DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH & HUMAN SERVICES

Public Health Service

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GENERAL MANAGEMENT STATUS REPORT
For the period 1 April 1998 to 30 September 1998

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These six months were marked by crescendoing involvement of all project staff in preparing numerous documents requested by Congressional staff persons, undergoing searching inquiries and culminating in an official hearing on the effects of nuclear fallout on human health. No official report has appeared to date.

During June-July the deliveries of equipment and supplies picked up and as of this writing 90% + of the needed goods have arrived in Belarus and Ukraine. Orders for consumable items have been placed far in advance to assure continuity of field work but customs problems continued to plague the delivery, more so in Ukraine than in Belarus. All the computer requirements for data management and eventual analysis have arrived in Ukraine. There still is need for a few units dedicated to specific technical equipment which will be satisfied in the near future.

Contract staff of the Columbia University was gradually incorporated in the teams visiting all three projects and very quickly became an integral part, showing professional depth in each discipline, manifesting their interest and willingness to assist where needed. The Principal investigator, Dr. Geoffrey Howe, came several times to Bethesda for joint session with NCI staff. Two session were held with entire Columbia team: one in New York and one in Bethesda. The overall performance of the contract personnel is excellent.

Six site visits for program review were held, two for each project. The screening for thyroid diseases in Belarus and Ukraine is proceeding well, even during the normally slow period of summer months. The Belarusian team was slowed down because of the relocation of the screening center and the central laboratory. We were worried that it may affect the screening rate in the future but there is little we can do, this being entirely a domestic issue. The Ukrainian project is phasing in adequately well, modifying their approach as they get more experience in the field. In both countries the mobile teams play ever increasing role.

French representatives accompanied our team on the visit to leukemia project and one

U.S.-French meeting was held in Paris in preparation for the summer visit.

The arrangement with the STCU in Kyiv works very efficiently and now we are exploring the possibility of getting a similar arrangement going in Minsk through the IST Center (ISTC) which is based in Moscow but has recently opened a branch in Minsk. In addition, we signed two Interagency Agreements with the Department of State to facilitate the transfer of funds to STCU for the thyroid and leukemia studies in Ukraine.

As a result of the current discordant relationship between Belarus and most of the western nations, we explored with DOS the appropriate posture that should be taken with regard to the ongoing Chornobyl health studies. The response was positive to continue as long as no new bi-national agreements were required and at least in part resulted in the approach to use the ISTC for financial fund control. Further, the ISTC may also be used in effecting funds transfer to the Institute of Biophysics in Moscow, considering the current status of Russian banking system. The Institute of Biophysics provides critical dosimetry support for the Belarusian thyroid study. The ISTC continues to function even though most western funds have been frozen in Russian banks.

The Chornobyl Project staff increased by one individual when Mr. Jake Wechselberger joined the team after he retired from NRC. On the other hand, we lost a supporter in Dr. Faye Austin who retired from the Government and moved to Boston.