

A. "I want to say frankly that we are partly to blame for this concern: secrecy has left its imprint everywhere. Of course, even now the testing range is not a place to go for a stroll, but we are definitely going to rectify the situation and give people reliable information about everything that goes on there. I hope that my meeting with you will be only the first step in this direction and that others will follow.

The test site is not to blame for the worsened ecological conditions in the Arctic. They are the technogenic consequence of man's multifaceted and wasteful activities in exploiting the riches of the Far North. Oil and gas workers, metallurgists, mining engineers and geologists have all had a hand in this... In a word, many departments. In my opinion, to say the least it is not very fair to shift all of the blame onto the military.

As regards the radiation situation, this is monitored daily and during test periods by means of special highly sensitive airborne, waterborne and land-based equipment. This is far from being a narrow departmental matter. In addition to the special services of the test site and the Ministry of Defence, monitoring is also done at posts maintained by the State Hydrometeorological Committee, the USSR Ministry of Health and various institutes of the USSR Academy of Sciences.

At the end of last year in particular an aircraft fitted out as a radiation and ecology monitoring laboratory overflew the northwestern part of the country to conduct an expert study of the prevailing background radiation along the route Archangel-Nar'yan Mar-Vaigach-Novaya Zemlya at altitudes of between 100 and 3,000 metres. A 20-mile zone of islands on the Barents Sea side was also investigated. Experts from the Ministry of Defence, representatives of the Centre for Public Information on Atomic Energy and scientists from the Physics Institute of the Academy of Sciences of the Lithuanian SSR participated in the work.