Weekly Intelligence Summary (U)

9 NOVEMBER 1979
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Intelligence
Summary (U)

DIAWIS 45-79

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REVIEW ON 15 OCTOBER 2009

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SOVIET BIOLOGICAL ACCIDENT RUMORED

An accident at a biological warfare (BW) institute in Sverdlovsk that resulted in 40 to 60 deaths may have occurred in May 1979. A Soviet emigre reported hearing of the incident on separate occasions from three close friends. Other sources also have heard rumors of such an accident. However, the specific nature of the accident is not yet determined, and the alleged number of deaths varies from 40 to 300.

The allegation that numerous deaths resulted from an accident at the unnamed BW institute in Sverdlovsk remains speculation and constitutes only one possible explanation of...

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such reports. If exposure to a biological agent occurred, the Soviets could be expected to 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 versions of the accident suggested a disease that also affects cattle. The bacterial agent anthrax was identified as a possible cause.

The installation in Sverdlovsk is suspected to be concerned with biological warfare. However, whether this facility is the site of the alleged accident remains undetermined. Despite the proliferation of rumors concerning a BW-related accident, insufficient evidence exists to attribute these purported deaths to the unlawful storage of a BW agent. (Classified by multiple sources: review on 17 Oct 1989)

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