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With Les Whitten

A SECRET WAVE

WASHINGTON. From a remote lakeside near the Russian-Finnish border, the Soviet Union is aiming a mysterious microwave beam at the United States.

American intelligence experts believe the strange beam keeps a round-the-clock watch on U. S. missile sites in the Dakotas.

The rays are so powerful that most Russians in the vicinity reportedly have been moved out. They now monitor the beam, it is believed, by computer from afar. But just across the border, unlucky Finns have developed alarmingly high rates of cancer and heart diseases.

The silent beam emanates from clusters of buildings on the eastern shores of Lake Ladoga, which is located in a barren region northeast of Leningrad. One structure has been identified as an enormous parabolic antenna capable of firing the high-powered impulse.

American experts say the lake waters help concentrate the rays into a powerful beam, which is launched off the lake's surface. This gives the beam a better "launch" and "angle," according to the experts, than would forest land or hill country.

Just as ordinary radar picks up distant objects, the Soviet super-radar can monitor movement around the inter-continental ballistic missile sites 4500 miles away. The Lake Ladoga installation would give the Soviet Union almost instant warning of missile launchings from the U. S. heartland. The Soviet monitors also could determine quickly where the missiles were headed.

Because of the dangerous radiation from the powerful microwave rays, So-

viet scientists reportedly direct the beam from the safety of a distant headquarters. But the Finns across the border have been afflicted with unusual maladies.

In the Finnish towns of Kuopio, Joensuu, and Ilomantsi, the World Health Organization has discovered extraordinary rates of cardiac disease. Ilomantsi, the town nearest the microwave station, has the highest rate of any place its size in the world.

Two other border hamlets, Koitsanlahti and Parrikkala, have shown inexplicable increases in cancer.

An American physician and microwave scientist, Dr. Milton Zaret, investigated the strange plague that has hit these small Finnish towns. At a Warsaw meeting of microwave specialists, he blamed the Lake Ladoga installation for the diseases.

The dangerous microwaves scatter from the main beam, he declared, just as droplets fall near the nozzle when water is squirted from a hose.

Footnote: There has been increasing evidence that exposure from radar and other microwave devices can cause cataracts and damage the nervous system, blood, genitals and genes. Yet the producers of microwave ovens discount the danger. They are supported by the Pentagon, which would have to change billions worth of military radar and related equipment if U. S. safety standards were tightened.

The only thing worse than doing business with a government bureaucracy is dealing with three bureaucracies. Take the case of Solomon Ward, an unhappy painter from West Virginia.

He was one of 13 unlucky men who did some painting at Wright-Patterson AFB, Ohio, back in September and October, 1973. They never were paid a dime by the contractor, the H. J. Stewart Co.

The men appealed to the Air Force and Labor Dept. But nothing happened. Not until Ward got his Congressman, Ken Hechler (D-W. Va.) to badger the Pentagon did the Air Force get around to investigating the case.

The Air Force concluded that Stewart did indeed owe the 13 painters \$14,183.63 in back wages. Accordingly, the money was withheld from the contract to pay the men.

On Nov. 12, 1974, more than a year after the painting job, the Air Force referred its investigative report to the Labor Dept., with a recommendation that the Stewart firm be banned from further government contracts.

The Labor Dept. then conducted its own investigation, which confirmed the conclusions of the Air Force. But the bureaucrats, who collected their own wages on schedule, were in no hurry to hand over the \$14,183.63 to the unpaid painters. A few months later, the Labor Dept. got around to charging the company with formal violations.

The company asked for additional time to answer the charges and then requested a formal hearing, which will be held in Chicago in a few more months. The findings of the hearing, of course, can be appealed.

Still the government refuses to part with the back wages. Last January, 14 months after Solomon Ward did the painting, he suffered a severe heart attack.

But the charade could continue for years. After the Labor Dept. finishes with the case, it must go to the General Accounting Office, where the whole process will be repeated. Only the GAO's Controller General has the power, it seems, to make a final ruling.

And for such cases, the GAO has a 12-month backlog.

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