

Cuba used hallucinogens to train its spies

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Cuba experimented with hypnosis techniques and hallucinogens to “modify the behavior” of numerous agents who were sent abroad in the late 1980s, asserted an ex-official of Cuban intelligence in Miami who defected to the United States in 1995. “Among these hallucinogens were psilocybesn and LSD. It was a project similar to the CIA’s MK-Ultra, and as much information as possible was obtained and transmitted this way,” described the deserter in a document obtained several weeks ago by El Nuevo Herald.

The controversial MK-Ultra initiated by the CIA consisted of the use of drugs to explore the possibility of “controlling minds from far away.”

The ex-official—identified by the pseudonyms of Alex and Jose—spoke under the condition of anonymity, but he gave the Nuevo Herald a written report of nine pages which summarizes the testimony that he gave to the FBI a few days after his desertion, as well as photographic documentation.

Upon his arrival to U.S. territory, Alex had the mission of contacting other agents, especially in the area of Miami, where the so-called Wasp Network operated then. At the beginning of this year, motivated by the trial taking place in Miami against five presumed Cuban spies, he decided to break his silence.

“I can assure you that the Wasp Network (broken up in September 1998) is just a part of the espionage work that was conceived to infiltrate the United States on a long-term basis,” said Alex, who now lives in southern Florida.

The FBI office in Miami refused to comment, but three ex-officials of Cuban intelligence who currently reside in the United States, corroborated—each one separately—the claims and credibility of Alex.

“By facts related to this, I can confirm that this is first-hand information,” asserted the ex-captain of counter-intelligence Carlos Cajaraville, who arrived in Miami in 1995. The report of Alex centers on the role of the lieutenant colonel of Cuba’s General Intelligence, DGI, Eduardo Rodriguez, alias Martin “El Manco,” founder of the organs of State Security in 1959.

As a close collaborator of the late ex-minister of the Interior (MININT) Jose Abrantes, Rodriguez was considered an expert in all the work methods of the CIA. In the 1980s, the high command of the Ministry of the Interior gave him direct orders to work on the preparation of the Cuban intelligence agents who would be sent abroad.

“‘El Manco’ directly managed the research on hypnosis and the use of drugs in the preparation of agents,” said the deserter. “It was the stratagem of this sudden peak in the study of parapsychology and hypnosis, themes that up to that point were taboo in the Cuban scientific community, and they even invited scientists to Cuba who had worked with the Soviet specialist Vladimir Raykov.”

According to Alex's testimony, Rodriguez participated in the creation of the Cuban Society of Hypnosis (SCH) in 1985, financed with secret funds from the DGI (Cuban General Intelligence). Under his command, scientific personnel were selected for this entity, many of whom already worked as agents or informants of State Security.

"That society (SCH) was only a "smokescreen" to justify certain experiments on behavior modification under hypnosis and the use of drugs for the purpose of ... intelligence and counter-intelligence," says the report.

According to Alex, for the experiments with potential agents, they used rooms in the Riviera and Presidente Hotels, in the zone of Vedado, and trips abroad were financed of the specialists in the project.

At 59, Rodriguez, was detained and interrogated in the so-called "Cause 1" of 1989 [the trial of military official Ochoa, who was tried and convicted for drug-trafficking, glr]. He is currently retired and lives in Havana, without responsibilities or influence that he had within the MININT.

Alex's report mentions at least three agents who were recruited and trained by Rodriguez in Havana, at the end of the 1980s:

Antoine Avila, an ex-functionary in the French embassy in Cuba. A trafficker of jewels and works of art, he was recruited to give information on the alarm systems, security and personnel searches of that embassy. He was used to "facilitate" donations, credits and collaboration of French institutions that were dedicated to the development of Third World countries. Avila distorted the information about the Cuban reality that had to be sent periodically to the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

Cosme Gonzalez Carone, a former agent of counter-intelligence, who was commissioned for the economic operations of MININT, particularly in Panama. He had a close relationship with general Manuel Antonio Noriega, the ex-strongman of Panama, and he carried out business through the MOINSA International Motors company. Another of his facades was as representative of the SKF and Sabena (Belgian airlines) firms, for which an office in the Cuban Institute of Civilian Aviation was opened for him. Due to suspicions that he was recruited by U.S. intelligence services, he was kidnapped by an operative in Panama, and taken to the island in a special flight by the Cuban Air Force.

A U.S. citizen of Cuban origin, alias "El Johnny", whose preparation was carried out in the fifth floor of the Hotel Presidente. In two adjoining rooms, Rodriguez and other officials worked to modify the behavior of the future agent, making him more aggressive and sure of himself, and developing his capacity of concentration. A façade of businessman was created for Johnny, with money provided by State Security, and he was ordered to create a commercial enterprise in the United States in 1989.

[accompanying article are photos, not available on internet]