

(Message DSB:51)

From: Joshua Lederberg <jsl@rockvax.rockefeller.edu>
Date: Sun, 19 Sep 93 16:37:10 EDT
To: "Alan P. Zelicoff" <apzelic@somnet.sandia.gov>
Subject: Re: Lists and quantities of agents for VEREX

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the notion of "consistency check" expressed in the paper. Thus, we believe it is possible to obtain additional information from measures that can support the BWC, but we avoid the question of whether or not the very high standards of verification are met.

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[I've been travelling too. I hope this is still timely for you.]

I've read your fax of Sept. 8, and concur with the conclusions and general drift of the position stated about "lists". Even for consistency and transparency, they would require a proviso that agents are presumed "guilty" until cleared by a standing commission; and this would have a busy time keeping up with scientific and technical advances. So there would have to be a blanket exemption for minimal scale of activity [say liter scale cultures], or no research would be possible.

Your paper is not totally clear about different thresholds for 'proscribed' activities, vs. those for which reporting is obligatory. Or is it all about the latter? If we're talking about verification, presumably that's the former.

Recognizing that this [or anything] is unlikely to solve the whole problem of verification, I suggest there is still some merit in a provisional list of "authenticated" BW candidates [starting with anthrax] with agreed thresholds of a) disclosure and b) possession. This would leave out a lot of expected innovations, and we have to be clear that it doesn't cover many important problems. We'd learn something about what was technically and politically feasible by coming to closure on negotiations for that schedule.

I concur that reliable verification on manufacture and possession is beyond our grasp. All the more reason to raise the ante on enforcement when violations are established, especially re use. Not enough has been said about that; and I realize it is beyond the scope of the expert groups.

Joshua Lederberg