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## SUMMARIZED MINUTES World War II Technical Talks U.S.-Russia Joint Commission on POW/MIAs (USRJC) 28 February 2018 Moscow, Russian Federation

### U.S. Side Participants:

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### Russian Side Participants:

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- Colonel Andrey Leonidovich Taranov (ret.),  
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- Colonel Nikolay Ivanovich Nikiforov (ret.),  
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- Ms. Iolanta Vitol'dovna Mikhailova,  
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Following introductions, the issues below were discussed:

### **1. New Issue: Information on a B-24 Bomber that Landed on Kamchatka on 19 January 1945.**

Colonel Nikiforov stated that Russian Side experts, in preparation for the Vladivostok area expedition in May 2018, went through the archival records of the Directorate for the Kamchatka Defense Region, including the earlier records of the 101<sup>st</sup> Rifle Division deployed on the peninsula during the years 1938-1948. They found a report to the commander dated 1 February 1945 that a U.S. Air Force B-24 Liberator violated Russian airspace on 19 January 1945 at 14:20 and that the plane made an emergency landing at Yelizovo Airfield at 14:45. There were no further details.<sup>1</sup>

### **2. Possible U.S. Bomber on Bering Island.**

**Background:** The issue of a possible U.S. bomber that crashed on Bering Island near

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<sup>1</sup> This incident more than likely refers to B-24D, No. 42-40996, Missing Air Crew Report 12428, which made an emergency landing at the airfield on Kamchatka on 18 January 1945. All crew members were returned to U.S. control.

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Kamchatka was raised at the 20th Plenum in Washington, D.C., in May 2016. It first came up in March 1995 when the U.S. Side received a letter from a retired Russian merchant marine officer living in Vladivostok. The U.S. Side provided the Russian Side with a copy of the letter.

In 1951, the retired Russian officer was the captain of a merchant ship that delivered supplies to remote locations near Kamchatka. In December 1951, he was delivering provisions to Bering and Mednij Islands of the Komandorskiye Islands in the Bering Sea. On New Year's Eve 1952, the retired Russian officer was celebrating with the commander of the Bering Island coast guard detachment in Nikol'skoe.

This commander said that an U.S. bomber crashed in one of the lakes on Bering Island during the summer of 1944. The U.S. bomber was allegedly damaged by Japanese fighters and air defense guns on Paramushir Island and ultimately crashed on Bering Island.

In September 2016, the U.S. Side sent a written request to the Russian Side asking that they contact local residents of Bering Island for information that may corroborate the story of the U.S. bomber. The U.S. Side suggested that the Border Guards outpost on the island, if it still exists, may be a good place to start.

**Discussion:** Colonel Nikiforov explained the work that the Russian Side has accomplished on this issue. The 60<sup>th</sup> Maritime Border Guards Detachment was subordinate to the Operations Directorate of the Kamchatka Defense Region. It is possible that a subunit of this detachment was located on Bering Island. The Russian Side had previously submitted numerous archival inquiries, but had not received any positive results. However, now that they have narrowed it down to a subunit of the 60<sup>th</sup> Maritime Border Guards Detachment, the Russian Side will submit a more specific inquiry. Part of the problem is due to these records not being located in Moscow, and many records have still not been sorted.

### **3. Miscellaneous Information on Aircraft Crashes in 1945.**

The Russian Side found a report from the military headquarters in Lublin, Poland, to the Chief of Staff of the 1<sup>st</sup> Belorussian Front on the crew of a "Liberator" (sic) of the 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion (sic) of the Brazilian Air Force, Field Post Number 1439. This battalion was based in Paris and on 18 January 1945 took part in the bombing of the port of Gdansk, Poland, which at the time was Danzig, Germany. The aircraft was shot down by German fighters, and it crashed in the area of Kalisz, Poland. Of the 8 crew members, 5 were killed, but 3 crew members survived. Two of the crew members were wounded. The Russian Side will provide the U.S. Side with this report.

The Russian Side also found a report on the crew of a B-17, Serial Number 48-130, that made an emergency landing on 3 February 1945. It was of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Air Division of the 8<sup>th</sup> U.S. Air Force. At 07:30 the aircraft took off from Air Base 174 in Yarmouth, England, on a bombing mission to Berlin. The aircraft was shot down, but all crew members survived. The Russian Side will provide this report for the U.S. Side to verify that all crew members are accounted for.

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The Russian Side also has information on an incident from 18 December 1944 in the area south of Lublin, Poland. The crew was from the 15<sup>th</sup> Air Force based in Foggia, Italy. On 18 December 1944, the aircraft was on a bombing mission to a synthetic fuel factory in Upper Silesia. The aircraft was damaged by anti-aircraft fire and the crew bailed out over Soviet-controlled territory. Six crew members were sent to a hospital, and three received ambulatory care. The report contains a list of names of 12 crew members. The Russian Side will pass this information on to the U.S. Side for verification.

#### 4. Immigration Records of Soviet Citizens that Immigrated to the United States in the Period following World War II.

**Background:** This issue was raised at both the 20th and 21st Plenums. Ms. Mikhailova of the Russian Red Cross Tracing and Information Center is seeking avenues to identify Russian citizens who immigrated to the United States at the end of World War II. In particular, she is interested in identifying Russian citizens who are listed on their roles as missing.

The Tracing and Information Center of the Russian Red Cross was created in March 1945 by a government decree. It is part of the Central Bureau on Displaced Persons. It was tasked to reunite families, mark the graves of Soviet personnel, find information on the fates of Soviet personnel, and to find the fates of Soviet citizens who were taken and made forced laborers and prisoners.

Prior to 1992, the Center served all of the Soviet Union. Currently, it only services Russia; now other former Soviet states have their own tracing services. Approximately 15 million documents are in the Center's archives. These are documents on displaced persons; evacuees; orphans (including those that were orphaned by Stalin's purges and vast imprisonments); and non-digitized card files.

The Center responds to requests from families and also from foreign entities, as appropriate. It is partnered with other Red Cross agencies throughout the world, in particular the International Tracing Service in Bad Arolsen, Germany. Most of the tracing questions it currently researches are related to WWII losses and disappearances. In 2015, the Center processed over 29,000 requests.

**Discussion:** There is no master list of immigrants that the U.S. government can provide to the Russians. U.S. federal law requires that the agency with this data, the United States Customs and Immigration Service (USCIS), restrict access to its records and indices for both law enforcement and privacy purposes. Open access to personal information about living persons would constitute a violation of the Privacy Act.

However, it is possible to do a search for specific individuals. The vast collection of historical Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS) subject, policy and correspondence files now stored as Entry 9 of Record Group 85 at the U.S. National Archives in Washington, D.C., includes thousands of files related to all aspects of immigration policy during the years 1906-1956.

Half of these files relate to specific individuals. They include ship passenger manifests, petitions, declarations, and naturalization records that may identify former citizens of the USSR who immigrated to the United States after World War II.

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The U.S. Side provided an example of a Declaration of Intention to become a U.S. citizen for a person that was born in Russia in 1910 and immigrated to the United States in 1949 from a Displaced Persons camp in Germany. This record is available to the public.

In order to assist the Russian Side on the strategies available for research in public records, the U.S. Side provided a document entitled "Quick Guide to finding INS Case and Correspondence Files Related to Specific Individuals" that was taken from the U.S. Customs and Immigration website.

The U.S. Side pointed out that the release of records of living persons is restricted under the Privacy Act. The USCIS will not release information if the immigrant's date of birth is less than 100 years ago without documentary evidence showing the immigrant is deceased.

It was agreed that the U.S. Side would assist the Russian Side on a case-by-case basis and, if possible, bring a USCIS representative to the next plenary meeting to continue the discussion.

### **5. Soviet Servicemen Missing in Norway: Captain-Lieutenant S.I. Kovalenko, Senior Lieutenant E.I. Frantsev, and Lieutenant Colonel B.P. Syromyatnikov.**

**Background:** During the March 2017 Technical Talks held in Washington, D.C., the Russian Side made a request for assistance in researching the fates of three Soviet officers from World War II who went missing in Norway. These officers are Captain-Lieutenant S.I. Kovalenko, and two pilots, Senior Lieutenant E.I. Frantsev and Lieutenant Colonel B.P. Syromyatnikov. The two pilots went missing off the coast of Northern Norway in 1944. Kovalenko was a submariner captured in 1942 and taken by the Germans to a POW camp in Norway. The U.S. Side agreed to conduct a search of U.S. archives for information on these officers.

**Discussion:** The U.S. Side reported that, so far, no information has been found in the National Archives on these three individuals. The U.S. Side also reported that a search of U.S. immigration records also turned up negative.

There was not much U.S. military activity in Norway during the war, in comparison with other parts of Europe. This means that there were few crash sites for the U.S. to investigate after the war.

The U.S. Side noted that there is a Norwegian organization (the Falstad Centre) that has built an online searchable database of war graves in Norway ([http://www.krigsgraver.no/home?locale=en\\_gb](http://www.krigsgraver.no/home?locale=en_gb)). The U.S. Side searched this database online. There are no records of Kovalenko, Frantsev, and Syromyatnikov in the database.

Though it appears there was nothing that would have led U.S. investigators to the sites where these Red Army servicemen may have perished, and therefore no information in U.S. records of missing aircraft and subsequent investigations, there may still be incidental information in U.S. archives that may help clarify their fates. Therefore, the

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U.S. Side agreed to continue to search for information on Kovalenko, Frantsev, and Syromyatnikov.

### 6. B-24 Bomber in Vestnik Bay on Kamchatka and Other Possible Crash Sites in the Russian Far East.

**Background:** Paramushir and Shumshu Islands in the Northern Kuril Island chain were heavily garrisoned by the Japanese during World War II. The U.S. Army Air Force and U.S. Navy would fly bombing raids to these islands from the Aleutians. If any of these planes were damaged or malfunctioned, the U.S. pilots headed for Petropavlovsk-Kamchatsky, where the main airfield on the Kamchatka Peninsula is located.

The U.S. Army's 11th Air Force, 404th Bomb Squadron flew the Consolidated B-24 (Liberator), the 77th Bomb Squadron flew the North American Aviation B-25 (Mitchell), and the 54th Fighter Squadron flew the Curtiss P-40 (Warhawk) and the Lockheed P-38 (Lightning).

The U.S. Navy had four VB/VPB (Navy Bombing/Navy Patrol) bombing squadrons that operated out of the Aleutian Islands to bomb Japanese targets. They were based in Attu and flew the Lockheed PV-1 (Ventura) and Lockheed PV-2 (Harpoon). The PV-1 aircraft used by the Soviet Air Force were known as a B-34.

In August 2004, the U.S. Side visited a B-24 crash site on Kamchatka and presented the findings at the 19th Plenum in Moscow in June 2005. However, no further action had been taken on this crash site.

The Russian citizen who reported the crash site in 2004 believed that he had identified the plane as being the B-24 that crash-landed on 17 November 1944, about one kilometer south of the delta of the Inkanyush River and 150 meters from the coastline. The entire crew of this aircraft was returned to the United States.

However, it is not entirely clear that the crash site visited in 2004 is the crash site of the B-24 whose crew was returned.

The B-24 that is accounted for is reported to have crash-landed at the north end of Vestnik Bay, near Cape Zhelty. This is roughly 17 kilometers from where the team found the wreckage of the B-24 in 2004. In addition, the B-24 that was accounted for did not break apart during landing. The wreckage found in 2004 was scattered for more than 300 meters.

Unfortunately, the crash site investigation in 2004 only had Joint Commission Support Directorate (JCSA) researchers representing the U.S. Side. There were no archeologists or an Explosive Ordnance Disposal (EOD) specialist. Therefore, the team was careful not to disturb the site in any way. They did not move or dig up the wing in order to find a number that would have identified this aircraft.

From photos of the wreckage, aircraft historians at the National Air and Space Museum were able to determine that the aircraft was a B-24D or later model.

**Discussion:** The U.S. Side would like the Russian Side to conduct archival research in

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preparation of a possible joint site investigation of this B-24 at Vestnik Bay on Kamchatka. The purpose is to exclude the known B-24 where the crew is accounted for.

The U.S. Side provided the Russian Side with a detailed account of the B-24 that went missing on 17 November 1944. The crew was marooned at its remote crash site at Vestnik Bay for nearly two weeks. During that period, the U.S. Eleventh Air Force dropped the crew supplies, violating Soviet air space in the process. The Soviet army attempted to rescue the crew by sea, but they were unsuccessful. Eventually, the Soviet army rescued the crew by land.

It is hoped that the Russian Side will be able to find some reports which will help better pinpoint the location of the known B-24. Because the U.S. Side has the coordinates for the crash site visited in 2004, it is hoped that it will be possible to exclude the B-24 that is accounted for.

### 7. 1LT Joseph J. Gorczyca.

**Background:** 1LT Joseph J. Gorczyca of the 760th Bombardment Squadron, 460th Bombardment Group, 15th Air Force, went missing on 2 December 1944, in the vicinity of Bircza, Poland. 1LT Gorczyca served as a co-pilot on board a B-24J Liberator that was hit by German anti-aircraft fire while on a bombing mission to the Blechhammer South oil refinery. According to a surviving aircrew member, approximately two minutes before weapons release, the group encountered heavy anti-aircraft fire from German batteries protecting the Blechhammer targets.

1LT Gorczyca's aircraft suffered a direct hit in the forward bomb bay, resulting in a massive fuel leak. The pilot, realizing that he would not have sufficient fuel for the return flight to Italy, flew toward Soviet lines.

In the vicinity of Bircza, Poland, the pilot ordered the crew to bail out. Every crew member successfully exited the aircraft and parachuted to the ground. Nine of the ten crew members were captured by Soviet forces and eventually returned to U.S. control.

The pilot last saw 1LT Gorczyca approximately 500 feet off the ground. After landing, 1LT Gorczyca and the pilot were separated by a small hill. Soviet troops immediately apprehended the pilot, who tried to go over the hill to rendezvous with Gorczyca.

Since the pilot did not speak Russian, he was not able to convey his intentions and was not allowed to attempt to reach his co-pilot. Gorczyca is the only member of the crew who remains unaccounted for.

The rest of the crew were eventually rounded up, taken to Poltava in the Soviet Union, and repatriated from Poltava through Iran.

**Discussion:** The U.S. Side explained that 1LT Gorczyca would have been of special interest to Soviet security forces. His name was Polish, he spoke Polish, and his grandparents at the time lived in Poland. With the political concerns of post-war Europe taking on greater importance as the end of the war approached, the U.S. Side believes there would have been a special effort made to track down 1LT Gorczyca.

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Therefore, the U.S. Side made a request that the Russian Side check its security services archives for reports on 1LT Gorczyca.

### 8. Romanian Trophy Documents in the Central Archives of the Ministry of Defense (TsAMO).

**Background:** There are seventy-nine (79) U.S. airmen missing from the bombing raid on the Ploesti oil fields in Romania on 1 August 1943, under Operation TIDAL WAVE. There are an additional five (5) U.S. servicemen missing from separate missions over Ploesti during the spring and summer of 1944. In 2010, the U.S. Side received a listing with a very general description of WWII-era Romanian documents captured by the Soviets as they advanced through Romania toward Germany that are stored in TsAMO.

At the 21st Plenum the U.S. Side expressed its desire to review these captured documents for information that would lead to clarifying the fates of the remaining eighty-five (85) U.S. servicemen missing from World War II during missions over Romania. In order to better target the files to be reviewed, the U.S. Side requested a more detailed description of the captured Romanian documents at TsAMO.

Col. Nikiforov stated that because a third nation is involved (Romania), it creates legal issues. He asked that the U.S. Side provide more specific information on the U.S. losses.

**Discussion:** The U.S. Side provided the names of the eighty-four (84) missing U.S. servicemen in Romania. The Russian Side has searched and found a 3 August 1943 report to Marshal Antonescu on bomb damage from 1 August 1943. The report indicates that one of the aircraft shot down crashed into a prison at Ploesti and caused a fire. In the area of Campina there were five wounded U.S. pilots, one of which had a severe head wound. In the area of Prahova, twenty-eight (28) U.S. planes were shot down. Some of the airmen were taken by the Germans for interrogation. Several planes were shot down by machine gun fire in the area of Traisteni. There was an order given by Marshal Antonescu to photograph all the aircraft that were shot down and publish the photographs in the press along with a list of all the prisoners. The Russian Side believes that much information will be located in the military records of the Romanian Government or in the documents of the Luftwaffe Mission to Romania. The Central Archives of the Ministry of Defense of the Russian Federation does not have any of these documents.

### 9. 1LT Raymond L. Klotz.

**Background:** In 2004, the Russian Side provided the medical treatment record for First Lieutenant Raymond L. Klotz of the 742nd Bombardment Squadron, 455th Bombardment Group, who died on 5 January 1945, as a result of wounds received on 26 December 1944.

1LT Klotz served as the navigator aboard a B-24 aircraft that took off from San Giovanni Airfield, Italy, on the morning of 26 December 1944, for a bombing mission over Oswiegen, Poland. Upon arriving at the target area, his plane was hit by anti-aircraft artillery fire, and 1LT Klotz was severely wounded in the right shoulder.

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The pilot set a course for Soviet-occupied territory in Hungary, where the crew bailed out of the aircraft. On 28 December 1944, Hungarian villagers came upon Lieutenant Klotz and transported him to a Soviet military hospital in the town of Szekszard, Hungary. Soviet medical personnel cared for 1LT Klotz in Szekszard until his death from septicemia on 5 January 1945.

In March 2004, the St. Petersburg Military Medical Museum Archives identified information relating to Lieutenant Klotz. This data, received from Soviet military hospital records, detailed the care given to Lieutenant Klotz, along with information about his burial site.

According to these records, Soviet medical personnel performed surgery on Lieutenant Klotz immediately after his arrival at the hospital on 28 December 1944, and gave him substantial medical care until the time of his death.

Following his death, they buried him in the Szekszard city cemetery, located on the road north from Baya to Szekszard, with the grave site located 150 meters along the path through the cemetery and 10 meters to the northeast of the path.

In October 2004, a JCSD analyst traveled to Szekszard, Hungary, to investigate this possible location of Lieutenant Klotz's burial site. A local historian accompanied the analyst to the cemetery. A search of the area described in the medical report revealed that all of the graves were post-World War II or pre-World War II, and none of the graves could be identified as belonging to Lieutenant Klotz.

However, 200-220 meters east, the path ends at the Soviet war memorial. Approximately 200 Soviet war dead are buried at this site. There are no individual grave markers, only several obelisks with the names of Soviet war dead inscribed on them. 1LT Klotz's name is not recorded on them.

Ten meters north of the center of the monument is the section of the cemetery where the Soviet officers are buried. As an American officer, Soviet medical personnel may have buried Lieutenant Klotz with the Soviet officers. The 150-meter measurement (referred to in the Military Medical Museum Archives records) may have been incorrectly estimated or the gate's location may have moved since Lieutenant Klotz's burial.

**Discussion:** The U.S. Side requested that the Russian Side search the records of the Soviet burials in the city cemetery of Szekszard, Hungary.

### **10. Personnel Files of Soviet POWs from Dora Mittlebau camp.**

**Background:** Just prior to the Tech Talks in February 2018, the Russian Side submitted a request for assistance in finding the personnel files of Soviet POWs from Dora Mittelbau camp, which was located near Nordhausen in Central Germany.

Dora was the code name for the concentration camp and its underground rocket factory called Mittelwerk. It was used from August 1943 until April 1945 to manufacture and test the V1 and V2 rockets. The factory used slave labor of inmates, many of whom were Soviet POWs.

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Mittelbau-Dora was liberated by the American forces on 11 April 1945. The Russian Side believes that, among documents transferred from Dora to the U.S., there may be personnel files of Soviet POWs who worked at the factory.

**Discussion:** The U.S. Side agreed to search records at the National Archives and Records Administration, as well as the archives at the Holocaust Museum for information on Soviet POWs at Dora Mittlebau.

### 11. Planning for an Investigation of Three Aircraft Crash Sites and the Cemetery at Hospital 404, All in the Vladivostok Area, in May 2018

**Background:** A Joint DPAA/Russian team is planning to travel to Vladivostok, Russia, to investigate three crash sites in the Vladivostok area and the cemetery of Hospital 404 near the town of Arsenyev, Russia. Some preliminary planning for the joint expedition has already taken place between the U.S. and Russian Sides in Washington, D.C.

**Discussion:** A number of open questions were addressed during this meeting. Because these sites are near the Russian Federation's naval base in Vladivostok, it is important that the Russian Side actively participate in this expedition.

Col. Taranov stated that the Russian Side fully supports the list of U.S. Side participants. The Russian Side will have fifteen personnel from the Ministry of Defense and five persons from the amateur search group "Aviapoisk," which is a civilian group that is familiar with this area in the Vladivostok region and with crash site investigations. Included in the twenty personnel from the Russian Side will be a World War II expert that knows how to identify wreckage of military equipment, an anthropologist, an EOD specialist, a ground penetrating radar specialist, a medic, and ten armed marines for security. The Russian Side is working with the Ministry of Culture to also secure an archeologist as well.

Col. Taranov will head the Russian Side of the group as he has led two expeditions to Shumshu Island in the Kuril Island chain.

*Changing the subject to the Kuril Islands, Col. Taranov stated that there are no U.S. aircraft crash sites on Shumshu Island, but there may be wreckage from an U.S. plane on Paramushir Island. Col. Taranov is currently investigating this claim. As far as underwater crash sites near these islands are concerned, it would be very unlikely that any wreckage remains there today due to the tidal patterns and currents. This straight has been thoroughly investigated by the Russian Side since there was an amphibious assault operation conducted there during World War II. The Soviet forces lost about 35 amphibious assault vessels in this area. The Russian Side conducted a two-year investigation of the coastal area around Shumshu and Paramushir.*

Returning to the Vladivostok, Col. Taranov stated that everyone is to meet in Vladivostok. Next, work will be done at the crash site in Lazurnaya Bay, also known as Shamora, then Arsenyev, Novosysoevka, and Hospital 404. As of right now, we do not have permission to dig in the cemetery. According to Russian Law graves can only be exhumed under a criminal investigation. Therefore, Col. Taranov suggested a reconnaissance/familiarization operation in the area and then decide what needs to be

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done. Permission to exhume a grave will have to come from the Arsenyev Regional Prosecutor General's Office.

Next, the team will travel to Mt. Lysaya. The Ministry of Defense will prepare a fully-supplied field camp there for twenty persons. The investigative work will be done at the crash site, to include aerial reconnaissance of the area.

Finally, the team will travel to the village of Veselyj, the location of another crash site. The team will work there for several days, lodging in Arsenyev, and then return by vehicle to Vladivostok.

The U.S. Side provided the complete equipment list to the Russian Side. The Russian Side will work to get pre-approval from the Customs office. The Russian Side stated that it did not matter which port of entry the U.S. Side uses, either Moscow or Vladivostok. The Russian Side stated that if Customs has a problem with any equipment, the Russian Side will find an equivalent in country for the team to use. The Russian Side will also provide medicines if required.

The Ministry of Defense is responsible for any remains found at the crash sites. The documentation to take them out of the country can be prepared on the spot. This Ministry of Defense documentation will be accepted by Customs. The same procedure is applicable for samples for DNA analysis that are taken, as well as data plates or other aircraft parts. If it turns out that the remains are not U.S. remains, then they can be returned.

The Russian Side will make the hotel reservation for the team in Arsenyev.

In case of a medical emergency, the Russian Side will provide a helicopter to extract any team member to Vladivostok. From Vladivostok, the U.S. Side has medical insurance to cover a medical evacuation. The Russian Side has insured the helicopter passengers for both life and cargo insurance.

Regarding permits for using metal detectors and other equipment in the cemetery and at the crash sites, the Ministry of Defense has authority to do this, as long as the graves are not disturbed. On the territory of the Russian Federation, except for civil cemeteries, the Ministry of Defense is the agency responsible for this type of investigatory work. Cemetery exhumations require permission from the Arsenyev Regional Prosecutor General's Office.

For the cemetery at Hospital 404, the burial records are located in Yakovlevka. The U.S. Side wants to examine the burial records for the entire year of 1951. In the past, only the records for the fall of 1951 were examined. Col. Taranov answered that the team will be near Yakovlevka at Novosysoevka for three days, which should provide plenty of time to examine the burial records.

The group "Aviapoisk" has spent some time in the archival records at TsAMO and is ready to share information they have found. Five of their members will also be attending the mission as well. Col. Taranov stated as of yet no witnesses to the crashes have been found, but he is confident that when the team is on site, people will turn up.

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