



MKULTRA

The Program that Spawned Jason Bourne and Stranger Things

By **Elly Flippen**

The goal of MKULTRA was to research and create chemical, biological, and radiological substances for covert operations by the CIA with the intention of manipulating human behavior. This included using drugs and other unconventional methods to gain control over individuals' thoughts and actions. The program had been in operation for twenty-two years before it was exposed for its illegal activities during the Watergate scandal. Overall, its primary objective was to develop an effective means of controlling the human mind through scientific experimentation.

The acronym MKULTRA is derived from "MK" standing for the Technical Services Division or Staff (TSD/TSS) of the CIA, a legacy group that existed before the formation of the CIA itself. The TSD/TSS was previously part of the OSS' Research and Development Branch, later known as the Office of Technical Service (OTS), which specialized in creating gadgets, disguises, forged documents, and weapons. The "ULTRA" portion of the acronym was originally used by British intelligence during World War II to refer to intercepted enemy communications that were obtained through deciphering encoded messages sent via radio and other frequencies.

According to the tale, in 1953, then CIA director Allen Dulles launched MKULTRA and put chemist Dr. Sidney Gottlieb in charge. Dr. Gottlieb was nicknamed "the CIA's poisoner in chief" and this program was started as a response to alleged mind-control tactics used by the Soviets, Chinese, and North Koreans on US airmen who were held captive during the Korean War.

This statement may have just been a cover story for two main reasons. Firstly, the panel that was tasked with investigating how some of the captured airmen were seemingly brainwashed found out that it was just due to sleep deprivation; no drugs or other means were used. Secondly, MKULTRA was not the lone program of its kind, nor was it the original one. The CIA, in collaboration with the US Army and Navy and Defense Department, had multiple programs like this dating back to World War I and even involving British Intelligence

For centuries, those in positions of power and those vying for it have understood the key to achieving their goals: weaken the morale of anyone who stands in their way. This is achieved through psychological warfare, manipulating the beliefs, fears, and desires of one's opponents. It is a calculated and strategic approach, aimed at breaking down the mental fortitude of those who dare to challenge them. From ancient empires to modern governments, the concept remains the same: control the minds and hearts of your enemies, and you control their actions.

During modern times, the British were remarkably adept at mastering this technique, especially during World War I. As a result of their success, in 1921, the Tavistock Institute of Human Relations was established in London with the specific purpose of studying the effects of shellshock on British soldiers. Under the strict supervision of the British Army Bureau of Psychological Warfare, their primary objective was to determine the threshold at which men would break under extreme stress. This marked the beginnings of formalized mind control, and it was of massive interest to Hitler as he began his meteoric ascent. To Hitler, the British had unlocked a powerful tool during World War I that could manipulate and control minds, and Hitler was eager to wield it for his own gain.

Therefore, taking cues from the psychological tactics used by the British during World War I, Hitler strategically laid out his path to power with similar schemes. These tactics deeply affected and influenced the minds of the German people as his rise to power continued. The Nazis then utilized this knowledge, incorporating the research conducted at Tavistock into their own strategies.

In the chaotic and horrific landscape of World War II, dark experiments were conducted by German military physicians under the SS. These twisted individuals sought to control minds and destroy the human psyche, conducting cruel and inhumane tests on prisoners at concentration camps such as Dachau and Auschwitz. Using mescaline and other potent psychoactive drugs, they aimed to strip away any sense of will or individuality from their victims.

The primary experimenter from Germany was a physician in the SS named Dr. Kurt Plötner. After the war, he was sought out and recruited by US Naval Intelligence to continue his research on interrogations under Operation Paperclip.

Among the sinister experiments conducted in the death camps, another German experimenter stood out: Dr. Hubertus Strughold. He gained infamy for his inhumane high-altitude tests on camp prisoners using a low-pressure chamber. Despite these horrific actions, he was brought to the US under Operation Paperclip and eventually became known as the “father of space medicine.” It was his use of mind-altering drugs in the death camps served as the foundation for clandestine research into mind control within the US government.

But MKULTRA was not the first nor only such US program; quite a few preceded and ran parallel to it. Listed alphabetically, they were:

MKDELTA

1952 – 1965?. The project centered around the utilization of biochemicals in undercover missions. It is unknown if the results of this project were implemented in any actual operations.

MKNAOMI

1959 – 1969. The goal of the project was to accumulate substances that could disable or kill, and to invent devices for spreading these substances.

MKPILOT

1954 – 1964. The goal of the project was to find a replacement for codeine that would not be addictive. More than 800 substances were trialed on patients with addiction at the Addictive Research Center, located at the US Public Health Service Hospital in Lexington, Kentucky. Three of these compounds were eventually incorporated into commonly used medications available without a prescription: Darvon, a pain reliever; dextromethorphan, found in cough syrup; and Lomotil, an antidiarrheal drug.

MKSEARCH

1965 – 1973. The successor to **MKDELTA** was a project with the goal of controlling human behavior through the use of drugs in a predictable manner. It had two subprojects: **MKCHICKWIT**, which focused on finding new drugs primarily in Asia and Europe, and **MKOFTEN**, which tested the toxicity and impact on behavior of these drugs on animals and humans. There have been theories that this subproject also delved into the realm of dark magic and sought to tap into occult and demonic forces.

Operation Mindbinder/Spellbinder

1963. It was probably conducted under Project Artichoke. The mission involved covertly sending hypnotherapists to Mexico and using a combination of drugs and hypnosis on unsuspecting

individuals. The ultimate objective was to transform them into assassins who would carry out an order to kill upon receiving a predetermined signal.

Operation Resurrection

The focus of this operation was on the experiments conducted by Dr. Ewen Cameron at McGill University in Montreal, Canada. In these experiments, lobotomized apes were subjected to radio waves before being decapitated and having their heads transplanted onto the bodies of other deceased apes. The purpose of this was to test whether the radio waves could serve as a means of reviving the dead apes.

Project Bluebird renamed to Project Artichoke

1951 – 1953. The cryptonyms for the CIA's study and/or use of "special" interrogation methods and techniques by the agency. Top among these methods was the development of LSD by some of the Nazi's chief chemical warfare specialists working with the CIA as part of Operations Paperclip. These "special" interrogation methods have been known to include the use of drugs and chemicals, hypnosis, and "total isolation," a form of psychological harassment. The goal was to determine whether a person could be involuntarily made to perform an act of attempted assassination. Under Project Artichoke the experiments increased to nothing short of medical torture: drugging victims with potent drugs, subjecting them to extremes of temperature and sound, and strapping them to electroshock machines. This is what then morphed into **MKULTRA**.

Project Chatter

1947 – 1953. The US Navy was conducting a program to experiment with truth serums, utilizing mescaline (a psychedelic substance known for its hallucinogenic effects), scopolamine (a drug commonly used to treat sea sickness), and seeds from the peyote cactus, which is also known for its ability to alter perception.

Project Monarch

Dates Unknown.

A possible project under **MKULTRA** and **Project Artichoke**. Thought to have been conducted by an international pedophile ring, this program specialized in trafficking children as sex slaves. Its purpose was to manipulate individuals through occult and demonic practices, utilizing methods such as torture and sexual/physical abuse to create multiple personalities. Some believe that these sex rings are a result of various mind control programs set in motion by the CIA as early as the 1950s.

Project Pandora

1960s. Employing advanced methods, such as utilizing biological applications and various frequencies, including the use of microwave transmissions, to convey encoded information to specific groups in order to manipulate their actions.

Project Pelican/Orcon

A suspected component of this project, which was launched by the US Navy in 1948 in collaboration with B. F. Skinner, aimed to determine whether pigeons could be used as homing devices for missiles. This alleged aspect was said to involve testing individuals believed to possess psychic abilities, in conjunction with **Project Chatter**. It is speculated that this subproject formed the foundation for what eventually became known as **Project Bluebird**.

QKHILLTOP

1954. The program's goal was to analyze Chinese Communist methods of indoctrination and integrate the most effective ones into **Project Artichoke**. Most of this research took place at Cornell University, under the Human Ecology Study Program at its medical school. This program eventually evolved into the Society for Investigation of Human Ecology and was later incorporated into **MKULTRA**.

Another useful approach would be to create a timeline. The outline below follows the progression of programs in the wake of, and based on, experiments conducted in Nazi concentration camps:

- 1947 US Navy reports on use of mescaline in interrogation tests by Nazi scientists at Dachau and starts its own project along these lines: **Project Chatter**.
- 1948 The US Navy integrates the testing of those known to have psychic powers under **Project Pelican** jointly with **Project Chatter**.
- 1950 The CIA launches **Project Bluebird** later renamed **Project Artichoke** to create "exploitable alterations of personality" in "potential agents, defectors, refugees, POWs and others" "to control an individual to the point where he will do our bidding against his will ... even against such fundamental laws of nature as self-preservation."
- 1953 On approval by Dulles and Helms, CIA's TSS division initiates **MKULTRA** as the successor project to **Artichoke**.
- 1954 Tests done under **MKPILOT** of drugs on black prisoners and drug addicts at Lexington Narcotics Hospital, KY begins.
- 1955 The US Army begins testing LSD at Edgewood Arsenal.
- 1962 The CIA ends its "above ground" support for LSD studies.
- 1965 CIA phases out **MKULTRA** and begins **MKSEARCH**.
- 1973 Helms, now CIA Deputy Director, orders all **MKULTRA** records destroyed. **MKSEARCH** supposedly ends.
- 1975 Rockefeller Commission and Church Committee reports on CIA and Army drug testing, this is the first time that **MKULTRA** and CIA mind-control activities are exposed.
- 1979 It isn't until the publication of John Marks' **Search for the Manchurian Candidate**, based on Marks' discovery of 16,000 pages of buried CIA **MKULTRA** documents, that the full extent of **MKULTRA** and CIA mind-control is revealed.

For **MKULTRA**, the CIA funded, either directly or through channeled or front organization namely the Geschickter Fund and its sister the Geschickter Foundation for Medical Research, the Josiah Macy Jr. Foundation, the Society for Investigation of Human Ecology/Cornell University, Medical Sciences Research Foundation, H.J. Rand Foundation, and J.P. Morgan (although unwittingly), research and operational projects at a venerable list of corporations, laboratories, academic institutions, prisons, and hospitals, including: Boston University, Columbia University, Emory University, Georgetown University Hospital, Harvard University, Ionic State Hospital, Johns Hopkins University, Massachusetts Institute of Technology, Princeton University, Stanford University, University of California, Los Angeles, University of Florida, and the University of Houston.

According to records, there were a total of 149 subprojects associated with this secretive operation that allegedly continued until the mid or late 1960s. However, when the project was exposed in 1977 during the US Congress' Church Committee investigations, much of the evidence had already been destroyed. This was reportedly done in 1972 by then-CIA director Richard Helms. The remaining documentation has since been released to the public by the CIA, although important information has been redacted. This includes details on who was responsible for overseeing each subproject at the CIA level and the identities of the contracted researchers involved.

The list and range of these subprojects in its entirety is sobering. Organizing these subprojects into more or less somewhat broad categories, one can quickly grasp just how perfidious the work really was: using of drugs and alcohol (and other like materials) to modify behavior, alter consciousness, and/or induce psychosis, including gaining an understanding of the drug's biological, neurological, and psychiatric properties and for Eli Lilly to manufacture and provide LSD to the CIA, includes inducing sleep insomnia and administering drugs used to induce sleep; deriving compounds from plants, mushrooms, bacteria, and fungus including funding for rare organic chemicals and gaining information from microorganisms for operations objectives; research on anti-authoritative behavior, personality theory, using psychotherapy to change behavior, mass conversation, mass psychology, social upheaval, societal change, changes in psychology due to disasters, and family personalities; unlocking the potentials of hypnosis, who was most susceptible, and in creating dissociative states (this also included use of drugs to induce hypnosis and for operational use for interrogations and counterintelligence), and polygraph machines and bioelectric responses to polygraphs; studying brain concussions, loss of cerebral tissues, verbal signals, neurotransmitters, and remote control of animals and humans through device attachments and brain implants, electrodes on the body, and how to influence the central nervous system; funding for non-related cover research, brainstorming and strategy meetings, symposium on behavior modification, and grant to build a research wing at Georgetown University Hospital to hide CIA research, and a 50-year study of voting records; funding the CIA's activity at Fort Detrick regarding bioweapons, the creation of exotic pathogens and effective delivery systems as well as ways to induce chemical toxins, and for biological and chemical warfare development projects; supporting site locations affiliated with Operation Midnight Climax run by George White, at the time, a senior official in the Bureau of Narcotics, to study the effects of LSD on unsuspecting individuals (prostitutes would lure johns to a bedroom adorned with a two-way mirror in safehouses one in Telegraph Hill neighborhood of San Francisco and the other in Greenwich Village in New York City, where the men would be unwittingly dosed with LSD and their actions observed and recorded by CIA agents from beyond that); researching communist defectors and communist indoctrination techniques; agent trainings, teaching machines foreign languages, and deep cover funding; studying handwriting, and exploring ESP, subliminal perception, truth serums, magic, and Yorba witchcraft; funding for magician John Mulholland to create a training program and manual for deceit in covert operations based on tricks used in magic i.e., misdirection and trickery, later published as **The Official CIA Manual of Trickery and Deception**; exploiting and/or researching criminal-sexual psychopaths; performing sex and gender research; identifying people by blood groupings; studying behavior of adolescent boys and children in general; exploring new energy production and bio-batteries; and, examining the role of avian vectors in disease transmission. That is a scary list to me.

One thing is certain: **MKULTRA**, and its predecessors **Projects Bluebird and Artichoke**, which were born out of Operation Paperclip, formed a chain of extensive projects that originated from the US Navy and had connections to the Nazis; a connection I believe that cannot be ignored.