

May 5, 1997

To -- Files

From -- Glenn Schweitzer

Subject -- Visit to Moscow (April 24-May 2, 1997)

1. All paperwork for the six initial projects is now in order. I signed three English and three Russian copies of each project agreement and initialled about 1500 individual pages associated with the projects. The ISTC Parties have until May 10 to react to the six proposals. The Secretariat will then sign the project agreements or, if there are objections, inform us promptly. Representatives of the institutes in Koltsovo and Obolensk will also sign the project agreements. We will request DSWA to transfer the funds so that the projects can be operational on June 1.

The ISTC Secretariat warned about delays within DOD concerning the transfer of funds. While the current DOD-ISTC memorandum of Agreement (MOA) has unused ceiling of \$3 million due to delays in Belarus projects, DOD apparently wants to amend the MOA so it explicitly calls for transfers of funds for NAS projects.

2. A revised agenda for the ISTC-NAS June seminar is enclosed. In addition, a visit to Omutninsk is anticipated. The ISTC Secretariat is confident that MOD specialists will attend in force despite Shcherbakov's prediction that they will not attend. The Governor of the Kirov region has issued a proclamation about the workshop. We need to inform the Secretariat as soon as possible as to the participants from NAS, including titles of any papers which we propose for presentation by the participants.

3. The April 28-29 Roundtable hosted by Biopreparat took place on schedule. The list of attendees, the program, and the memorandum which was signed at the conclusion of the Roundtable are enclosed. Also enclosed are Russian comments relevant to the long-term plan (Appendix A) and other Russian comments of interest (Appendix B).

As indicated in Appendix A, MOD did not participate. We were informed of this decision on April 27, having been told that discussions between Biopreparat and MOD continued until April 25. Kalinin did not respond to our request for a separate meeting at MOD for our DOD participants on April 30.

The preparation of the memorandum was complicated by Kalinin's reluctance to include references to defense scientists. The wording that finally emerged was based on a very confused intervention by him during the final drafting; and according to Shcherbakov he finally agreed to sign the memorandum after lengthy internal discussions with his staff.

Appendix A

Comments of Individual Russians Concerning the Long-Term Plan

Organizational and Financial Arrangements

- The American proposal of a Coordinating Body and three technical committees is reasonable.
- The Gore-Chernomyrdin Commission should be utilized.
- The American side will have to cover most of the costs.

Research Activities

- Research collaboration should be the principal activity.
- Fundamental research must be supported because all applied activities depend on such research.
- Research collaboration is useful for confidence building.
- U.S. and Russian work groups should decide which projects should be supported.

Epidemiology and Response to Outbreaks

- The boundary between research and epidemiology is not clear.
- Epidemiology-oriented research centers should be established at Koltsovo, Obolensk, and elsewhere since SanEpi does not have adequate scientific capability.

Personnel, Facilities, and Biosafety

- Discussions of the details of regulations in the U.S. and Russia would be useful.
- Due to inadequate equipment, Russian institutes cannot comply with recent regulations governing control of dangerous pathogens.
- The virus collection at the Ivanovskiy Institute and the bacteriology collection at the Saratov Plague Institute deserve support since they are widely used throughout the country.
- Terrorists may well use new agents which are not on any lists, including agents developed through gene engineering.
- Scientists have an individual responsibility to handle dangerous pathogens responsibly.
- A new international agreement with stringent criminal penalties for inappropriate use by individuals of dangerous pathogens is needed.

Appendix B

Interesting Comments by Russian Participants

Absence of MOD

Several reasons were offered concerning the absence of MOD.

- MOD is a separate Ministry which has its own programs (Kalinin).
- MOD adopted new procedures two weeks earlier for obtaining approval of contacts between MOD personnel and foreigners (Shcherbakov).
- MOD does not want to work outside the Trilateral Framework (Shcherbakov).
- MOD is reluctant to take any initiative at a low level (Sandakhchiev).

Two suggestions were offered for involving MOD in the future.

- Have the Gore-Chernomyrdin Commission approve the program (Ignatiev).
- Approach MOD directly (Sandakhchiev).

Bioterrorism

This topic was raised by Russian participants on at least three occasions, with Stepanov being the most expansive. (He participated in a recent NATO seminar on the topic.) The following possible scenarios were set forth.

- Bacteria-impregnated bullets could spread diseases.
- Spreading of agricultural diseases could be used to destroy companies involved in agriculture.
- Diseases could be spread through the metro system to attack large population centers.
- AIDS-infected syringes could be distributed through the drug users.
- Rabies-infected ticks were considered by Russian specialists as early as World War II.

Russian Regulatory Framework

Ignatiev described relevant Presidential decrees (criminalizing activities counter to the BW convention, controlling BW-related exports), provisions of the criminal code, a provision of the customs code, and a recently promulgated set of new regulations controlling activities at individual facilities. He reported that the decrees and regulations have been made available to the Department of State.

The Biopreparat Complex

According to Sandakhchiev, of the 11 Biopreparat institutes, only Koltsovo and Obolensk are deeply engaged with dangerous pathogens.

The IPP Program

Shcherbakov asked many questions concerning the IPP program. He was concerned over their claims of access to funds and their intention to spend these funds at Biopreparat facilities.