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Vozrozdniya Island Point Paper

1. Background: Vozrozdniya Island (VI), in the Aral Sea Region (ASR) of Central Asia, has been visited on several occasions by various groups from the USA. A total of 5 visits (4 official/1 unofficial) have occurred over a seven-year period. A total of 74 samples were taken from the 11 burial pits to ascertain contamination levels and type of material located in the pits.

(Note: These 11 pits are each approximately 4 feet wide by 10 feet long and approximately 4-6 feet deep. They are in a side-by-side configuration. The pits are unlined (meaning that seepage could have taken place) and have been backfilled with earth removed for their construction. They are indistinguishable from the surrounding area and unless first hand knowledge of their location is known, no other tell-tale signs exist. Geo coordinates, derived from overhead imagery, are available for center of mass of the 11 pits as well as cardinal directions for all four major corners.)

a. 1994 - US group (Andy Weber) conducts brief orientation of the facilities and the BW program orchestrated by former workers on the former complex. This visit was classified as an "unofficial visit" on both the part of the US and the GOK/GOU

b. 1997 - (October) US sampling team conducts environmental sampling on VI including within the confines of the 11 burial pits, which reportedly contained a form of weaponized anthrax believed to have originated from the BW facility at Yekaterinburg (formerly Sverdlovsk). The total number of samples taken during this mission is as follows:

- 64 soil samples from the pits (coring and surface)
- 36 samples from the laboratory buildings
- 110 soil samples from various locations around the BW test facility

(Note: Results from extensive governmental testing showed that approximately 11 of the 64 samples taken from the pits tested positive for live anthrax spores. The remaining 53 samples taken from the pits did not test positive for *Bacillus anthracis* or any other live microorganism.

Of the 36 samples taken from the laboratory buildings, only 1 sample tested positive for plague. Plague is endemic to the region and not necessarily indicative of a weaponization program. This result is reasonable given that the sample was taken from a drain in the floor where waste material would have been "flushed" through to either a decontamination tank or leech field from one of the laboratories working with this pathogen. All samples taken from the buildings were taken from areas where contamination could logically be found; drains, corners in ventilation systems, exhaust ports, filtration

systems, biological safety hoods and laboratory work areas. Invasive techniques were used to reach into corners and suspected areas to ensure thoroughness in the mission.

None of the 110 samples taken from various areas within the test grid and the laboratory complex came back as positive. Many of these samples were "coring samples" while others were surface/subsurface in nature.

c. 1998 - OGA trip to VI to ascertain the extent of the BW testing at the facility and garner additional material from the burial pits (less than 50 samples taken - 10 from the pit areas - no coring activity conducted). None of these samples came back positive. This mission was to develop a comprehensive "blueprint" of the activities on VI therefore the samples that were taken received only cursory attention based on results from the previous years testing. The samples taken were only surface samples and the methods to retrieve these samples did not reflect the same procedures executed in 1997.

d. 1999 - US journalist Judy Miller travels to VI to conduct research for her book "GERMS" as well as an ongoing research into the former Soviet biological warfare program for the New York Times.

e. 2000 - DTRA/CTR assessment team traveled to VI to gather information for a possible mission to eliminate the structures and decontaminate the burial area as directed by OSD/P.

In addition to the above mentioned missions, numerous briefings with former workers and directors - G. Lepyoshkin - Stepnogorsk director and VI manager, and K. Alibek - Biopreparat deputy director- have yielded data on what may be contained in the burial pits as well as what was tested on VI as part of the Soviet BW program. Alibek recently testified before Congress that "VI contained large amounts of anthrax" and that "wherever you dig on VI you will find it." No credible open source information or intelligence exists to support this claim. The IC has no information to support additional burial sites on VI.

2. CTR Voz Island Plan: The following represents the plan for CTR engagement on VI. This plan was initiated as part of CTR's original plan to deal with VI and done prior to guidance issued by DASD 16 November 2001:

Phase 0 Study: Feasibility analysis to determine whether an effective operation could be executed to decontaminate effected areas (pits) and demolish all buildings on VI. Status: Done (deliverable with BG K)

Phase 0.5 Study: Determine cost and methods needed to execute decontamination operation on VI. Status: Ongoing (PR packet to AM 21

November 2001) (CANCELLED)

Phase 1 Study: Determine best COA for execution of decontamination operation and provide roadmap for implementation. Status: Awaiting approval for continued planning and funding (RECEIVED APPROVAL FROM OSD/P FOR SPRING 2002 EXECUTION)

Phase 2 Execution: Decontamination of effected areas on the island. Status: (STARTING CTIC PROCESS ICW TIMELINE IN VI BRIEFING FOR SPRING 2002 EXECUTION)

Additional Phases: Determined by OSD/P