

115

115

SNIG

## Special Analysis

USSR:

### Increasing Disinformation About AIDS

***Moscow's yearlong campaign charging that US biological weapons research is responsible for AIDS has gained momentum in recent months. The rapid spread of these allegations on a worldwide scale, even in the conservative Western press, demonstrates the USSR's ability to manipulate foreign media. Growing attention to the spread of AIDS will present Moscow with additional exploitable opportunities for the foreseeable future.***

Since October 1985, charges that US biological weapons experiments created the AIDS virus have appeared in more than 40 countries in media of all political viewpoints—including the London *Sunday Express*, several international wire services, as well as Soviet Bloc radiobroadcasts in more than 20 languages. Originally designed to blame the West for the occurrence of AIDS in the USSR and to sow fears that the disease may be spread by US military personnel overseas, Moscow's campaign has added racial themes by alleging that the West is trying to shift responsibility for AIDS to African countries.

Moscow used the occasion of the recent Nonaligned Summit in Harare to further its campaign. According to the US Embassy there, a Soviet-inspired report alleging US culpability for AIDS was distributed to those in attendance. This paper, prepared by East Germans misidentified as French scholars, claimed that the disease resulted from gene-mutation experiments at Fort Detrick, Maryland. Variations of this allegation have appeared in the media of about 20 countries since the summit.

Other countries have initiated similar efforts to manipulate fears about AIDS. For months North Korea has broadcast warnings of an AIDS epidemic of US origin in South Korea; North Korean embassies have been directed to use this allegation to disrupt planning for the 1988 Olympics in Seoul. South Africa may use AIDS as grounds for expelling foreign mineworkers. Demands that US military bases in the Philippines be closed to prevent the spread of AIDS there have already appeared in the local press.

The Soviet propaganda campaign will probably increase because of growing attention to the widespread incidence of AIDS in the Third World, particularly in Africa. Success in alleging that US military personnel are AIDS carriers could lead Moscow to broaden its claims to include other Americans overseas such as students, tourists, and Peace Corps volunteers.

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