Curbing Soviet Disinformation

United States and Soviet information officials have agreed on efforts to combat any more Soviet-inspired "disinformation" about AIDS. The understanding was reached at a September meeting in Moscow between Charles Z. Wick, head of the United State Information Agency (USIA), and Valentin Falin, head of the Novosti press agency. A USIA spokesman says the officials agreed that if either side learns of any such reports it will let the other know so they can be curbed "before they get out of hand."

There have been frequent reports in the Soviet press linking AIDS with American biological warfare research. The Soviets agreed in August 1987 to stop these reports. But there have been occasional mentions since, which tend to get picked up by Third World newspapers and publications run by Soviet front organizations. The latest instance occurred last July when the Novosti Military Bulletin, referring to obscure American publications, said that the link between AIDS and biological warfare was "first admitted in the U.S. press in 1983."

The State Department is now trying to combat the latest disinformation campaign, involving reports from Honduras and Guatemala that adoption rings have been selling South American babies to Americans and Israelis so their organs can be used for transplants. The story was picked up last year by *Pravda* and was repeated on Moscow Radio in September. A USIA spokesman says newspapers in 50 countries, most of them in the Third World, have run the story. ■ CONSTANCE HOLDEN

Bush Discusses Science Policy

On 25 October, George Bush said that, if elected President, he would elevate the status of the science adviser in the White House and create a new "Council of Science and Technology Advisers," giving it a more prominent role than in the past. Thus, in a speech to the Ohio Association of Broadcasters in Columbus, Ohio, Bush became the only candidate to take the arcane subject of science policy to the hustings.

Democratic candidate Michael Dukakis earlier went on record as favoring a promotion for the science adviser, writing that the office should have the rank of presidential assistant (*Science*, 14 October, p. 173).

In his Ohio speech, Bush said, "I will upgrade the President's science adviser to Assistant to the President and make [him or her] an active member of the Economic Policy Council and our national security planning process." A campaign sheet says Bush "believes a stronger OSTP [Office of Science and Technology Policy] is needed, one that can coordinate the President's federal science and technology policy among agencies. OSTP should be able to perform analyses and help prepare budgets on an across-the-board basis."

The statement raised hardly a ripple in the national press. "We know we're not going to collect many votes with this," says a Bush campaign worker who worked on it. "But I'm glad he got it in before the election."

Describing technology as "America's economic fountain of youth," Bush restated an earlier pledge to reduce the capital gains tax from 28% to 15%, to make permanent the industrial R&D tax credit, and to double the budget of the National Science Foundation in 5 years. In supporting basic research, Bush said he would "seek government R&D authorizations for 5 years and appropriations for 2 years at a time" to create a "stable, consistent environment in which to plan." ■ ELIOT MARSHALL

NAE Creates New Prize

The National Academy of Engineering (NAE) thinks it is too bad that there is no Nobel Prize for engineering. After all, Alfred Nobel himself was, among other things, an engineer.

So with funding provided by the private engineering lab that bears his name, the NAE has established the Charles Stark Draper Prize to be awarded biennially to an engineer or group of engineers whose work most contributes "to the advancement of human welfare and freedom." And by giving an award of a gold medal and $350,000, the Academy is aiming for the Nobel league.

"Our society tends to reward the discoverers of basic scientific principles, but overlooks the engineer who puts that principle into practice in products and services that yield societal and economic benefits," said NAE president Robert M. White in announcing the prize. "We hope that in years to come the Charles Stark Draper Prize will be just as well known and respected an award in engineering as the Nobel Prizes are today for chemistry, physics, and medicine."

Indeed, in monetary terms the Draper Prize is now the biggest prize exclusively for engineering and technology achievement. The prize is endowed by the Charles Stark Draper Laboratory in Cambridge, Massachusetts, formerly an MIT lab.

Draper developed the inertial guidance systems that make possible all modern navigation, including the system that took the Apollo astronauts safely to the moon and back as well as the landing system used on the space shuttle.

Draper's first huge success was the Mark 14 gunsight during World War II, a mechanism so effective that in 1942 the U.S.S. *South Dakota*, using the Mark 14, shot down 32 Japanese planes, an unprecedented score. Draper's later work led to development of the THOR guidance system for intercontinental ballistic missiles and to guidance systems for the Polaris, Poseidon, Trident I, and Trident II systems. Draper died in July 1987 at age 85, one of the most highly acclaimed of American engineers.

White said the recipient will be selected by a committee chaired by Robert C. Seamans, Jr., senior lecturer at the Department of Aeronautics and Astronautics at MIT, and a former secretary of the U.S. Air Force. Nominations will be solicited from within NAE and the rest of the National Academy of Sciences complex and from the engineering community. Nominees may come from any engineering discipline and from any part of the world. The award will be given for either an individual achievement or a lifetime's work in developing a concept and reducing it to practical application.

The first Draper Prize will be awarded in October 1989 at the 25th anniversary annual meeting of the NAE.

■ GREGORY BYRNE

Research Resources Merger

James Wyngaarden, director of the National Institutes of Health (NIH), has decided to merge the Division of Research Services (the intramural animal care program) with the extramural Division of Research Resources (DRR), whose director Betty Pickett has just retired. The research services division, headed by Robert Whitney, will now be the intramural program of the DRR. Whitney is acting director.

Whitney says the move has been under discussion for the past 17 years, and consolidation seems advisable wherever possible, what with the proliferation of institutes at NIH. He says no major changes are afoot, but three DRR programs—general clinical research centers, biotechnology support, and minority research support—"are being looked at in relation to programs in other institutes." ■ CONSTANCE HOLDEN