

MSGNO 1 (STXX) RSB *17/09/86 FOIA Exemptions (b)(3) TS authority to
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SECRET



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TO RUFHGV/USMISSION GENEVA IMMEDIATE 9125
INFO RUEHMO/AMEMBASSY MOSCOW IMMEDIATE 3871
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EZ1:
SECRET STATE 291907
EXDIS: GENEVA FOR USDEL CD

EZ2:
E.O. 12356: DECL: OADR
TAGS: PARM, UR, US
SUBJECT: SVERDLOVSK -- VISIT TO WASHINGTON OF
PROFESSOR MESELSON

REF: (A) STATE 267418; (B) MOSCOW 14971; (C) GENEVA 8160

1. SECRET - ENTIRE TEXT.
2. ON SEPTEMBER 12, HARVARD BIOCHEMISTRY PROFESSOR MATTHEW MESELSON MET WITH STATE, ACDA, DOD, AND CIA OFFICERS AT HIS REQUEST TO PRESENT AN OUTLINE OF HIS DISCUSSIONS WITH SOVIET MINISTRY OF HEALTH OFFICIALS ON THE 1979 SVERDLOVSK INCIDENT.
3. MESELSON'S PRESENTATION WAS ESSENTIALLY ALONG LINES OF HIS READOUT TO EMBASSY MOSCOW (REF B). HE INDICATED THAT HE PERSONALLY HAD DOUBTS AS TO THE THOROUGHNESS OF THE 1980 US STUDY ON THE INCIDENT, BUT ADDED THAT HE FELT THE SOVIETS HAD NOT PROVIDED A SATISFACTORY EXPLANATION FOR THE INCIDENT EITHER. THE ACCOUNT GIVEN HIM IN MOSCOW, HE SAID, SEEMED TO HANG TOGETHER. NOW, IT IS IMPORTANT THAT FOLLOW-UP EFFORTS SEEK TO DETERMINE WHETHER IT IS IN FACT TRUE. TO THIS END, MESELSON SAID, HE IS PUTTING TOGETHER A TEAM OF EXPERTS TO RETURN TO MOSCOW FOR FURTHER DISCUSSION, PERHAPS IN OCTOBER. HE SAID HE WOULD NOT ACCOMPANY THE FOLLOW-UP TEAM, WHICH, HE EMPHASIZED, SHOULD INCLUDE THE MOST QUALIFIED PEOPLE, INCLUDING USG EXPERTS IF POSSIBLE. MESELSON ALSO HAS INVITED SOVIET MOH OFFICIALS TO VISIT US TO DISCUSS BOTH SVERDLOVSK AND OTHER SCIENTIFIC PROBLEMS SUCH AS TOXIC SHOCK SYNDROME.
4. COMMENT: IN BRIEF DISCUSSION FOLLOWING MESELSON'S PRESENTATION, IT BECAME APPARENT THAT HE HAD NOT PURSUED TOUGH QUESTIONS WITH HIS SOVIET HOSTS. INTERAGENCY REPS UNDERSCORED OUR CONTINUING UNSATISFIED QUESTIONS AND CONCERNS AND NOTED THAT TIMING OF SOVIET INVITATION TO MESELSON APPEARED TACTICALLY RELATED TO BWC REVCON.