

## Commerce Secretary Wants Technical Data Restricted

The Reagan Administration's efforts to stem the flow of unclassified but potentially sensitive information to the Soviet Union may soon turn to a new area: the voluminous government literature made available to the public through the Commerce Department's National Technical Information Service (NTIS). A memorandum written last month by Commerce Secretary Malcolm Baldrige claims that "several U.S. government agencies are tolerating a massive give-away program that permits the Soviets to acquire tens of thousands of scientific and technical studies as well as other strategic information" from NTIS.

The memo, which was sent to the secretaries of State, Defense, and Energy, the President's national security adviser, and the administrator of the National Aeronautics and Space Administration, urges the National Security Council to look into the matter. Baldrige suggests that "new legislation, new Executive Orders, and coordinated government-wide regulations" may be required to stem what he calls the "hemorrhage" of information through NTIS.

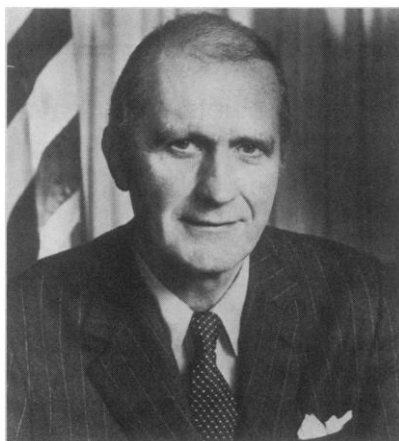
The NTIS is the chief conduit through which thousands of technical studies reach the public each year. It functions as a central clearinghouse to which government departments and agencies send unclassified studies, which are then either sold directly or made available through commercial vendors or computerized data bases. In 1983, according to Baldrige's memo, the Defense Department alone submitted 15,000 documents to NTIS.

Private corporations make extensive use of NTIS materials and they are also an important resource for scholarly research. In addition, "Moscow has unlimited access to all information in NTIS through the USSR All-Union Scientific Research Institute, which is a prominent subscriber to this source of data," Baldrige notes.

Baldrige wants much tighter screening of what goes into NTIS, in essence requiring that documents containing potentially sensitive information be withheld from NTIS even though they are declassified or un-

classified. He points out that the Commerce Department cannot perform this function and says that the Defense Department does not have adequate resources to carry out the required screening. "As a result, numerous sensitive reports are being dumped into the NTIS system without proper review."

According to Baldrige, a study of the problem was begun by an inter-agency committee in August last year and a classified draft report was produced in January. "It is my understanding that . . . its conclusions are similar to mine—that we have a massive outflow of damaging information that must be stemmed at the source," he said.



**Malcolm Baldrige**

*Wants to stem the "hemorrhage."*

"The Administration has played around with this for some time," notes one congressional observer. The interesting thing about Baldrige's memo, he says, is that it suggests that some proposals may be in the offing.

Restricting the type of information available through NTIS would be consistent with previous Reagan Administration moves to clamp down on public access to unclassified but potentially sensitive information. In an Executive Order issued in 1982, for example, President Reagan gave agencies the power to prevent many studies from being automatically declassified after 6 years, a move that ended more than two decades of liberalizing classification rules. Baldrige's memo is "part and parcel" of the Administration's efforts to make less and less information available to the public, says Allan Adler of the Center for National Security Studies.

—COLIN NORMAN

## OTA Critical of AIDS Initiative

The Public Health Service's multi-front battle against acquired immune deficiency syndrome (AIDS) has been hampered by insufficient funds and inadequate planning, according to a report from the Office of Technology Assessment (OTA).

The report, produced at the behest of two congressional committees, says that despite much money—\$97.4 million in fiscal 1985—"it has not always been clear . . . that the amount of support for AIDS activities has been equivalent to the needs identified by PHS agencies." It contends that "except when prodded by Congress, the Department [of Health and Human Services] has maintained that PHS agencies should be able to conduct AIDS research without extra funds"—with the result that, despite extra appropriations, agencies have had to divert money from other activities.

The OTA maintains that planning has been thwarted by personnel cuts and financial uncertainties. It chastises the Administration for not seeking appropriations from the \$30 million fund established by the Public Health Emergency Act of 1983.

The report is also critical of the fact that despite the designation of AIDS as the "number one health priority" of the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), there has been no mechanism to speed up approval and funding of grant applications which take more than a year to process.

Although in the past 4 years PHS-funded researchers have defined the syndrome, found an AIDS virus, devised a test for antibodies to the virus, and are working feverishly to develop a vaccine, the report faults HHS for concentrating almost exclusively on biology. "Psychological and social factors, . . . the service needs of AIDS patients, and public education and prevention have not been considered funding priorities." Education efforts have been directed at professionals, "leaving education of high-risk groups largely up to the leadership of the groups themselves." The education part of the AIDS budget went up to 4 percent in fiscal 1985.

According to the report, former As-