

2.1.2 Preliminary Activities

Approximately one month prior to the trip, it was possible to give some thought to each of the activities identified in this and the following chapter, although at varying levels of detail. Of particular concern were matters related to equipment, sample handling, routing for the return trip, preparation of fortified samples, development of the analytical method, sample clean-up, optimization of Mass Spectrometer (MS) parameters, and determination of the sensitivity of the procedure.

Since refrigeration of the samples was especially important, various coolers and ice packs were tested, not only to choose suitable equipment but also to determine the margin of safety that would apply in the event of travel delays. Dry ice was not considered suitable for chilling samples for extended periods, being more appropriate for freezing materials for short periods. Furthermore, there was some uncertainty as to various airline regulations on the subject (i.e., concerning escaping carbon dioxide gas in the luggage/freight compartment and elsewhere). Simplicity of equipment was also considered a most desirable feature.

Sample questionnaires (one for people claiming to have been exposed to toxin/chemical weapons, another for those not making such a claim) were prepared for reproduction in the host country.