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**U.S.-Russia Joint Commission on POW/MIAs (USRJC)
Vietnam War Working Group Technical Talks
April 25, 2018
Honolulu, Hawaii, United States of America
SUMMARIZED MINUTES**

U.S. Side Participants:

- Mr. Kelly McKeague, USRJC Commissioner, U.S. Side
U.S. Chairman, USRJC Vietnam War Working Group
Director, Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency
- Rear Admiral (LH) Jon Kreitz, USN
Deputy Director for Operations, Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency
- Colonel Christopher S. Forbes, USA
Director, Europe Mediterranean Regional Directorate
Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency
- Colonel Brian Pearl, USA
Director (incoming), Europe Mediterranean Regional Directorate
Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency
- Director, Scientific Analysis
Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency
- Senior Research Analyst, Sub Regional Team 2
Indo-Pacific Regional Directorate
Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency
- Research Analyst, Sub Regional Team 2
Indo-Pacific Regional Directorate
Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency
- Casualty Resolution Specialist, Sub Regional Team 2
Indo-Pacific Regional Directorate
Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency
- Technical Lead for the U.S. Side of the USRJC Vietnam War Working Group
Europe Mediterranean Regional Directorate
Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency
- Deputy Chief, Joint Commission Support Division
Europe Mediterranean Regional Directorate
Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency
- Note Taker, Vietnam War Working Group
Europe Mediterranean Regional Directorate

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Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency

Russian Side Participants:

- Major-General (ret) Major Vladimir Vasil'evich Popov
Director, Directorate for Perpetuating the Memory of Fallen Defenders of the Fatherland, Ministry of Defense of the Russian Federation
- Colonel (ret) Andrey Leonidovich Taranov (ret.), USRJC Executive Secretary, Russian Side Deputy Director, Directorate for Perpetuating the Memory of Fallen Defenders of the Fatherland, Ministry of Defense of the Russian Federation
- Division Head, 111th Main State Center of Forensic Pathology
Ministry of Defense of the Russian Federation
- Acting Chief, Washington Office, Russian Side of the USRJC
- Researcher, Washington Office, Russian Side of the USRJC.

Following introductions, the issues below were discussed:

- 1. Dataset of all DoD personnel unaccounted-for from the Vietnam War and a subset of over-water losses; and maps with locations of loss incidents.**

Background: In 2017, the U.S. Side provided the Russian Side a number of datasets listing various categories of DoD unaccounted-for personnel (such as specific loss incidents selected from archival information provided by the Russian Side in the 2000s; losses from F-105 and F-111; losses for which DoD does not know the location of crash sites; list of POWs who died in captivity; and other datasets). The Russian Side requested detailed information on overall U.S. losses in Southeast Asia (SEA) listed in one dataset and a subset of U.S. over-water losses in response to DPAA's request for reports from Soviet cutters and trawlers that might contain details regarding U.S. over-water losses in SEA.

Discussion: An overall dataset of the 1,598 DoD personnel missing in SEA from the Vietnam War as of April 15, 2018, was compiled. The dataset contains the following information for each missing individual: name, date of loss, geographic coordinates for loss location, type of, ground or aircraft, and location (country, province) of the loss incident. A subset of 447 over-water losses off the coast of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam (S.R.V.) was extracted from the overall dataset and supplied as a separate subset of the data. CDs with copies of these datasets were provided for use in other archives (beyond the Central Archives of the Ministry of Defense of the Russian Federation, TsAMO), such as the Russian Navy Archives. The datasets were in both English and Russian. Mr. McKeague explained the subcategories of all 447 over-water losses: one hundred and thirty-eight (138) service members who were in (or possibly in) their aircraft at the time of their incident and were lost within the S.R.V. territorial waters, while two hundred and eight (208) were lost outside territorial waters, including in Cambodia, China, the Paracel Islands, and the Philippines. One hundred and one (101) individuals either ejected from their aircraft or fell overboard from a ship and subsequently drowned.

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Mr. McKeague provided maps with locations of U.S. loss incidents in Vietnam and China, Laos, and Cambodia. Each set included two maps: one showing the number of incidents and the number of the missing in each category (ground losses and air losses), and the second map stating the categorization¹ of incidents and missing personnel.

Mr. Taranov assured the U.S. Side that the information would be disseminated, as necessary. Regarding the U.S. Side request to initiate a search in the Russian Navy Archives, he stated that such work is already underway. He explained that at present, the Black Sea or Far East Fleet Archives, or the Navy Archives do not exist; all archives are now branches of the Central Archives of the Ministry of Defense and are part of TsAMO. Russian archivists are expanding their research to include all of the defense archives in Russia. Mr. Taranov stated the need to have the U.S. Side of the Commission involved in research work in these archives by providing candidates (researchers from Russia) for hire as a trusted agent/agents with special clearances for such work. He underscored that combining the efforts of both Sides will yield the most effective and fastest way to achieve results. Mr. McKeague confirmed that the U.S. Side is very interested in reestablishing the trusted agent program and will provide relevant recommendations to the Russian Side.

2. DPAA Analysis of the Vietnam War-Era Records from TsAMO.

Background: In 2017, the Russian Side provided two sets of records from the 113 secret/top secret files related to the Vietnam War that a six-member group of Russian archivists and Vietnam War-era SMEs were reviewing, presumably in TsAMO. The group was created specifically for this purpose by the Head of the Russian Defense Archival Service who is the Russian Deputy Chief of the USRJC VWWG. One set of records was accompanied by cover sheets with archival citations typed up, but did not include the name of the archive. DPAA analysts completed their initial analysis of these documents.

Discussion: Mr. McKeague requested that the records provided by the Russian Side include the name of the archive from whence they came. In response, Mr. Taranov stated that documents not originating from TsAMO would be annotated with the name of the archive.

The U.S. Side shared summaries of DPAA analysts' conclusions of the analyzed records. One set of documents, handed over in June 2017, included five pages of extracts from the information collected during interrogations of four U.S. Air Force and Navy pilots shot down between 13 November and 23 December 1965, during the early stages of the aerial campaign known as Operation Rolling Thunder. DPAA analysts confirmed that the pilots returned to U.S. control on February 11 and 12, 1973.

The second set was handed over at the USRJC 21st Plenum in Moscow, and included either complete documents or excerpts from reports by Soviet military advisors who served/worked in the Democratic Republic of Vietnam in 1966 and 1967. They also included information

¹ The number of cases that are actively pursued, the number of cases in the deferred status (meaning that we have exhausted all information and all current leads, and are waiting for new information to be found), and non-recoverable cases (meaning it is not possible to recover the remains as they are deep water losses or sites on the industrially developed land where a building was built and the site is underneath it or the site is under a new water reservoir.

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summaries from interrogation reports of captured U.S. pilots and descriptions of aerial battles, with attached schematics. Mr. McKeague stated that this information could be associated with 19 separate air incidents or POWs, and that one of the diagrams depicting an aerial battle is believed to correlate to an unresolved loss. He stressed the importance of searching for additional information regarding the unresolved loss incident and provided the Russian Side with an official request for further archival research.

3. Status of Archival Research of U.S. Requests on 17 Loss Incidents Provided to the Russian Side in 2017.

Background: In 2017, the U.S. Side submitted details on 17 loss incidents and requested that relevant research be conducted in the Russian archives. Ten of these loss incidents were selected based on the information from TsAMO provided to the U.S. Side in the early 2000s and were deemed by both Sides of the Commission to be priority cases. The other seven were aircraft shot down by Soviet surface-to-air missiles (SAM).

Discussion: Mr. McKeague asked if the Russian Side had any new information regarding those loss incidents. He explained that some of these losses were those of highly sophisticated aircraft at that time such as the F-111A and EB-66C. Five of these incidents are considered “off-the-scope losses,” wherein neither the Vietnamese government nor the U.S. Government can confirm crash site locations. Russian military advisors may have witnessed these incidents, may have had access to the crash sites, and/or could have the knowledge of the disposition of the crewmembers.

Mr. Taranov stated that no additional information on these and other loss incidents, or information on other U.S. pilots who perished or who went missing during the war in Vietnam, was found in the 113 files that had been reviewed to date. He added that if such records did exist, they would be kept in other archives where Russian archivists are now starting research, i.e., the archives of intelligence services, the Federal Security Service (FSB), and Foreign Intelligence Service (SVR). He clarified that the Russian Side is working on access to the Main Intelligence Service (GRU) Archives. As to the seven aircraft shot down by Soviet SAMs, Russian archivists will be looking in the local anti-air defense archives as well. He speculated that the records might be kept in one of the archives of the military districts.

Mr. McKeague also asked about 98 missing air crews from the aircraft for which we do not know the crash site locations -- the “off-the-scope losses.” He explained that the aircraft either did not report in to its next location, made no further radio calls, or simply fell off the U.S. radar, making the cause of the loss unknown. He hoped that Russian archival records, and possibly Russian Vietnam War veterans, could shed light on information regarding these incidents, particularly 49 loss incidents that occurred in northern Vietnam.

4. Records Declassification System in Russia.

In response to a question on the records declassification system in Russia, Mr. Taranov explained that records are declassified upon orders by the Russian government after a certain period of time has passed. For example, personal information is declassified after 100 years. As for military documents, the time period is determined on a case-by-case basis. For example, all the WWII documents, 1941-45 period inclusively, have been declassified per the order of the President of the Russian Federation. However, that does not mean the documents are automatically declassified.

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Mr. Popov added that a special commission of the Ministry of Defense reviews each document one more time before making a decision. It is the originators of the records who actually declassify the documents. Mr. Taranov stated that WWII documents number 600 million, so it takes time to process them for declassification. However, if a request for specific information is received, the records are declassified as a matter of priority. For example, part of the Vietnam War-related documents that were recently provided to the U.S. Side were declassified on the priority basis.

5. Reporting System by Soviet Advisors Who Participated in the Vietnam War.

Background: Technical Reporting. The Soviet Union deployed a special research group (the *spetsgruppya*) to North Vietnam to obtain U.S. military hardware and technology directly from the battlefield (historical fact). The group was operationally subordinate to the Main Intelligence Directorate (GRU) of the Soviet General Staff and commanded by its officers. The Soviet Defense Attaché Office in Hanoi maintained administrative control of the *spetsgruppya*. The group received some of the “trophy” U.S. weaponry and equipment from the Engineering Directorate, General Staff, People’s Army of Vietnam, but acquired most of it independently from downed aircraft, helicopters, reconnaissance drones, etc., as well as from broken down weapons systems and unexploded ordnance. Often times, the group had access to the crash sites and might know the fates of the pilots from the downed aircraft. Throughout the years, the U.S. Side requested that a search for the reports by this group be conducted and relevant information be provided to the U.S. Side. In 2017, the U.S. Side presented a record from the Soviet archives stating 700 pieces of equipment from the downed U.S. aircraft were sent to the Soviet Union for exploitation.

Discussion: COL Forbes discussed technical and tactical reporting categories. He proposed a different approach to this matter: the U.S. Side will submit a formal request to the Russian Side to conduct searches in the Russian archives beyond TsAMO (air defense, GRU, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and Presidential archives). This request will include a few “trial” loss incidents with a detailed description. Mr. Taranov agreed with COL Forbes’ proposal and emphasized that the Russian Side is willing to take any approach and follow any route, including “re-reviewing” documents.

The U.S. Side will provide details from the interviews of Soviet veterans which are related to the access to U.S. crash sites by the *spetsgruppya*. These details might help the Russian archivists find relevant reports on equipment collected from downed U.S. aircraft. The reports might contain information on the fates of the U.S. crew members. The U.S. Side will also provide details from the interviews related to the chain of command to which such reports were sent by Soviet tactical and technical advisors.

6. Request for Information on Arnold M. KHOLLAND.

Background: A family member of U.S. Air Force TSgt Melvin Arnold Holland, who was lost in Laos on March 11, 1968, asked about any developments on the so-called “List of 41.” In 1992, the U.S. Side presented to the Russian Side a list of U.S. personnel missing from SEA (the PMSEA) and requested a search of all available records for any information related to the names on the list. The list was turned over to the Russian Ministry of Internal Affairs and checked against its card files that contained information of those sentenced for various offenses from 1922-1968. Based on the information from the Russian Side, if a person committed a crime in Soviet or occupied territories, and was imprisoned or sent to a labor

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camp or exile, the relevant records would be kept in the Soviet Ministry of Internal Affairs (MVD). The response contained 41 names that were similar to those from the PMSEA. Even though U.S. analysts could not correlate any of the names with the U.S. personnel missing in SEA, one name on the List of 41 could be loosely associated with TSgt Holland. An individual was named Kholland, Arnold Mikhelevich. There might be a loose association with USAF TSgt Melvin Arnold Holland. TSgt Holland, USAF, is listed in PMSEA under Reference Number 2052 as Killed in Action on March 11, 1968, Body Not Recovered. The only information provided on the list of 41 on Mr. Arnold M. Kholland was his conviction for counterrevolutionary activities. No other information provided by the Russian Side on the list of 41 was available. TSgt Holland's family member asked about any developments on the so-called "List of 41".

Discussion: In regards to a request for a Ministry of Internal Affairs (MVD) Information and Analysis Center file card on Arnold M. Kholland, Mr. Taranov forwarded the request to the Center and is waiting for the response, which is expected within 30 days. The Russian Side will forward the response to the U.S. Side as soon as it becomes available, together with information on any other individuals from the so-called "List of 41" (if found). The Head of the Information Center of the MVD is part of the USRJC.

7. Access to Records of Soviet Units Deployed to Vietnam.

Background: In addition to hand-picked Soviet advisors sent to Vietnam during wartime, the Soviet Union deployed units or air crews from those units to Vietnam. In the past, the U.S. Side asked for access to the records of such units, but was denied as they were not part of TsAMO holdings but belonged to the units' archives. The Russian Side still had challenges with access to these units' archives. DPAA found in the archives of other former Soviet republics general information about units' or crews' deployment but not combat orders or reporting that might be helpful to DPAA's search. Those archivists responded that combat orders are in TsAMO. In the past, the U.S. Side asked about access to Soviet-era records of the 10th Main Directorate of the General Staff of the Armed Forces of Russia. The 10th Directorate was responsible for sending personnel abroad and would have lists of the units and personnel in question.

Discussion: The Russian Side stated that it will continue the search for the records of specific units deployed to Vietnam with the goal of locating information relevant to DPAA's accounting mission. Mr. Taranov stated that Russia had an agreement with the ministries of defense of the countries of the Commonwealth of Independent States (several former Soviet republics) on the exchange of information, so the Russian Side might be able to find out whether these units still exist and where their records are located. In addition, Russian archivists would conduct another search in the 113 TsAMO files that already had been reviewed, to make sure nothing was missed. As for the records of the 10th Main Directorate, the Russian Side had access to this collection of documents, in general. However, such access depended on the nature of the documents. Mr. Taranov will send a request for a list of such units but believes that this information is restricted. He stated that the party responsible for these documents was the Russian Ministry of Defense Main Directorate for International Military Cooperation, the originator of these records.

8. Reinstatement of the DPAA Oral History Program.

Background: We are seeking help from the Russian Side to reinstate DPAA's interview program and to locate Soviet Vietnam War Veterans in Russia and in other countries of the

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former USSR for conducting interviews. Reinstatement of the Oral History Program was initiated in Ukraine and the Baltics in 2017.

Discussion: The Russian Side will support reinstatement of the DPAA Oral History Program. Mr. Taranov confirmed that the Russian Side will start making arrangements with veterans and proposed that interviews be conducted by the DPAA Moscow office for ease of coordination. He also promised to reach out to the Russian-Vietnamese Friendship Society to find out about any Vietnamese veteran organization(s) in Russia. Additionally, the Russian Side stated that it would connect the U.S. Side with General Rodionov's veterans group.

9. Working Level Communication Matters.

Background: In 2017, the USRJC Chairmen and VWWG Chairmen discussed the possibility for more frequent meetings of SMEs and analysts of both Sides of the Commission.

Discussion: In response to Mr. McKeague's question on the timeframe for a working meeting between the Head of the Defense Archival Service of Russia and the VWWG U.S. Technical Lead from DPAA, Mr. Taranov and Mr. Popov stated that it would be scheduled as soon as practical, possibly in conjunction with the Cold War Working Group Technical Talks on May 25, 2018, or at any other time coordinated by both Sides.

10. Other Matters Discussed at the VWWG Technical Talks.

U.S.-Russia Joint Field Activities (JFA), Vladivostok Area, Far East, May 2018.

Background: A Joint DPAA-Russia 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. The JFA will take place May 11-25, 2018. In March 2018, the U.S. Side submitted to the Russian Side a complete list of U.S. equipment to be brought to Russia for use during the JFA. The Russian Side stated that if Russian customs has a problem with any U.S. equipment, the Russian Side will find an equivalent in-country replacement for the team to use.

Discussion: Mr. Taranov confirmed the dates of the trip as May 11-25, 2018. He reported that no U.S. military equipment may be brought into Russia, but added that the Russian Side would provide Russian military equipment of equal capability. In response to our question regarding the shipping of civilian equipment provided by the University of Pittsburgh, Mr. Taranov stated that it may be allowed. If such equipment were not allowed to be brought to Russia, the Russian Side would provide civilian equipment and the operators to use it. Mr. Taranov reiterated that the Russian Side would assist with customs procedures compliance in Vladivostok. Mr. Taranov confirmed that the Cold War Working Group Technical Talks will be held on May 25, 2018 in Vladivostok, Russia.

Note: Based on sanctions the EM Directorate must obtain a legal review from DPAA OGC before making any payments to Russian government or non-government entities.

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Areas Requiring Further Discussion/Coordination.

The Russian Side requested assistance in drafting an MOU with the U.S. Coast Guard, in order to place a WWII Catalina memorial plaque at the U.S. Coast Guard Base in Elizabeth City, North Carolina.

Outcome.

Both Sides signed a Memorandum for Record, summarizing all the discussion points at the April 2018 VWWG Technical Talks and the way ahead.