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TOR: 291946Z OCT 79

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SUBJ: DIA DEFENSE INTELLIGENCE NOTICE (DIN) (U)

USSR: POSSIBLE ACCIDENT. (U)

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1. ~~(S)~~ [REDACTED] A SOVIET EMIGRE REPORTED BEING TOLD BY THREE CLOSE FRIENDS ON SEPARATE OCCASIONS DURING MAY 1979 OF AN ACCIDENT AT A BIOLOGICAL WARFARE (BW) INSTITUTE IN SVENDOVSK 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. [REDACTED] INTELLIGENCE REPORT OF A QUARANTINE IMPOSED BY THE MILITARY IN SVENDLOVSK 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. ~~(S)~~ THE ALLEGATION THAT NUMEROUS DEATHS RESULTED FROM AN ACCIDENT AT THE UNNAMED BW INSTITUTE IN SVENDLOVSK REMAINS SPECULA-

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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. ~~(C)~~ 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 INSUFFICIENT EVIDENCE TO ATTRIBUTE THE PURPORTED DEATHS TO UNLAWFUL STORAGE OF A BW AGENT.  
PREPARED BY: [REDACTED]  
(REVW 17 OCT 09)

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