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Agency's Strangeloves altered mind of a girl aged 4

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EASILY lost, on page 425, in the mass of the CIA's notorious "Family Jewels" files is a short paragraph outlining "potentially embarrassing Agency activities".

"Experiments in influencing human behaviour through the administration of mind- or personality-altering drugs to unwitting subjects."

Of all the heinous acts committed by the CIA in the name of national security, these experiments, done on the agency's behalf by prominent psychiatrists on innocent victims - including children as young as four - may be the darkest.

"We have no answer to the moral issue," former director Richard Helms infamously said when asked about the nature of the projects.

The release of the Family Jewels documents revealed the CIA handsomely funded these real-life Dr Strangeloves and engaged pharmaceutical companies to help its experiments.

The agency appealed to Big Pharma to pass on any drugs that could not be marketed because of "unfavourable side effects" to be tested on mice and monkeys. Any drugs that passed muster would then be used, according to an internal memo, on volunteer US soldiers.

The Family Jewels files do not provide further detail into the numerous mind-control programs, such as MKULTRA, covertly propped up by the agency. In 1953, MKULTRA was given 6per cent of the total CIA budget without any oversight.

Only the tip of a large iceberg had been previously released by the CIA under Freedom of Information Act provisions.

Yesterday's acknowledgments will comfort those who have long campaigned for truth and restitution.

The nature of the experiments, gathered from government documents and testimony in numerous lawsuits brought against the CIA, is shocking, from testing LSD on children to implanting electrodes in victims' brains to deliberately poisoning people with uranium.

"The CIA bought my services from my grandfather in 1952 starting at the tender age of four," wrote Carol Rutz of her experiences.

"Over the next 12 years, I was tested, trained, and used in various ways. Electroshock, drugs, hypnosis, sensory deprivation, and other types of trauma were used to make me complain and split my personality (to create multiple personalities for specific tasks). Each alter or personality was created to respond to a post-hypnotic trigger, then perform an act and (I would) not remember it later.

"This Manchurian Candidate program was just one of the operational uses of the mind-control scenario by the CIA.

"Your hard-earned tax dollars supported this."

The US began these experiments after World War II when it made a grab for hundreds of Nazi scientists and doctors who had been researching mind control in concentration camps, fearing they would fall into Soviet hands.

US military intelligence leaders were paranoid that they were falling behind the communist bloc in the brainwashing race.

The programs, though carefully hidden, continued into the 1970s - when Helms

ordered much of the documentation to be destroyed.

Some conspiratorial theorists believe the CIA completed its goal, initially outlined in the early 1950s, of altering a personality and having someone "perform an action contrary to an individual's basic moral principles".

The attorney for Sirhan Sirhan, Lawrence Teeter, has said his client was programmed to assassinate Robert Kennedy in 1968.

Theodore Kaczynski, the Unabomber, volunteered to take part in CIA mind-control experiments when he was a student at Harvard University in the late 50s.