

Cancer once possible CIA weapon

United Press International
WASHINGTON — A quarter-century ago, the CIA considered experimenting on terminal cancer patients under the guise of "legitimate medical work," but government documents fail to show if such ideas were carried out.

Heavily censored material obtained under the Freedom of Information Act showed the agency was looking into ways to "knock off key guys" by causing death by apparently natural causes such as cancer and heart attacks.

The CIA also was concerned about the vulnerability of U.S. leaders to assassination by such virtually undetectable means.

But there is nothing to show whether the talk about inducing cancer and heart attacks ever got past the memorandum stage.

The papers, researched by Martin Lee of the Washington-based Assassination Information Bureau, show that the CIA project apparently started with an undated, unsigned memo noting the "vulnerability of U.S. to unconventional attack" and referred to studies by the Office of Strategic Services, the World War II predecessor of the CIA.

"Knock off key people," the heavily censored document said. "How knock off key guys. Natural Causes. Method produce cancer."

"Heart techniques. Query — should facts on (blank) be dug up?"

"Are they of interest to (blank)? Probably yes."

"At any rate, we need know enough more about it to decide how much interest we have in it."

The next pertinent document was a Feb. 4, 1952, "draft" memorandum from "Chemical Branch, Research & Development." It reported inspecting a lab for possible use in "medical research involving physiologically active chemical compounds."

"Human subjects would be available for work that could be carried out as legitimate medical research," it said. "Extensive animal facilities exist for other kinds of research."

The memo discussed the use of beryllium, a metallic element said to have "extreme toxicity" and capable of inducing tumors.

It suggested "a study of the effect of inhaling small amounts of beryllium in the lungs, and other studies to evaluate the potentialities of beryllium as a covert weapon."

A document dated Aug. 4, 1954, showed the project was still being considered seriously.

The unidentified writer provided a bibliography of such relevant works as "Chemical Induction of

Cancer" and "Survey of Compounds Tested for Carcinogenic Properties," and said:

"Methylcholanthrene is now recognized as probably the most potent

known carcinogen (cancer-causing agent) in the production of tumors of various types."

It suggested using "normal constituents of the human organism" to

produce methylcholanthrene in the body "through a process of abnormal metabolism." A footnote gave the cost of the chemical as being \$4.40 a half-gram, \$8.25 a gram.



Battalion photo by Ken Agorichas

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Bahá'ís believe in the unity of God and accept the divine origin of religions, including Judaism, Christianity, Islam, and Buddhism.

Bahá'ís advocate the unity of nations and races, the establishment of universal peace, the equality of the sexes, and the abolition of all forms of prejudice.

Bahá'ís propose the adoption of an international auxiliary language, the abolition of barriers to international, economic and cultural exchange, and the development of institutions that would ensure lasting peace.

Bahá'ís abstain from partisan politics, refuse to assume hostile attitudes or to engage in violence, emphasizing instead the need to spiritualize humanity and to apply moral standards to institutions as well as to individuals.

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