

SUMMARIZED MINUTES

U.S.-Russia Joint Commission on POW/MIAs (USRJC)

Vietnam War, Korean War, Cold War and World War II Technical Talks

28 March 2017

Morning Session Location

Crystal Square 4, Suite 101

241 18th Street South

Arlington, Virginia

Afternoon Session Location

U.S. National Archives and Records Administration I

700 Pennsylvania Ave., NW

Washington, DC

U.S. Side Participants:

- Mrs. Fern Sumpter Winbush Commissioner, USRJC; Acting Director, Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency (DPAA)
- Dr. Tim Nenninger, USRJC Commissioner, U.S. National Archives and Records Administration
- Mr. Tim Shea, USRJC Commissioner, Defense Intelligence Officer, Defense Intelligence Agency
- Colonel Christopher S. Forbes, USA, Director, Europe/Mediterranean Regional Directorate, DPAA

- Dr. James G. Connell Jr., Acting Executive Secretary, U.S. Side of the USRJC; Lead Analyst, USRJC Cold War Working Group; Senior Analyst, Europe/Mediterranean Regional Directorate, DPAA
- Chief, Moscow Detachment, Europe/Mediterranean Regional Directorate, DPAA
- Senior Southeast Asia Policy Advisor, Policy and Plans Directorate, DPAA
- Chief, Southeast Asia Branch, Asia-Pacific Directorate, DPAA
- Lead Analyst, USRJC Vietnam War Working Group; Senior Analyst, Europe/Mediterranean Regional Directorate, DPAA

Other Participants, U.S. Side:

- Military Assistant, DPAA
- Outreach and Communications Directorate, DPAA (note taker)
- World War II Historian, Europe/Mediterranean Regional Directorate, DPAA
- Lead Analyst, USRJC Korean War Working Group; Chief, North Asia-Pacific Branch, Asia-Pacific Directorate, DPAA
- Senior Analyst, Southeast Asia Branch, Asia-Pacific Directorate, DPAA
- Lead Analyst, USRJC World War II Working Group; Senior Analyst, Europe/Mediterranean Regional Directorate, DPAA
- Chief of Research, Moscow Detachment, Europe/Mediterranean Regional Directorate, DPAA
- Researcher, Europe/Mediterranean Regional Directorate, DPAA

Russian Side Participants:

- General-Major (ret.) Vladimir V. Popov, Chief, Directorate for Perpetuating the Memory of Fallen Defenders of the Fatherland, Ministry of Defense of the Russian Federation
- Colonel (ret.) Andrey L. Taranov, Executive Secretary, USRJC Russian Side; Deputy Director, Directorate for Perpetuating the Memory of Fallen Defenders of the Fatherland, Ministry of Defense of the Russian Federation
- Colonel (ret.) Igor A. Permyakov, Chief, Central Archives of the Ministry of Defense of the Russian Federation (TsAMO)
- Colonel (ret.) Nikolay I. Nikiforov, Deputy Chief, Military History Research Institute, Military Academy of the General Staff, Armed Forces of the Russian Federation
- Consultant, International Section, Directorate for Perpetuating the Memory of Fallen Defenders of the Fatherland, Ministry of Defense of the Russian Federation
- Chief, Washington Office of the Russian Side of the USRJC

Other Participants, Russian Side:

- Researcher, Washington Office of the Russian Side of the USRJC
- Researcher, Washington Office of the Russian Side of the USRJC
- Researcher, Washington Office of the Russian Side of the USRJC

Main Points

The following administrative issues were discussed:

- Both Sides agreed to continue the momentum and the level of joint work.
- General Vostrotin confirmed he will speak at the National League of POW/MIA Families annual meeting in June of this year.
- The Russian Side confirmed participation at the technical talks to be held in June.
- Confirmed that the 21st Plenum will be held in Russia in November of this year.

The following issues were discussed:

- 1. Soviet Korean War-Era Maps of North Korea** – During the 20th Plenum of the USRJC a request was made for Russian language Korean War-era maps of North Korea. The Joint Commission Support Division (JCSD) has access to declassified files on the activities of Soviet forces in North Korea and Communist China during the war. These files contain shoot down reports, reports of search groups, and other information that may help pinpoint crash site locations. The maps from the time period are needed because place names have changed since the Korean War.

During the Technical Talks held in Moscow, Russia, in February 2017, the Russian Side provided us with a disk containing images of Korean War-era maps. Unfortunately, the resolution of the images on the disk was too low to read place names. The U.S. Side pointed this out, and the Russian Side apologized and agreed to provide the U.S. Side with map images at a higher resolution.

- 2. The Monument at Elizabeth City, North Carolina** – During World War II, the United States provided PBN-1 Nomads, also known as “Flying Boats,” to the Soviet Union. Under a secret training program called Project Zebra, Soviet pilots were trained to fly the aircraft at a naval base in Elizabeth City, North Carolina, that belongs to the U.S. Coast Guard today. On January 11, 1945, a training accident occurred, which resulted in the deaths of four members of the Soviet aircrew and one Canadian member.

The Russian Side desires to erect a monument in Elizabeth City, North Carolina, to memorialize the airmen of the countries who trained together during World War II under Project Zebra. The Russian Side showed the U.S. Side three design proposals for the monument. General-Major (ret.) Popov emphasized that the Russian Ministry of Defense Directorate for Perpetuating the Memory of Fallen Defenders of the Fatherland does not engage in politics, but in the work of memorializing the fallen. He pointed out that his country lost 27 million people during World War II. He recognized U.S. and Soviet joint efforts in World War II in overcoming a common enemy. The monument is to honor those who perished and the victory for which they sacrificed their lives. Later in the week, the Russian Side will meet with the leadership of the U.S. Coast Guard base and with the municipal leaders of Elizabeth City.

- 3. General Issues of Interest to the Russian Side** – The Russian Side raised the following issues as items they would like the Commission to focus on: 1) Soviet citizens who are missing in Somalia, Ethiopia, Mozambique, and Angola; 2) Soviet citizens who are still listed as missing in Russia, but may have emigrated to the United States during or shortly after the end of WWII; and 3) locating and marking burial sites [of Russian military or civil servants dating back to imperial times] in the United States. No particulars were discussed. The Russian Side agreed to provide more specific information in the future.
- 4. Specific Russian Side Request on Missing from World War II** – Because of the thorough research the United States did on four unknown aviators, possibly Soviet servicemen who crashed in Norway, the Russian Side made a specific request for assistance in researching the fates of three Soviet officers from World War II who went missing in Norway: Kovalenko and two pilots: Frantsev and Syromyatnikov. The two pilots went missing off the coast of Northern Norway in 1944, and Kovalenko was a submariner who was captured in 1942. There is no further information in the Russian archives on their cases. The U.S. Side agreed to conduct a search of U.S. archives.
- 5. Documents on U.S. Air Base in Poltava during World War II** – During World War II, the Soviet Union permitted the United States to use several air bases near Poltava, in present-day Ukraine, in order to conduct shuttle-bombing missions against targets in Germany, Hungary, and Romania.

At these Technical Talks, the Russian Side provided the U.S. Side with copies of archival documents pertaining to the operations of the 169th Special Purpose Air Base, the Soviet designation of the base at Poltava, known by the United States as U.S. Army Air Forces Station 559, Eastern Command. The documents included photographs of President Roosevelt in Crimea, Ambassador Harriman in Poltava, and General Kessler who commanded Eastern Command. The package also contained a document called “The Final Account of the Operations of the 169th Special Purpose Air Base,” which indicates that 2,297 U.S. aircraft took part in these operations.

- 6. Update on the Cold War Shoot Down of a P2V on 6 November 1951** – On 6 November 1951, at 1010 hours Vladivostok time, a U.S. Navy P2V Neptune reconnaissance aircraft, assigned to squadron VP-6 at Atsugi Air Base, Japan, was shot down by Soviet fighters over the Sea of Japan near Cape Ostrovnoy, Soviet Union. This case has been researched from the first days of the USRJC. Nonetheless, the U.S. Side made a request for renewed research on this case in November 2016. The Russian Side provided a summary of the work accomplished on this case in the past five months.

The Russian Side determined the nearest naval units to the shoot down location were three torpedo boat brigades. Based on the time that it would take to travel to the crash site, the Russian Side believes the unit that would most likely have responded was deployed at Sovietskaya Gavan, in the Soviet 7th Fleet area of operations. Russian researchers reviewed the documents of all three brigades, but paid special attention to the documents of the brigade from Sovietskaya Gavan. Unfortunately, the deck logs for

watercraft belonging to these units are only stored for five years, unless they are at war. As a result, the Russian Side did not have any new information to share on this case.

The U.S. Side emphasized continued family member interest and requested that the Russian Side search beyond the Central Archives of the Ministry of Defense of the Russian Federation (TsAMO) at Podolsk, but also review FSB (formerly KGB, MGB, and NKVD among others), Border Guards, Presidential, and GRU archives. The Russian Side has already submitted requests to those archives.

The U.S. Side renewed its request for the exact location where the Russian Side claimed the P2V was shot down and crashed. The Russian Side agreed to provide the exact coordinates where the P2V crashed.

- 7. Update on 10 Cases from the Vietnam War** – In 2000, the Russian Side provided the U.S. Side with 356 excerpts from Russian archival documents of U.S. aircraft that were shot down over Vietnam. U.S. researchers performed a detailed and thorough analysis of this information and derived ten cases that show the most promise for finding additional fate-clarifying information in Russian archives. As with the Cold War case described in issue number 6 above, the U.S. Side is requesting that Russian researchers review classified files found in KGB, Border Guards, Presidential, and GRU archives.

In order to provide the Russian Side an understanding of U.S. efforts to resolve cases of missing servicemen from the Vietnam War, the Senior Southeast Asia Policy Advisor in DPAA, provided a briefing on the three main priorities in our POW accounting effort in Vietnam: 1) resolution of live sighting reports and those personnel who were in a last known alive scenario; 2) archival research; and 3) what we call “Operational Flexibility.” Since the end of the war, there have been approximately 2,000 firsthand live sighting reports of U.S. service members in captivity in Southeast Asia, of which all but 55 have been resolved. The Last Known Alive (LKA) category pertains to those U.S. service members who were lost in the proximity (not necessarily in the custody) of enemy forces during the Vietnam War, not mortally wounded and, in the case of an aviator, on the ground alive, or with a good parachute, and could have survived their loss incident and made it into the Communist Vietnamese or Pathet Lao prison systems, but who did not return home after the Paris Peace Accords (Operation Homecoming) in 1973. The United States determined 296 individuals lost in the three countries of Cambodia, Laos, and Vietnam met the “LKA” criteria. Since the end of the war, the United States has been able to bring that number down to 44. Archival research is especially important because witnesses are aging, but also because a vast number of our losses in Laos and Cambodia occurred where North Vietnam forces controlled base camps and the Ho Chi Minh Trail. In many instances, this archival research is critical in helping determine what units were in those areas when a U.S. service member was lost. This is important when trying to account for special operations teams that were lost in Cambodia and Laos. Unlike an aircraft crash site, these teams did not leave much physical evidence behind. “Operational Flexibility” is an umbrella term that refers to working with the three Southeast Asian governments to encourage them to give us the flexibility to use our resources the best, most efficient way possible, (i.e., to bring in as many teams as

possible, to let us extend a recovery mission, or allow us drive to a site rather than taking a helicopter).

The Russian Side was impressed with this information. General-Major (ret.) Popov stated that Colonel Paderin has a working group reviewing archival documents and will be addressing our Vietnam War cases. He also assured the U.S. Side that General Vostrotin is closely following Colonel Paderin's work.

In order to help focus the work, the U.S. Side provided the Russian Side with a list of U.S. service members missing from Vietnam for the period 1965-1967 and with one specific case summary as an example.

- 8. Russian Side Plans to Digitize Select Records from the National Archives and Records Administration (NARA)** – The Russian Side has an office at the Russian Embassy in Washington, D.C., staffed with an office chief and three archival researchers. The archival researchers work at NARA, primarily with captured German documents from the World War II period, searching for information on Russian (Soviet) citizens and service members who may be missing. Their goal is to find documents that may clarify the fates of those missing and provide this information to Russian family members. They want to digitize these records and make them available on a Russian Government website open to all researchers.

The U.S. Side offered to assist the Russian Side in this effort and committed to working with the chief of the Russian Side Washington office to help facilitate this project.