

Knudson

October 25, 1994

Gregory B. Knudson, Ph.D.
Lieutenant Colonel, U.S. Army
Armed Forces Radiobiology Research Institute
8901 Wisconsin Avenue
Bethesda, MD 20889-5603

Dear Colonel Knudson:

Thank you for your letter of 18 October. I enclose an embargoed copy of our manuscript soon to appear in SCIENCE, a note regarding source strength, and a copy of a recent publication by E. N. Shlyakhov and E. Rubinstein. I would be very grateful to have your comments on this material.

In answer to your questions:

1. I am aware of no public information from the Russian government or any of its agencies as to how the accident occurred. In private conversations, Russian military personnel have told me that they were challenging small animals and monkeys with anthrax aerosols in the course of a vaccine development program. They say they have no knowledge of any failure in the exhaust filters. I cannot certify these statements as true.
2. I know of no good evidence for an explosion.
3. I collected soil samples in Sverdlovsk but have not tested them yet. As to penicillin resistance, I am told by Dr. Lev Grinberg that bacterial counts were greatly reduced in patients by penicillin administration.
4. Our evidence is internally consistent, as indicated in the manuscript, and would not support a number of deaths much larger than approximately 70.
5. I know of no evidence for similar incidents elsewhere.

6. Coincidentally, the answer to this question appeared in the mail today in the form of the enclosed publication by E. N. Shlyakhov and E. Rubinstein.

Sincerely,

Matthew Meselson
Professor of Biochemistry
and Molecular Biology

Enclosures