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Directorate of Intelligence

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File

The Chernobyl' Accident: Social and Political Implications



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A Research Paper

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Excerpt 1:

Estimates of Chernobyl's Impact on Health

According to a draft report from a US Government task force presented at a meeting of the Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC) on 6 February 1987, the release of radiation from the Chernobyl' explosion and fire may cause up to 4,000 cancer deaths in Europe and 10,000 additional unanticipated cancer deaths in the Soviet Union during the next 70 years. The interagency government task force, chaired by Harold R. Denton of the NRC, also estimated that the accident may eventually cause mental retardation in up to 300 newborn babies in the Soviet Union.

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These were infants born of women who were pregnant at the time of the accident and who lived within 30 kilometers of the nuclear reactor. NRC officials said that the figures represent the US Government's best assessment at that time of the long-term health toll from the disaster.

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A more recent unofficial study claims 39,000 may die of cancer in the next 50 years, most of them outside the Soviet Union. According to our experts, this study does not use reliable or complete data, but may further contribute to public uncertainty in the USSR and Western Europe.^a The Soviets are estimating an increase of 1,000 to 3,000 cancer deaths over the next 50 years in the Soviet Union or less than 0.4 percent of the natural death rate.

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^a This information is from the monthly journal *Science*, 8 May 1987, "Recalculating the Cost of Chernobyl," pp. 958-59. The chief author of the report is Marvin Goldman of the University of California at Davis.

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