

Agency Information

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[R] - ITEM IS RESTRICTED

Boston, David - interview

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300-8

SECRET

April 24, 1975

MEMORANDUM FOR THE FILE

SUBJECT: Interview with M. David Boston

On Wednesday, April 23, 1975, M. David Boston was interviewed by James N. Roethe at the South Building, Office of Technical Service complex in Washington. The interview commenced at approximately 1:30 and terminated at approximately 3:10. Mr. Boston appeared voluntarily for the interview.

Background Information on Mr. Boston

Boston has a Masters degree in Agricultural Biochemistry from the University of Missouri. Several years prior to joining the Agency he worked for UMC Industries, Inc. in St. Louis in their laboratory for some period and doing pyrotechnics work for his last two years. During those last years, he was working on several UMC Industries projects for the CIA (an animal toxicology program and a secret writing systems program). He was asked to join the Agency and did so on May 1, 1961. He has worked with TSD or OTS (in the development and engineering sections) during his entire CIA career.

For the first three months with CIA, Boston worked in the Chemistry Branch. At the end of that period, a Biological Branch split off from the Chemistry Branch and Boston remained there until 1968. There were only three persons in that branch at the time (Boston, Dr. Ray Treichler--its head, and [redacted]) [redacted] was later replaced by [redacted] in about 1965. In 1968 the Biological Branch remerged with the Chemistry Branch. In July 1970, Boston became Deputy Chief of the Chemistry Branch and in January 1971 he became Branch Chief.

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Destruction of Documents re Drug Program

Shortly after Boston came aboard in 1961, Sid Gotlieb became Deputy Chief of TSD. He had previously been Chief of the Development and Engineering Section of TSD. He remained Deputy Chief of TSD for about two years and then assumed the position of Chief which he remained in until TSD was shifted from the Operations Directorate to Science and Technology. At that time Gotlieb retired.

About six months before Gotlieb retired, he requested that Boston destroy all records pertaining to a TSD project, MKULTRA. Gotlieb did not tell Boston why these records were to be destroyed. Boston was aware that these were contract files, funded under a special funding mechanism which would not show CIA or governmental interest. The MKULTRA files consisted of 152 files dated from April 1952 through May 1967. Boston called up all of these files from the CIA Archives, had them torn and burned. It took four people a full day to destroy these documents. Boston was never told whether Gotlieb made his request at the request of Mr. Helms. However, he assumes that the request came from higher authority because at the same time, CRD was told to stop all work in its drug programs. The MKULTRA files all involved drug programs although TSD was out of the drug business at the time these files were destroyed.

TSD's Drug Program - MKULTRA

Boston did do some fringe work on MKULTRA during his early years with the Agency. He is sure that this project involved a search for certain chemicals which could influence the behavior or mind of an individual. The purpose of this work was to find drugs which would open a person up and make him more vulnerable to interrogation, or to temporarily disorient a person. The project was eventually terminated because these chemicals were not being used operationally and it was also difficult to find compounds of this nature. Many of the drugs that were experimented with were obtained from pharmaceutical houses (drugs that had been rejected because of unusual side effects).

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ORD had been keeping a list of such drugs. This was also the primary source of drugs by Edgewood Arsenal which was the Army's installation for experimentation in chemical warfare.

Testing on Animals

In the early 1960s, Boston himself conducted many tests of drugs on animals. Much of this experimentation was undertaken by contractors such as UMC Industries of St. Louis and Resources Research Institute in San Mateo, California.

Testing with Humans

Boston only knows of three materials which were tested on humans while he was with OTS. These were all tested on voluntary subjects from the Agency or from Bacaville Correctional Center in Bacaville, California. The three are as follows:

1. A fluorescent chemical which when mixed with shampoo would leave fluorescent traces on the hair. This was used for identification purposes.
2. A non-detectable fluorescent tattoo also used for identification purposes and detected with ultraviolet light.
3. Cylert-magnesium pemoline which is a memory and learning enhancement material. Testing showed that this product was not effective.

Boston himself tested the two fluorescent materials on himself.

None of these tests caused any bad side effects on the subjects. Boston has not heard of any tests every conducted by TSD or CTS which resulted in bad side effects on humans. He has heard rumors that certain tests were at one time conducted on unwitting subjects but he knows of none of the specifics.

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LSD Program

Boston is aware of an LSD program run in the 1950s under Dr. Hank Bortner. Dr. Bortner left the Agency many years ago and is since deceased. He told Boston that he had taken LSD himself during the course of testing. Boston was not aware that tests had ever been conducted on unwitting subjects.

It is the Office of Technical Services' policy today not to conduct tests of any type of product on unwitting subjects, no matter how harmless. Boston believes that it has always been the policy of TSD and CTS to test potentially harmful drugs (such as those which influence behavior) only on witting subjects. He would have frowned upon tests of such products on unwitting subjects.

The Biological Branch

The Biological Branch existed from 1961 through 1968. He engaged in the following activities:

1. It conducted technical chemical warfare and biological warfare surveillance programs to determine if foreigners were manufacturing chemical warfare or biological warfare drugs. This consisted on taking air and water samples and analyzing them.
2. The Branch developed tear gas and other harassment gasses for use against foreign groups. These were used primarily by liaison services to control crowds, etc., unfriendly to those governments. The gasses were manufactured in canisters which were unmarked and untraceable.
3. Animal training programs, started by ORD, were continued by TSD. In particular, ravens were trained to deliver packages, etc.
4. The Branch also engaged in an ongoing analytical program wherein they would analyze any substance brought to the Agency by operating divisions.

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The Biological Branch has never engaged in any positive chemical warfare or biological warfare activity. They would have relied on Edgewood Arsenal for chemical warfare materials or Fort Dietrich for biological warfare materials. Both these installations were Army installations and have been closed down.

The Chemical Branch

Since 1968 the Biological Branch remerged with the Chemical Branch, Boston states that the Chemical Branch has engaged in the following activities.

1. The development of power sources. This is by far the Chemical Branch's most important activity, taking up about two-thirds of its time. These power sources are the types which are used by agents in transmitters, etc., used in the field. These batteries must be of long-life and of special configurations for concealment purposes.
2. The analytical facility previously operated by the Biological Branch is now operated by the Chemical Branch.
3. training activities are carried out to train to retrieve dead drops.
4. An Agency security pouch system has been developed which cannot be opened without CIA being able to detect the fact that it has been opened.
5. Several programs in the development of adhesives have been undertaken to permit the quick planting of audio devices and to create an adhesive for use in disguise.
6. The chemical warfare technical surveillance previously carried on by the Biological Branch is now carried on by the Chemical Branch.
7. Some nuclear technical surveillance is conducted in conjunction with the Systems Branch.

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8. The Branch has developed component parts for other development and engineering branch projects.

9. The Branch is involved in a radiation health badge service for personnel overseas.

The Chemical Branch has not been engaged in any experimentation with drugs which influence the mind or behavior. They have not been involved at all with drugs that would in any way affect humans. If any branch would carry on such activity, it would be the Chemical Branch.

The Manufacture of Poison Capsules

If poison capsules had been manufactured by CIA, the most likely place for such manufacture would have been the Biological Branch of CTS or TSD. Boston states that the Branch did have some capsules when he first came aboard (he doesn't know who developed them; they have since been destroyed). These were hydrogen-cyanide capsules for suicides. They could not be given to a human unknowingly as the person taking the capsule had to crush a gas capsule with his teeth and then suck back sharply.

Boston is not aware of any other poison capsules which have been manufactured by the Chemical Branch or by the Biological Branch between 1961 and 1968. Boston reiterated that if a tasteless poison were to be developed in capsule form, with a delayed lethal reaction, it would almost surely be developed by the Biological Branch of TSD.

Boston stated that the Biological Branch was working with Fort Dietrich on a dart launcher which would shoot a tiny dart which could not be felt by the victim. The dart was large enough to carry lethal material but it was being developed to simply immobilize victims and it apparently was not large enough to carry sufficient amounts of knock-out material.

Boston believes he would have heard of a poison capsule project but he is not sure. The requirement may have come to a specific individual if it was a sensitive job.

Dr. Ray Treichler, who was head of the Biological Branch from 1961 until 1966 or 1967, presently works for Hudson Manufacturing Company in Chicago. Dr. Nathan Gordon, who took over for Dr. Treichler, now is the Washington representative of the Midwest Research Institute of Kansas City.

The Biological Branch would have been the branch most likely to prepare any wearing apparel or diving gear infected with lethal strains of biological organisms. Boston is aware of no such requirements placed upon OTS during the 1960s. He did state that CIA did support financially some biological work being done by the Army at Fort Dietrich. He is unaware of any requirements placed upon Fort Dietrich for organism infected wearing apparel.


Miscellaneous Matters

Boston has engaged in no projects with CTS, nor has he heard of any projects where he would have questioned the propriety of the project.

Those persons who may have been involved in early drug programs include Dr. Treichler, Dr. Bortner (dead) and Dr. Gotlieb (in India). Other old-timers in the Chemistry Branch include Dr. Lashbrook (retired in 1960).

Boston is not aware of any testing done by CIA at Fort Dietrich.

It is unlikely that the Operations group would go outside the Agency for a substance such as poison capsules.


James N. Roethe

ADVICE AND WAIVER

8040 Bldg.
Place Offices of the Senate Clerk
Date 4/23/75
Time 1:40 PM

Before you make any statement to, or answer any questions from, the Commission or its investigators, you should understand that you have the right to remain silent. If you choose to answer, anything you say can be used against you in court.

You may consult a lawyer for advice before any questions are put, and you may have a lawyer with you during questioning. If you cannot afford a lawyer, one will be appointed for you before questioning if you wish. If you decide to answer questions without a lawyer present, you still have the right to stop answering at any time; or you may defer your answer until you talk to a lawyer.

WAIVER

I have read and understand the foregoing advice. I am willing to make a statement and answer questions with without a lawyer at this time. No promises or threats have been made to me, and no pressure or coercion of any kind has been used against me.

Signed

[Empty signature box]

Witness: James M. Ricketts
Witness: _____
Witness: 1:40 PM