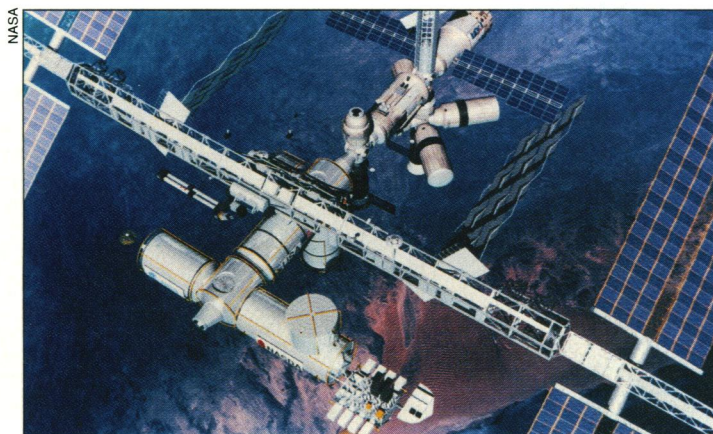


edited by RICHARD STONE



Pie in the sky? Congress may not like news that Russian help on international space station will save \$1.5 billion less than predicted last fall.

Revised Budget Bodes Ill for Space Station

With a budget-minded Congress rattling its saber this spring about the excessive cost of the \$28-billion space station, project supporters are groping for new ways to defend it. Now, suddenly, one of their key arguments has proven fallible: In a letter to Congress earlier this month, Daniel

Goldin, administrator of the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA), said Russian participation in the space station will save the United States \$1.5 billion—just half the savings the agency had originally estimated.

The Clinton Administration announced last September that it had invited the Russian Space

Agency to play a key role in building the space station, for economic as well as political reasons. With Russian help, NASA said the station could be completed by October 2001—2 years earlier than a go-it-alone plan unveiled last May—thereby saving \$3 billion.

But now that Congress has killed one “big-science” project—the Superconducting Super Collider, which died last year—the station may be the next vulnerable target. In a 1 April letter to Senator Barbara Mikulski (D-MD) and Representative Lewis Stokes (D-OH), Goldin states that it will take 9 months longer to build the station than estimated last fall, for a savings of only \$1.5 billion. Because all the savings from Russian help are derived from an accelerated schedule, says a NASA spokesman, the current plans to finish by June 2002 will save less money.

Animal Researchers On Red Alert

Universities and research labs are bracing for an event that may cost them thousands of dollars in extra security: The eighth World Laboratory Animal Liberation Week (WLALW), 24 to 30 April, a nationwide protest against animal research. Last year WLALW was punctuated by vandalism at the homes of four Washington, D.C.-area scientists, prompting many researchers to say they will be extra vigilant this year.

Of utmost concern to scientists is the personal nature of terrorism that lurks behind peaceful protests. In a joint report to Congress last fall, the Departments of Agriculture and Justice cited the “increasing frequency and persistence” of attacks against individuals and private property. Activist attacks between 1977 and 1993 caused an estimated \$137 million in damage, the report says, mostly from destruction of lab equipment and loss of animals.

Last year, WLALW was accompanied by nighttime attacks on the homes of three National Institutes of Health (NIH) scientists and the president of Rockville, Maryland-based BIOCON, Inc., a firm that does work for NIH. The group “Animal Avengers” claimed responsibility for the attacks, in which epithets such as “Animal Killer” and “Dr. Mengele” were sprayed on the scientists’ houses and cars.

Such attacks divert money from research to security. According to University of Arizona toxicologist Glenn Sipes, WLALW runs his school at least \$50,000 in extra security. BIOCON president Lawrence Cunnick, who has found fake bombs on his doorstep, says his small firm spends \$12,000 a year on security.

For this year’s WLALW, the group “In Defense of Animals” has organized more than 60 protests. The group is focusing on two long-time targets—the use of animals to study addictive drugs and personal hygiene products—and is extending this year’s radiation-studies theme to animals.

Long Search for EPA Research Chief Ends

One of the last key science posts still vacant in the Clinton Administration is about to be filled: By the end of this month, the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) is expected to tap chemist Robert Huggett of the College of William and Mary to head EPA’s Office of Research and Development (ORD).

ORD, which spends \$500 million a year on research, has experienced growing dissatisfaction during Carol Browner’s tenure as EPA administrator. For example, researchers complain that an increasing paperwork burden has reduced productivity at ORD labs and lowered morale. And it has taken longer than expected to fill the ORD post. Not that the delay is all Browner’s fault—her search has been hampered by rules that circumscribe the ability of ORD chiefs to publish work done at their previous institution and limit their ability to seek EPA grants after leaving the agency (*Science*, 21 January, p. 313).

Huggett told *Science* that he is prepared to abide by the rules. “I don’t feel they’re that onerous,” he says. His background is ideal for the job, says Cornell’s Dale Corson, who chaired a National Research Council panel on environmental science. As an outsider, Huggett might take a fresh

approach to ORD’s problems, Corson says. Huggett has also served on EPA’s Science Advisory Board and is familiar with agency science. “His selection is reassuring,” says former ORD chief Bernard Goldstein, an environmental scientist at UMDNJ–Robert Wood Johnson Medical School.

Pentagon Bio-Defenders Seek Industry Aid

Stung by criticism that the military had inadequate vaccine stocks during the Persian Gulf war, the Pentagon is now looking for ways to expand its biological defenses in a hurry. The Pentagon is so eager, in fact, that it’s appealing to private companies and academic researchers to help develop vaccines against exotic threats such as anthrax, tularemia, rift valley fever, Q fever, and botulinus toxin. The key reason for involving the private sector: Military officials calculate it would take at least until 2000 to refurbish government-owned labs for this project.

The Joint Program Office for Biological Defense has been meeting with pharmaceutical honchos this month to discuss plans for expansion. The office hopes to send a report to the Pentagon’s top brass in early May, says Lieutenant Colonel Debra Krikorian. This push could lead to a \$300-million federal investment in a new vaccine production line.

So far, however, industry has been lukewarm to the overtures, says Tom Copmann, a vice president at the Pharmaceutical Manufacturers Association. Mainly that’s because firms lack spare production capacity, he says. Executives also worry that such products would require expensive security and containment measures. Moreover, federal officials so far haven’t offered liability coverage for these vaccines; without this protection, Copmann says, many firms consider the risks too high.