1. A SOVIET ENSIGN REPORTED BEING TOLD BY THREE CLOSE FRIENDS ON SEPARATE OCCASIONS DURING APRIL 1979 OF AN ACCIDENT AT A BIOLOGICAL warfare (BW) INSTITUTE IN SVEDLOVSK THAT RESULTED IN 40 TO 60 DEATHS. OTHER SOURCES ALSO HAVE HEARD RUMORS OF SUCH AN ACCIDENT. THE SPECIFIC NATURE OF THE ACCIDENT IS UNDETERMINED, HOWEVER, AND THE ALLEGED NUMBER OF DEATHS HAS VARIED FROM 40 TO 300. A SUGGESTED INTELLIGENCE REPORT OF A QUARANTINE IMPOSED BY THE MILITARY IN SVEDLOVSK IN MID-APRIL TENDS TO SUPPORT RUMORS OF A DISEASE-RELATED OUTBREAK. HOWEVER, THESE EVENTS CANNOT AS YET BE ATTRIBUTED TO BW STORAGE ACTIVITIES.

2. FOR THE ALLEGATION THAT CUMBEROUS DEATHS RESULTED FROM AN ACCIDENT AT THE UNNAMED BW INSTITUTE IN SVEDLOVSK REMAINS SPECULATIVELY REMARKABLE.
TION AND IS ONLY ONE POSSIBLE EXPLANATION OF THESE RUMORS. IF EXPOSURE TO A BIOLOGICAL AGENT OCCURRED, IT IS SURPRISING THE SOVIETS COULD NOT RESPOND WITH TIMELY AND EFFECTIVE TREATMENT — UNLESS THE AGENT WAS A FAST-ACTING BIOLOGICAL TOXIN. ALTHOUGH A TOXIN CANNOT BE RULED OUT AS THE CAUSATIVE AGENT, TWO REPORTS OF THE ACCIDENT SUGGESTED A DISEASE THAT ALSO AFFECTS CATTLE, AND ONE SOURCE IDENTIFIED THE BACTERIAL AGENT ANTHRAX AS A POSSIBLE CAUSE.

3. THERE IS A SUSPECTED BW INSTALLATION IN SVERDLOVSK, BUT WHETHER IT WAS THE SITE OF THE ALLEGED ACCIDENT IS UNDETERMINED. DESPITE THE PROLIFERATION OF RUMORS OF A BW-RELATED ACCIDENT, THERE IS ININSUFFICIENT EVIDENCE TO ATTRIBUE THE PURPORTED DEATHS TO UNLAWFUL STORAGE OF A BW AGENT.

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