM BRONSKILL
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OTTAWA - Brian Mulroney’s future father-in-law was one of two Montreal doctors involved in a military-funded LSD experiment on volunteer students and musicians. The authors of the study, published in 1965, credit physicians DIMITRI PIVNICKI and ROBERT CLEGHORN for assuming medical responsibility in the administration of the drug. Cleghorn and Pivnicki, whose daughter Mila would later marry Mulroney, were members of the psychiatry department at McGill University’s Allan Memorial Institute. The LSD study was part of an ongoing investigation of human perception and short-term memory by McGill psychologists, with financial assistance from the federal Defence Research Board. The Allan Memorial’s current director, Dr. Herta Guttman, said she had no knowledge of the Canadian military’s involvement in the LSD research at McGill. She added it was highly unlikely that the consulting physicians, Pivnicki and Cleghorn, had any idea the experiment was funded by the military. At the time, LSD was legal and the subject of countless research papers. Documents obtained by Southam News and the Ottawa Citizen show the research board provided money for the McGill study, which involved six student volunteers and two unnamed professional musicians. Guttman said she knew nothing about the experiment, but speculated it may have been a product of Cold War security fears. During the Korean War a lot of governments were interested in brainwashing and things like that,” Guttman said in an interview. “I’m not so sure the researchers would have known the Canadian military was funding it.” The Allan Memorial was the site of brainwashing experiments by Dr. Ewen Cameron in the 1950s and early ‘60s. Cameron’s work, funded in part by the U.S. Central Intelligence Agency, included LSD, electroshock therapy and sensory deprivation. However, until now there was no hint of Canadian military involvement with LSD at McGill. Dr. Peter Lockwood, a Defence Department spokesman, played down the military’s connection to the newly uncovered McGill study. He said the experiment was part of a much larger, 18-year examination of perception and memory by a McGill psychologist, who oversaw various projects. Lockwood said it was unlikely that the Defence Research Board knew McGill researchers were using LSD - even though the board supplied the money. “I find no evidence it was reported to the (Defence) Department,” said Lockwood. In the study, six university students and two musicians were given LSD and their ability to recognize geometric patterns was measured. However, because the drug was

administered by injection, the two medical doctors were recruited by the researchers to supervise the procedure. Cleghorn, who succeeded Cameron as head of Allan Memorial, has since died. Pivnicki, now in his 80s, lives in Montreal and is ill, said Guttman. She declined to arrange an interview with Pivnicki, saying that he has undergone several recent operations. “The fact is I would not disturb him with such things,” she added. “I don’t want to co-operate with this story.” Pivnicki and his wife, Bogdanka, emigrated to Canada from Sarajevo, Yugoslavia.

At the time of the McGill LSD study, Mulronev was completing his law studies and had yet to meet Mila Pivnicki. The couple married in 1973.

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