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 TO SECSTATE WASHDC 8451
 INFO SCIENCE COLLECTIVE
 NRC WASHDC
 AMCONSUL ST PETERSBURG
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 DOE WASHDC
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UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 MOSCOW 024457

STATE FOR PM/NE, PM/RNP, AND EUR/ISCA;
 DOE FOR S-1 (BERLS), NN-40 (ROONEY), OTA AND PO-70;
 NRC FOR OIP;
 WHITEHOUSE FOR OSTP (VON HIPPLE)

E.O. 12356: DECL: OADR
 TAGS: MNUC, PARM, TRGY, KNNP, RS
 SUBJECT: OPENING THE POST OFFICE BOXES: A GUIDE TO
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RUSSIA'S NUCLEAR ARCHIPELAGO

1. WITH THEIR CRYPTIC NAMES AND "CLOSED" STATUS, RUSSIA'S ONCE-SECRET NUCLEAR CITIES (CALLED POST OFFICE BOXES BECAUSE THEIR ALPHANUMERIC NAMES ARE ACTUALLY POSTAL CODES IN NEAR-BY TOWNS) REMAIN LARGELY UNKNOWN BY THE OUTSIDE WORLD. TO HELP SHED SOME (UNCLASSIFIED) LIGHT ON THESE SEEMINGLY MYSTERIOUS PLACES, THE FULL TEXT OF AN AUGUST 25 ARTICLE BY PAVEL FELGENHAUER (DEFENSE AND NATIONAL SECURITY EDITOR FOR "SEGODNYA" NEWSPAPER) IS REPEATED BELOW.

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2. BEGIN TEXT:

NUCLEAR CITIES' SECRETS REVEALED

IN THE WAKE OF SEVERAL GERMAN STING OPERATIONS IN RECENT MONTHS, PLUTONIUM HAS BECOME ONE OF THE MOST TALKED-ABOUT METALS IN THE WORLD. WHILE RUSSIA HAS QUITE A BIT OF WEAPONS-GRADE PLUTONIUM (ESTIMATES RANGE FROM 100 TO 200 TONS), IT IS STILL OBVIOUSLY NOT SOMETHING YOU CAN JUST BUY ON THE STREET. BEFORE BEGINNING ONE'S OWN STING OPERATION, ONE SHOULD HAVE AT LEAST SOME IDEA WHERE -- IN PRINCIPLE -- WEAPONS-GRADE PLUTONIUM MIGHT BE UP FOR SALE AND WHERE IT MOST LIKELY IS NOT. MOSCOW'S RENOWNED KURCHATOV INSTITUTE, FOR EXAMPLE, DOES NOT HAVE A SINGLE NUCLEAR-WEAPONS SPECIALIST AND DOES NOT PRODUCE ANY NUCLEAR-WEAPONS MATERIALS.

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ALL MILITARY ATOMIC PRODUCTION IN RUSSIA IS CONCENTRATED IN 10 CLOSED "ATOMIC CITIES" ADMINISTERED BY THE NUCLEAR POWER MINISTRY. IN SOVIET TIMES, THAT MINISTRY WAS ENIGMATICALLY CALLED THE MINISTRY OF MEDIUM MACHINE BUILDING OR SREDMASH. IN THE WEST, OF COURSE, NUCLEAR FACILITIES ARE ALSO CLOSED TO THE PUBLIC, BUT RUSSIA TOOK THIS PROCESS TO THE EXTREME. IT BUILT AN ENTIRE CLOSED ATOMIC EMPIRE, COMPLETELY ISOLATED FROM BOTH FOREIGNERS AND RUSSIANS. THESE CLOSED CITIES WERE SURROUNDED BY VAST DEFENSIVE PERIMETERS MANNED BY TROOPS FROM THE INTERIOR MINISTRY. THE CLOSED ZONE CALLED ARZAMAS-16, FOR EXAMPLE, OCCUPIES 200 SQUARE KILOMETERS.

RESIDENTS OF THESE CLOSED CITIES NOT ONLY LIVE THERE AND MAKE NUCLEAR WEAPONS WITHOUT EVER NEEDING TO GO OUTSIDE THE BARBED WIRE, THEY ALSO HAVE THEIR DACHAS THERE AND PLOTS WHERE THEY PLANT THE POTATOES THAT ARE NOW BECOMING AN INCREASINGLY IMPORTANT PART OF THEIR DIET.

IN ADDITION TO THESE 10 ATOMIC CITIES, RUSSIA HAS MORE THAN 100 OTHER CLOSED CITIES AND SETTLEMENTS THAT ARE RUN BY OTHER MINISTRIES, ESPECIALLY THE DEFENSE

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MINISTRY. ALL OF THESE, HOWEVER, ARE SMALLER THAN THE ATOMIC CITIES. IN ALL, 1.5 MILLION RUSSIANS LIVE IN CLOSED AREAS, WITH OVER 700,000 OF THEM LIVING IN THE 10 ATOMIC CITIES.

ALL SREDMASH'S ATOMIC CITIES WERE BUILT ON RUSSIAN TERRITORY, SO WHEN THE USSR COLLAPSED, NOT A SINGLE

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IMPORTANT NUCLEAR-WEAPONS FACILITY WAS STRANDED IN THE "NEAR ABROAD". ALL THE CLOSED CITIES REMAIN CLOSED TO THIS DAY. HOWEVER, IT IS CONSIDERABLY EASIER TO GET IN THAN IT USED TO BE. EVEN A FOREIGNER CAN MAKE IT NOW BY PRETENDING TO BE A JOURNALIST AND PAYING A BRIBE TO THE RIGHT BUREAUCRAT.

HERE IS THE FULL LIST OF RUSSIA'S CLOSED ATOMIC CITIES (THE FORMERLY STRICTLY SECRET NAME OF EACH CITY IS GIVEN IN PARENTHESES):

1. ARZAMAS-16 (KREMLYOV): 80,300 RESIDENTS. THIS IS THE LOCATION OF THE INSTITUTE OF EXPERIMENTAL PHYSICS, THE PRIMARY NUCLEAR RESEARCH INSTITUTE IN THE COUNTRY. HERE, NUCLEAR MATERIALS ARE PROCESSED, TEST BOMBS ARE ASSEMBLED AND SCIENTIFIC RESEARCH IS CONDUCTED. IN ADDITION, ARZAMAS-16 IS HOME TO THE ELECTRO-MECHANICAL FACTORY AVANGARD WHICH PRODUCES NUCLEAR WARHEADS FOR THE MILITARY. THE CITY IS THE UNOFFICIAL CAPITAL OF RUSSIA'S ATOMIC ARCHIPELAGO AND THE COUNTRY'S FIRST CLOSED CITY, FOUNDED IN 1946.

2. CHELYABINSK-70 (SNEZHINSK): 46,300 RESIDENTS. THE

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CITY IS HOME TO RUSSIA'S SECOND MOST IMPORTANT NUCLEAR RESEARCH FACILITY, THE INSTITUTE OF TECHNICAL PHYSICS. HERE, NUCLEAR MATERIALS ARE PROCESSED, TEST NUCLEAR DEVICES ARE ASSEMBLED AND SCIENTIFIC RESEARCH IS CONDUCTED. IN 1992, PRESIDENT BORIS YELTSIN DECLARED CHELYABINSK-70 AND ARZAMAS-16 THE "RUSSIAN NUCLEAR CENTER."

3. KRASNOYARSK-26 (ZHELEZNOGORSK): 90,300 RESIDENTS.

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THIS CITY HAS AN UNDERGROUND CHEMICAL PLANT AND
FOUNDRY AT WHICH WEAPONS-GRADE PLUTONIUM IS PRODUCED.
THE PLANT HAS THREE NUCLEAR REACTORS AND THE WORLD'S
ONLY UNDERGROUND NUCLEAR POWER PLANT. IT PRODUCES
ULTRA-PURE RARE-EARTH METALS AND HAS AN UNDERGROUND
FACILITY FOR ASSEMBLING SPACE SATELLITES AND
UNDERGROUND NUCLEAR-WASTE STORAGE. A PLANT FOR
PROCESSING SPENT NUCLEAR FUEL HAS NOT YET BEEN
COMPLETED.

4. TOMSK-7 (SEVERSK): 107,700 RESIDENTS. PRODUCES
WEAPONS-GRADE PLUTONIUM AND MASS-PRODUCES WEAPONS-
GRADE URANIUM. HERE, THE CHEAPEST AND MOST EFFECTIVE
METHOD OF PRODUCING ENRICHED URANIUM WAS DEVELOPED.
THIS IS THE PROPOSED SITE FOR UNDERGROUND STORAGE FOR
RUSSIA'S 100-TON WEAPONS-GRADE PLUTONIUM SURPLUS.

5. CHELYABINSK-65 (OZERSK): 83,500 RESIDENTS. USED
TO BE THE MAIN CENTER FOR PRODUCING WEAPONS-GRADE
PLUTONIUM. NOW IT REPROCESSES RADIOACTIVE WASTE AND
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PRODUCES RADIOACTIVE ISOTOPES TO SELL FOR SCIENTIFIC
USE. THE LOCAL FACTORY MAYAK HAS FORMED A JOINT
VENTURE WITH THE BRITISH FIRM AMERSHAM, LTD.

6. PENZA-19 (ZARECHNY): 61,400 RESIDENTS. THE PENZA
INSTRUMENT ASSEMBLY FACTORY ASSEMBLES AND DISMANTLES
NUCLEAR WARHEADS. THE SCIENTIFIC RESEARCH DEVELOPMENT
INSITUTE OF RADIOELECTRONIC TECHNOLOGY DESIGNS NUCLEAR
WARHEADS.

7. SVERDLOVSK-44 (NOVOURALSK): 88,500 RESIDENTS.
PROCESSES ENRICHED URANIUM.

8. SVERDLOVSK-45 (LESNOI): 54,700 RESIDENTS.
ASSEMBLES AND DISMANTLES NUCLEAR WARHEADS.

9. KRASNOYARSK-45 (ZELENORGORSK): 63,400 RESIDENTS.
PRODUCES ENRICHED URANIUM.

10. ZLATOUST-36 (TRYOKHGORNY): 29,800 RESIDENTS.
ASSEMBLES AND DISMANTLES NUCLEAR WARHEADS.

END TEXT.
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