

NATIONAL RESEARCH COUNCIL

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WAK-BW

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To -- John Steinbruner

From -- Glenn Schweitzer

Subject -- Context for Project on US-Russia Collaboration in
Biosciences

Here are some quick comments to start the discussion. The issues I have raised seem fundamental to the approach and therefore should be resolved in principle before proceeding farther. Therefore, I have not attempted to redraft any of the text.

We clearly need an overarching statement which sets the stage for the details of the various types of cooperation being considered. While many of the points set forth in your draft are important, a somewhat different orientation of the statement would make the concept more palatable to Russian officials, more attractive to Russian researchers, and more realistic in terms of early implementation.

The current emphasis of the paper is on improvement of the effectiveness of the BW Convention as the primary objective, with public health benefits sounding almost as an afterthought. The statement could be recast to put the public health benefits of cooperation up front, then note that expanded cooperation could also lead to joint measures which would improve the effectiveness of the BW Convention. This orientation would seem to be more in keeping with the primary strengths of the NAS/IOM and the importance of building supportive scientific constituencies in both countries which can apply pressure on political forces.

Such an approach would set the stage for research cooperation to go forward, even in the absence of immediate movement in resolving the political stalemate, with the expectation that rather quickly, cooperation would encourage better understanding in the political arena as well. Holding cooperation in the research area hostage until there is political accord on all fronts may simply perpetuate the current status of inaction. At the same time, this emphasis on prompt implementation of research cooperation does not imply in any way that we should ignore the more difficult political dimension, and indeed the political issues should be addressed in the paper.

With regard to the discussion of the military importance of BW, you have a good statement at the top of page 2 as to why BW is not an attractive military option. I would put this statement before the discussion of the BW Convention since it should

resonate well with many Russians who have little interest in maintaining the BW option.

You suggest a new bilateral organization which would exercise oversight. It would be responsible both for (a) financing research activities and (b) registering all relevant research activities, recording all known strains of designated pathogens, and establishing procedures for collaborative reactions to outbreaks of relevant diseases. As a practical matter, I would separate the financing of research, which is reasonably straight forward and quickly implementable, from the other activities which are loaded with difficult negotiating details. Again the point is to start quickly and use the success of research collaboration to encourage progress on the other fronts. Of course in the absence of progress, the funds for research might well be terminated.

However, more fundamentally, a new bilateral organization raises so many issues that it may not be in the cards for some years to come. Therefore, we should not rule out lab-to-lab approaches, enhanced research funding through existing mechanisms, expansion of current diplomatic efforts concerning reciprocity, and add-ons to related efforts of WHO, the Australia Group, and other existing organization as interim approaches.

Finally, with regard to the cost of future activities, I believe that the U.S. contribution for research activities alone will have to be on the order of at least \$5 million annually to capture the attention of Russian political leaders. Of course, the scientists will take whatever they can obtain, but even they will hardly be supportive allies if the kitty isn't reasonably large.