

LETTERS

"Frankness and caution"

A chemist suggests that certain "marigolds, after steaming, yield a stable oil" that could kill dengue fever-causing mosquitoes in Cuba. A researcher describes the collapse of an "international expedition to the Papovka River Valley" in 1996. Readers react to a news article about "delay" and "difficulties" in Russia's space program (below, cosmonaut and astronaut in happier days). And the U.S. National Research Council is said to have undergone "tremendous changes."



Fighting Dengue in Cuba

A resurgence of dengue fever in Cuba associated with the failure of a large government program to maintain an early success in control of *Aedes aegypti* is reported by Gary Taubes (News & Comment, 11 July, p. 174). Experts are reported to believe that effective and long-standing control might follow individual community efforts to control this mosquito vector for dengue fever. The article also reports that *Aedes aegypti* breeds in human-made containers. In 1991, my co-authors and I reported showing that certain commonly available marigolds, after steaming, yield a stable oil that acts as a larvicide against *Aedes aegypti* both in laboratory tests and in barrel tests (1). Because *Aedes aegypti* usually forms larvae in limited volumes of water, this finding might be worthy of investigation for control of dengue fever in Cuba.

Mark M. Green

Department of Chemistry,
Polytechnic University,
Brooklyn, NY 11201, USA
E-mail: mgreen@duke.poly.edu

References

1. M. M. Green, J. M. Singer, D. J. Sutherland, C. R. Hibben, *J. Am. Mosq. Control Assoc.* **7**, 282 (1991).

Harassed Expedition

Jeffrey Mervis' article "Cold wind blows through Arctic climate project" (News & Comment, 27 June, p. 1965) reports an incident similar to my own experience in attempting to join an international expedition to the Papovka River Valley in August 1996. The expedition was planned in detail by Anatoly Shvidenko, a well-known forest scientist in Russia. It was stopped in Yakutsk by harassment similar to what Larry Hinzman and Vladimir Romanovsky are reported to have experienced. The harassment included delays, an exorbitant fare for air travel beyond Yakutsk (despite an earlier assurance of the price), the nonavailability of seats and tickets, the lifting of passports of a German couple on the expedition because of a technicality involving their visas, difficulties in obtaining hotel space (although reservations had been made), the interest of the reestablished security forces in our presence, and rumors of an imminent robbery. The trip was abandoned, despite the elaborate arrangements, and participants returned to Moscow.

The reasons for the harassment were unclear. One element was the emergence of nationalism in the Saha Republic. Apart from a fascinating landscape, Yakutsk has little to recommend it. The current attitude toward science and scientists there is clearly a step backward.

George M. Woodwell

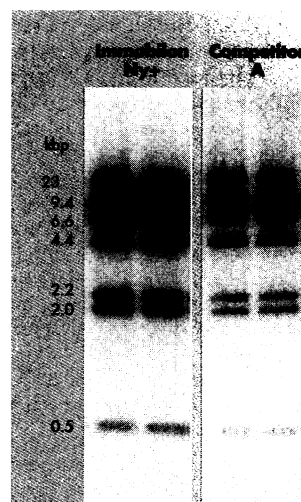
President, Woods Hole Research Center,
Post Office Box 296,
Woods Hole, MA 02543, USA

Russian Space Program

Richard Stone's article "Russia's last shot at space" (News & Comment, 20 June, p. 1780) has resulted in numerous anxious inquiries from our colleagues at many institutions and organizations all over the world who participate in the implementation of the Russian Space Science Program. In view of this, we asked Yuri Ossipov, chairman of the Space Council of the Russian Academy of Sciences, to clarify matters. The Space Council is the main body that defines fundamental research carried out by the Russian Space Program, subject to approval by the government. His statement is as follows.

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