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17 December 1953

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MEMORANDUM FOR: Director of Central Intelligence

SUBJECT: The Suicide of Frank Olson

1. Attached are the complete files on this case which have been compiled jointly by the General Counsel and this office. A review of these files plus our conversations with Dr. Abramson, the psychiatrist involved in the case, and Dr. W. Marshall Chaffell, MD/PT, who received a full description of the case from Stanley Levall, indicates certain matters that should be attended to before the case is closed. It further should be noted that on 17 December, some 20 days after the event, Dr. Hibbons and Col. Bruns came to see the undersigned to report that Dr. Hibbons had just learned that Col. Bruns knew of the experiment in advance and had given his approval to Dr. Bittsich to conduct it on an unwitting basis.

2. These conclusions can be drawn from the facts in this case:

a. The drug used has also been used fairly extensively in experiments and in psychiatric treatments conducted both for the benefit of the Agency and private practice.

b. The amount of drug used was only 1/7 of that has been used without ill effects.

c. Although Dr. Bittsich knew all of the individuals who received the drug, he obviously was not aware of their medical records. Therefore, only one individual was excluded from the experiment because of a heart condition. Bittsich was not aware that over a period of five years Olson had apparently had a suicidal tendency.

d. It is apparent that there is a strong possibility that the drug was a trigger mechanism precipitating Olson's suicide.

e. With the exception of the gaining of concurrence of the Deputy Chief of TSC, no mechanism was available or utilized for getting approval for an experiment in which human lives could possibly be jeopardized.

f. Uncontrolled experiments such as those conducted by TSC could seriously affect the record and reputation of the Agency.

g. Although there is an Ethics Committee on which TSC, OSI and Security sit, this committee was never advised or consulted about this experiment.

h. Using employees of another agency could seriously jeopardize our relationship with that and all other agencies should this become known.

3. Recommendations:

- a. There should be immediately established a high-level intra-agency board which should review all RGS experiments and give approval in advance to any in which human beings are involved, and to all others involving matters of policy or large amounts of money.
- b. The Deputy Chief RGS should be recommended for his poor judgment shown in this instance and consideration should be given us to whether this individual should continue in his present position.
- c. Chief RGS should be authorized to exercise tighter supervision and control over the use of this drug and should render periodic reports to D/F on its use and the result.

Lyman K. ...
 Director General

Be given generally in the above recommendations

*UK
 9-5-53*