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FOIA Exemptions *(b)(3)* _____ TS authority to
EA Exemptions _____ CLASSIFY as S or G Sec.
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TO RUEHMO/AMEMBASSY MOSCOW IMMEDIATE 5087
INFO RUFHGV/USMISSION GENEVA PRIORITY 1438
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DECAPTIONED

EXDIS

E.O. 12065: RDS-2 3/26/00 (DAVIES; THOMAS D.)

TAGS: PARM; UR

SUBJECT: SVERDLOVSK INCIDENT (U)

GENEVA FOR AMB, FLOWERREE

REFS: (A) STATE 686541 (B) MOSCOW 4496

1. SECRET - ENTIRE TEXT.

2. EMBASSY SHOULD SEEK AN EARLY OPPORTUNITY TO CONVEY THE FOLLOWING POINTS TO KOPPLEKTCV OR ANOTHER MFA OFFICIAL AT A COMPARABLE LEVEL. POINTS SHOULD ALSO BE PROVIDED IN THE FORM OF A NON-PAPER.

A. WE HAVE STUDIED THE RESPONSE OF MARCH 20 BY THE MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS TO THE UNITED STATES' REQUEST FOR INFORMATION REGARDING THE OUTBREAK OF ANTHRAX IN THE AREA OF SVERDLOVSK IN MARCH-APRIL 1979.

B. WE WELCOME THE INFORMATION YOU PROVIDED REGARDING THE INCIDENT. HOWEVER, YOU WILL APPRECIATE THAT ON MATTERS OF SUCH COMPLEXITY, IT IS DIFFICULT FOR US TO ACQUIRE A SUFFICIENTLY FULL AND CONFIDENT UNDERSTANDING OF THE SITUATION WITHOUT A SUBSTANTIALLY GREATER EXCHANGE OF INFORMATION. FOR EXAMPLE, REPORTS AVAILABLE TO US INDICATE A PROLONGED OUTBREAK OF PULMONARY ANTHRAX IN SVERDLOVSK, INVOLVING LARGE NUMBERS OF FATALITIES. BASED ON OUR EXPERIENCE, WE WOULD EXPECT AN OUTBREAK OF ANTHRAX RESULTING FROM CONTAMINATED MEAT TO HAVE BEEN OF RELATIVELY SHORT DURATION AND TO HAVE RESULTED IN ONLY A SMALL NUMBER OF FATALITIES.

C. WE BELIEVE IT IS ESSENTIAL FOR OUR TWO GOVERNMENTS TO MAKE PROMPT AND DETERMINED EFFORTS TO ARRIVE AT A MUTUAL UNDERSTANDING OF THIS MATTER. ARTICLE V OF THE BIOLOGICAL WEAPONS CONVENTION, THE IMPORTANCE OF WHICH WAS RECENTLY REAFFIRMED AT THE CONVENTION'S REVIEW CONFERENCE, REQUIRES CONSULTATION AND COOPERATION BETWEEN PARTIES IN ORDER TO REDUCE UNCERTAINTIES AND ALLAY CONCERNS THAT MIGHT ARISE. AS DEPOSITARY GOVERNMENTS, THE SOVIET UNION AND THE UNITED STATES BEAR A SPECIAL RESPONSIBILITY FOR ENSURING THE EFFECTIVE OPERATION OF THE CONVENTION'S CONSULTATIVE PROCEDURES, AS THE TWO LEADING

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PARTICIPANTS IN INTERNATIONAL ARMS CONTROL EFFORTS, WE HAVE AN ADDITIONAL AND IMPORTANT RESPONSIBILITY TO DEMONSTRATE OUR READINESS TO WORK TOGETHER CONSTRUCTIVELY TO PROMOTE THE VIABILITY OF EXISTING AGREEMENTS.

D. WE BELIEVE THE MOST EFFECTIVE MEANS OF CLARIFYING THE SITUATION--AND THEREBY MEETING OUR MUTUAL OBLIGATIONS UNDER ARTICLE V OF THE BWC--WOULD BE TO HOLD CONFIDENTIAL DISCUSSIONS INVOLVING SOVIET AND AMERICAN MEDICAL, PUBLIC HEALTH AND VETERINARY SPECIALISTS. WE BELIEVE THE SPECIALISTS SHOULD MEET AS SOON AS POSSIBLE, PREFERABLY WITHIN THE NEXT FEW WEEKS. WE WOULD BE PREPARED TO HOLD THE DISCUSSIONS IN THE SOVIET UNION OR SOME OTHER MUTUALLY ACCEPTABLE LOCATION.

E. IN PROPOSING THAT SPECIALISTS FROM BOTH SIDES MEET CONFIDENTIALLY TO DISCUSS THE SVERDLOVSK SITUATION, WE ARE MINDFUL THAT, IN THE CONTEXT OF SALT, US AND SOVIET EXPERTS HAVE BEEN ABLE TO RESOLVE TREATY IMPLEMENTATION QUESTIONS OF GREAT COMPLEXITY AND SENSITIVITY IN A MUTUALLY SATISFACTORY MANNER. WHILE NO FORMAL CONSULTATIVE MECHANISM EXISTS FOR THE BW CONVENTION, WE HOPE THAT THE AD HOC DISCUSSIONS WE ARE PROPOSING WOULD ENABLE US TO DEAL WITH THE PRESENT SITUATION IN AN EQUALLY SATISFACTORY FASHION.

F. IN REFERENCE TO THE LAST PARAGRAPH OF THE FOREIGN MINISTRY'S RESPONSE, WE CANNOT ACCEPT THE IMPLICATION THAT U.S. EFFORTS ARE DIRECTED TOWARD COMPLICATING THE SITUATION AND WEAKENING INTERNATIONAL AGREEMENTS ON DISARMAMENT. OUR MOTIVATION IS PRECISELY THE OPPOSITE--TO RESOLVE THE

CURRENT SITUATION AS QUICKLY AS POSSIBLE AND TO STRENGTHEN THOSE AGREEMENTS BY RESTORING CONFIDENCE IN THEIR EFFECTIVE IMPLEMENTATION.

J. FYI. SITE OF INITIAL DISCUSSION, REFERRED TO IN PARA 20 ABOVE, SHOULD NOT PREJUDGE POSSIBILITY OF U.S. SEEKING TO VISIT SVERDLOVSK AS PART OF INVESTIGATIVE PROCESS IF NECESSARY. END FYI. VANCE

END OF MESSAGE

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