edited by RICHARD STONE

Russian Chemist's Story Corroborated

Next week, Russian prosecutors are expected to detail charges against Vil Mirzayanov, a Russian chemist accused of illegally revealing classified information about chemical weapons under development at a government laboratory in Moscow. But as the case comes to a head, Mirzayanov has received some unexpected support from a comrade in arms: Another former military scientist has gone public with an account of the weapons program that corroborates many of the details that got Mirzayanov in trouble.

Mirzayanov, a former employee of the State Union Scientific Research Institute for Organic Chemistry and Technology (SIOCT), was arrested last October on charges of "disclosing a state secret" when he revealed details of a SIOCT program to develop a sophisticated new binary nerve gas (*Science*, 13 November 1992, p. 1086). Last September, Mirzayanov and Lev Fedorov, a chemist at the Russian Academy of Sciences, described the program—code-named "Foliant"—in an article in the *Moscow News*. (Fedorov, who never worked at SIOCT and is therefore exempt from the institute's secrecy rules, was questioned and released last October.)

ALEXEI KUDENKO

Russian whistleblowers. Fedorov and Mirzayanov outside the offices of *New Time*.

Now another former SIOCT employee has disclosed details about Foliant. In an interview in the 5 February edition of the Russian newspaper *New Time*, chemist Vladimir Uglev corroborated Mirzayanov's account of the development of "Newcomer," a class of compounds allegedly several times as toxic as other Russian chemical weapons. Uglev also claimed that experimental quantities of Newcomer are stored at a facility in the Bryansk region southwest of Moscow.

Uglev acknowledged in *New Time* that his revelations may force him to "share [Mirzayanov's] fate," but, he added, "I'm inwardly ready for any possible consequences." As *Science* went to press, Uglev had not been arrested.

MSU Coughs Up Partial Mea Culpa

Michigan State University (MSU) seems ready to take to heart some—but not all—of the tough comments it received from an outside panel that probed charges that a graduate student and three faculty members had committed scientific misconduct.

In a contrite letter to the U.S. Office of Research Integrity on 12 February, MSU president Gordon Guyer accepts the conclusions reached by the outside panel, chaired by Washington, D.C., attorney Barbara Mishkin (*Science*, 29 January, p. 592). Guyer states that he agrees with the panel's main findings—that the student committed misconduct by sequestering data from a collaborative project, and that MSU did an inadequate job of "setting forth and disseminating policies concerning authorship and control of research." But he notes that "various parties have commented that the report distorts certain events ...and is otherwise deficient."

Guyer says he will seek a 1-year suspension of the accused student, rather than immediate dismissal as the Mishkin panel recommended. Guyer also plans to create a committee of five of MSU's "most senior and respected research scientists" to investigate misconduct charges against three faculty members who helped the student publish a paper that failed to cite collaborators. According to Guyer, the university will not help the student publish a second paper based on the disputed research. Guyer also plans to give the new committee a second task: To prepare a report on MSU's possible "administrative and policy failings." Finally, he ends on a note of praise for Jeffrey Williams, the microbiologist whose allegations forced MSU to hire the Mishkin panel.

Better Living Through Chemistry

USA Today may soon start spicing up its usual fare with a regular helping of science education. That's if the newspaper and the American Chemical Society (ACS) can put the finishing touches on an unusual agreement for a page of science articles that would appear every other Tuesday.

As the *USA Today*-initiated plan looks now, newspaper staff would fill half the spread with newsy science stories, says Joan Baralota, *USA Today's* director of education initiatives and marketing. The ACS would fill the rest with "advertorials," including hands-on projects for parents and children derived from *WonderScience*, an ACS publication. Other features will include advice on how to get kids fired up over science, such as tips on succeeding at science fairs, recognizing good science instruction, and "finding science in the world around you," says Sylvia Ware, ACS's education director.

That may sound dandy, but *USA Today's* millions of readers won't be seeing the science page until the newspaper, ACS, and potential additional sponsors agree on how to divvy up the project's cost—upwards of $2 million for the initial year, according to a source familiar with the project. Neither Ware nor Baralota was willing to discuss financial details. "Until it is going to be, we are not comfortable in saying more about it," says Baralota.

Biosphere Loses Its Advisers

It looks like oxygen isn't the only thing that Biosphere 2 is running out of—now it's scientific advice. Earlier this week, the ecology experiment in the Arizona desert announced that its scientific advisory committee had disbanded.

In September 1991, eight people voluntarily shut themselves in a glass dome near Oracle, Arizona, to perform a science experiment of sorts. They are supposed to live solely off the Biosphere 2 habitats, which include wetlands and drylands, as well as their denizens—a variety of animal and plant species besides *Homo sapiens*. The press, however, has criticized the tourist attraction for lacking in scientific rigor. That's why Biosphere's billionaire financier, Edward Bass, last year got renowned biologist Thomas Lovejoy to help appoint a scientific panel to advise the experiment.

But the panel's advice mostly went unheeded, charge several panel members contacted by *Science*. Panel members say they were irked by Biosphere's lukewarm response to a committee report that recommended ways to improve the experiment's science. One suggestion was that Biosphere try to publish its data. Indeed, last year Biosphere did publish a study on the health effects of a low-calorie diet in the *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*.

But that apparently wasn't good enough for the committee, which, according to *Newsday*, disbanded after a 5 February meeting. Committee members say they resigned en masse after Lovejoy, the committee's chairman, announced he would step down. Lovejoy was traveling and could not be reached for comment.

A press statement released by Bass' PR firm blamed the resignations on "personality conflicts" and "inherent difficulties with an unpaid, volunteer committee" advising a private company. It did state that Biosphere plans to forge ahead with one panel recommendation—it plans to hire a scientific director soon.