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ARTICLE APPEARED
ON PAGE 1THE BALTIMORE SUN
9 February 1982

UM malaria lab chief Pakistan

Mosquito research drew Soviet attack

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New Delhi Bureau of The Sun

New Delhi—Pakistan has forced the director of a University of Maryland anti-malaria laboratory to leave the country.

Dr. David R. Nalin, a Baltimorean who has been director of the University of Maryland International Center for Medical Research in Lahore, Pakistan, since late 1979, left Pakistan at the end of last month when the government—which helps run the center—refused to extend his visa.

The laboratory has been accused by the Soviet Union of breeding dangerous "CIA mosquitoes."

In New Delhi yesterday, Dr. Nalin said his forced departure was the work of an orchestrated campaign fueled by Moscow sympathizers.

However, Dr. John R. Dennis, the dean of the University of Maryland School of Medicine, said in a telephone interview from his Baltimore office that "the Pakistani government did not want to renew his visa because of his dealings with Pakistani employees. And, U.S. AID [the Agency for International Development, which also helps finance the laboratory's work] thought he was running around behind their backs to get his visa renewed."

According to Dr. Dennis, Dr. Nalin made contact with several Pakistani officials, outside the normal channels, in an attempt to obtain the renewal.

Dr. Dennis said Pakistani officials had promised Dr. Nalin a limited visa sometime in the future, to enable him to return to finish part of his work.

come under sharp attack by the Soviet media, which have sought to portray the facility as a tool of American espionage.

But Dr. Dennis yesterday seemed to disagree with Dr. Nalin's assertion that he was the victim of a Soviet disinformation campaign. "I think he might be making too much of this."

The University of Maryland and the government of Pakistan have run the laboratory since 1962. Scientists at the 130-employee installation have done extensive work on malaria research and have produced a stock of 20,000 mosquitoes—including genetically altered strains—for experiments.

Last week, the Soviet weekly *Literary Gazette* charged that the lab was creating new strains of "killer mosquitoes" that would be used by the Central Intelligence Agency operatives to spread diseases into Cuba and Afghanistan.

The report, as reproduced by one Indian newspaper, stated: "Poisoners from overseas plot to infect cattle with viruses, and then use the seasonal migration of herds from Pakistan to Afghanistan to start an epidemic of encephalitis in Afghanistan."

The Soviet report went on to blame "recent epidemics in Cuba" on the Lahore-bred mosquitoes.

Last year, Cuba charged that the CIA was responsible for introducing dengue fever—a mosquito-borne disease—into that country.

Dr. Nalin and Dr. Dennis denied the Soviet charges.

"I think the Soviets are always going to try to discredit us," said Dr. Dennis. The dean, who was in Lahore last month to visit the anti-malaria lab, said he did not believe the Soviet charges would threaten the future of the lab.

He said Dr. Nalin would probably be replaced in Lahore by Dr. Richard Baker, who is now head of the Department of International Medicine at the university and who worked previously in Pakistan.

Dr. Dennis said the University of Maryland will find out this month whether the anti-malaria lab will receive full funding from AID. The university has applied for \$5 million to help keep the lab open for the next five years.

In describing his 27 months in Lahore, however, Dr. Nalin said yesterday that he doubted whether the Baltimore-based lab would be able to survive what he described as Soviet-backed attempts to undermine the work.

He said the campaign against the lab has been led by two former Pakistani employees—Dr. M. Aslam Khan, a geneticist, and N. A. K. Chaudhry, an administrative officer. Each of them had been dismissed, but continued trying to sabotage the lab's research work, Dr. Nalin claimed.

Among the tactics allegedly used by opponents of the lab, Dr. Nalin said, were:

- Spreading a rumor that 22 patients at the lab's clinic near Lahore had been killed by American medication.
- Sending a letter to his office threatening his life.
- Bribing patients to say that they had suffered adverse drug reactions to medication given at the clinic. One patient has filed a malpractice suit.
- Telling Pakistani villagers that laboratory officials were suppressing information about a supposed outbreak of yellow fever. In fact, no such epidemic ever existed.

Dr. Nalin said that in early December, he walked into his secretary's office to find a stranger rummaging through some files. When Dr. Nalin asked the man who he was, the stranger produced a visiting card identifying himself as Iona Andronov, a Moscow-based correspondent for the *Literary Gazette*.

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