

SUMMARIZED MINUTES
Cold War Working Group (CWWG) Technical Talks
U.S.-Russia Joint Commission on POW/MIAs (USRJC)
December 12, 2019
Ministry of Defense
Frunzenskaya Naberezhnaya, 22/2
Moscow, Russian Federation

U.S. Side Participants

- Mr. Timothy Shea
U.S. Commissioner to the USRJC representing the Defense Intelligence Agency
U.S. Chairman, USRJC CWWG
Defense Intelligence Officer for Europe/Eurasia

- Colonel Frank Tank, USA
Acting U.S. Chairman, USRJC Korean War Working Group
Director, Europe Mediterranean (EM) Regional Directorate, Defense POW/MIA
Accounting Agency (DPAA)

- Mr. Richard Lyda
Acting Executive Secretary, U.S. Side of the USRJC
Chief, Joint Commission Support Division (JCSD), DPAA

- Research Analyst, CWWG
JCSD, EM Regional Directorate, DPAA

Russian Side Participants

- General Major (Ret.) Aleksandr Kirilin
Russian Side Deputy Chairman, USRJC
Assistant Deputy Minister of Defense

- General-Lieutenant (Ret.) Vasiliy Khristoforov
Russian Chairman, USRJC CWWG
Member of the Interagency Commission on POWs, Internees, and MIAs, Ministry of
Defense (MoD) of the Russian Federation

- Colonel (Ret.) Andrey Taranov
Executive Secretary, Russian Side of the USRJC
Deputy Director, Directorate for Perpetuating the Memory of Fallen Defenders of the
Fatherland, MoD of the Russian Federation

- Mr. Aleksandr Mukomolov
Chairman, Inter-regional Nongovernment Organization (NGO)
“General Lebed Peacekeeping Mission”
Member of the Interagency Commission on POWs, Internees, and Missing-in-Action
Commissioner, USRJC

- Deputy Chief, Warrior-Internationalists Affairs Committee, Commonwealth of Independent States Government Heads Council

Joint Opening Comments

General Kirilin welcomed the group to Moscow. He passed on greetings from the Russian Side Co-Chairman, General Vostrotin, who was attending another high-level meeting. He noted as the city of Moscow prepares for the upcoming holidays, the memory of the fears of war 75 years ago lives on. He recalled the events that led up to the Lend-Lease Act during World War II and the cooperation between the United States and the Soviet Union. He mentioned that every year, members of the USRJC lay flowers at a monument dedicated to the U.S. Merchant Marines who took part in transporting aircraft under the Lend-Lease Program. General Kirilin informed the group of the Russian Federation's intention of erecting an armed forces cathedral in honor of the 75th anniversary of that victory. He also expressed the hope that a future meeting of the USRJC would take place in that building. He added the building would commemorate all participants of the Great Patriotic War. In that vein, the Russian Side expressed gratitude to the U.S. Side for acquiring soil from U.S. cemeteries that hold the remains of Soviet servicemen. General Kirilin stated he had no doubt the day's events would be productive and in keeping with the spirit of cooperation and mutual understanding. He acknowledged the meetings were occurring under less than favorable political conditions, but reiterated the Commission was created for a noble purpose. General Kirilin stressed the importance of moving forward and finding answers to the questions posed regarding the missing or killed-in-action for their families.

Mr. Shea thanked the Russian Side for showing up "in force." He stated it was great to see so many important and friendly faces across the table. He acknowledged General Vostrotin had other requirements to attend to and passed along greetings from U.S. Side Co-Chairman General Foglesong, who planned to visit General Vostrotin in January 2020. He expressed gratitude to the Russian Side for inviting the U.S. Side to Moscow despite the difficult political situation.

Colonel Tank expressed gratitude and humility for the opportunity to be part of this important work. He stated he was fascinated by the Russian people's passion for their history and acknowledged General Kirilin's mention of the current anniversaries of notable historic events. Colonel Tank shared that 20 years earlier, while serving as a company commander in Kosovo, he supported the 13th Tactical Group of the Russian Army. He added that those soldiers also took care of his troops over the course of six months. He expressed appreciation to the Russian Federation for their support.

Mr. Lyda introduced himself as a new "old" member of the Commission. He explained that he left the Agency for a few years, but is happy to be back as the Acting Executive Secretary of the U.S. Side. He recalled 2010 when the Russian Side visited Arlington National Cemetery and expressed a desire to work on a similar project. He expressed gratitude for the opportunity to help with the acquiring of soil from U.S. cemeteries bearing Soviet remains for the Russian Side. Mr. Lyda echoed the sentiments of Mr. Shea and passed along greetings from General Foglesong to General Vostrotin and reiterated that despite tumultuous political conditions, the Commission continues to renew its commitment to this important work.

Colonel Taranov warmly welcomed the U.S. Side to the Hero City of Moscow and introduced the Russian Side representatives. He also expressed a wish on behalf of General Major Vladimir

Vasil'evich Popov, Director, Directorate for Perpetuating the Memory of Fallen Defenders of the Motherland, that the day's meetings would be fruitful.

After the Working Groups split up, the following topics were discussed at the CWWG session:

1. Lieutenant Colonel Koventsov and Senior Sergeant Ledzhiev

Background: There are two Russian servicemen considered missing from the Russo-Georgian War of August 2008: Guards Lieutenant Colonel Aleksandr Aleksandrovich Koventsov and Senior Sergeant Ledzhiev.

Lieutenant Colonel Koventsov was assigned to the 52nd Guards Heavy Bomber Regiment stationed at Shajkovka in the Kaluga Oblast, Russian Federation. On August 9, 2008, he departed Shajkovka in his TU-22MR long-range reconnaissance bomber on a mission to South Ossetia. Shortly thereafter, his aircraft was shot down by a Georgian surface-to-air missile on Georgian territory near Tskhinvali, South Ossetia. Of the TU-22MR's four-man crew, Lieutenant Colonel Koventsov was declared missing; the co-pilot was wounded and captured, and the two other crewmen were killed.

Beginning in August 2008, the Russians sought the assistance of the U.S. Government to intervene with the Georgian Government to repatriate Russian prisoners of war (POWs) and the remains of Russian servicemen who died during the war. On September 19, 2008, the Georgian Government repatriated seven sets of remains and returned the wounded co-pilot to the Russians with the help of the International Red Cross. The Russians conducted DNA testing of the remains and identified two of the sets of remains as the members of Koventsov's crew who were killed. Koventsov's remains however, were not among those repatriated.

Many Russians believe Koventsov survived the shoot-down of his aircraft. Much of this belief is fueled by circumstantial evidence and speculation. The pilot's ejection seat, parachute, and helmet were all found separate from the aircraft wreckage, which appear to indicate he was able to get out of the plane. There are a number of unsubstantiated reports that he was captured.

In a separate incident, Senior Sergeant Ledzhiev disappeared some time before the conflict began. The area where he disappeared was searched, but he was not found.

Recovering Lieutenant Colonel Koventsov and Senior Sergeant Ledzhiev is an on-going issue of great importance to the Russian Government and the Russian Side of the USRJC.

Discussion: The Russian Side thanked the U.S. Side for assistance rendered in the past. The Russian Side also noted that it cannot resolve this without U.S. help and influence in working with the Georgians. The Russian Side stated that a thorough search of the aircraft crash site has never been conducted due to a large amount of unexploded ordnance in the area. In 2018, the Georgians informed the Russians that they would clear the crash site of unexploded ordnance. The Russian Side has officially requested of the Georgians, through a three-party commission [no further information], to conduct a search of the crash site that has been cleared of unexploded ordnance.

The U.S. Side requested a copy of the formal request the Russian Side provided to the Georgians in order to facilitate cooperation. Mr. Shea offered to bring this matter up with his Georgian colleagues in early 2020.

The Russian Side stated it will pass a formal request that was recently submitted to the Georgians to the U.S. Side in preparation for Mr. Shea's meeting.

2. Soviet Service Members Missing from Afghanistan and Russians Missing from Chechnya

Background: Since 1992, the Russian Side has requested any information from the U.S. Side that will help clarify the fates of the Soviet soldiers missing-in-action (MIA) from the 1979-89 war in Afghanistan. Over the years, a number of these MIAs have been accounted for. At present, there are 264 service members still considered missing. More recently, the Russian Side has asked the U.S. Side to assist with locating persons who may have information on the approximately 300 missing from the various conflicts in the Northern Caucasus, primarily from the two wars in Chechnya.

Discussion: The Russian Side provided the U.S. Side a disk containing the names of 273 Russian personnel, both military and civilian, who remain missing from the conflict in Afghanistan. The database contains names, photographs, dates of birth, as well as information surrounding their disappearance. This list includes names of 264 missing soldiers and also names of unaccounted-for security services and civilian personnel.

The Russian Side requested the U.S. Side review the list and check if any of these missing Soviet servicemen or civilians currently live in the U.S. If so, the Russian Side requests the U.S. Side locate and contact them to determine whether they would like to contact family members from any of the countries of the former Soviet Union and/or return.

In addition, these former missing, possibly previously captured and held as POWs, persons may have information about other MIAs and/or about burial sites. The Russian Side emphasized this information should be given voluntarily, and if they desire, they could provide the information anonymously. They stated this information would be helpful in informing remaining family members on the fate of their loved ones.

The Russian Side also provided a list of specific questions it would like to ask these persons. The Russian Side reiterated the fact the Soviet Union granted full amnesty in 1990 to any citizen who participated in the war in Afghanistan. The amnesty covers not only desertion, but even criminal offenses. The Russian Federation, as well as the other countries of the former Soviet Union, consider this amnesty to be in effect.

The U.S. Side responded that if relevant information is found, the U.S. Side will then work with those agencies to determine what, if any, information can be shared.

3. Joint Expedition to Hospital 404 Cemetery in Novosyoyevka

Background: In 1995, a Russian national alleged he had seen four Americans alive in a hospital (Hospital 404) in Novosyoyevka in Primorsky Krai, Russia, in November 1951. He also claimed he was shown a grave in the hospital cemetery containing the remains of a

fifth American. Based on the approximate dates the Russian national said he was in the hospital, analysts from the U.S. Side believed his report may relate to the loss of a U.S. Navy P2V shot down on November 6, 1951, in the Sea of Japan near the Soviet coast. The hospital is approximately 150 miles northwest of Cape Ostrovnoy, where the Soviets reportedly shot down the P2V. From June 1995 through March 1996, joint U.S.-Russia teams conducted three separate visits to the hospital and cemetery. In addition to conducting interviews of local officials and potential eyewitnesses, the teams disinterred four graves containing remains, all of whom were excluded as members of the P2V aircraft's crew. DPAA returned to the cemetery in May 2018 and performed a site survey using ground-penetrating radar in the location described by the Russian national. The site survey led to the discovery of several anomalies that warrant follow-up. The Russian Side is currently seeking approval from the local Russian government to return to the cemetery and excavate the anomalies.

Discussion: The U.S Side is prepared to return to the site of the cemetery and excavate the location that was investigated in 2018, once permits to do so have been issued by the local Russian authorities. The U.S. Side reminded the Russian Side of the active U.S. family member interest in this excavation.

The Russian Side stated the local authorities have opened an investigation as part of the process required to grant permission for an excavation at the cemetery; this is standard procedure. Each anomaly must be investigated, and this requires time. The Russian Side believes it will receive a final answer from the local government regarding the permits by April 2020, but offered no guarantee. Colonel Taranov stated categorically the Russian Side has no influence over the process at the local level. For crash sites, the MoD is the agency responsible for investigatory work, but work in a civilian cemetery requires approval from the local prosecutor's office. The U.S. Side acknowledged this, but replied that timely resolution would better support mission planning for this summer.

4. Gun Camera Photography

Background: During the Cold War when shoot-down incidents occurred over water near the Soviet border, the Soviet Union would often not admit to having shot down the U.S. aircraft. At the time, they would protest to the U.S. Government that they fired on a U.S. aircraft, which went off in the direction of the sea. After the establishment of the USRJC in 1992, the Russian government provided the U.S. Side with contemporary reports - some going up to General Secretary and Soviet Premier Stalin himself - confirming that certain U.S. aircraft were indeed shot down. The admission the planes were shot down was a significant revelation in the early 1990s.

Some of these contemporary Soviet reports indicated photos were taken of the crash site. In addition, it is known that gun camera photos of Soviet-U.S. air engagements during the Korean War (1950-1953) are kept in the Central Archives of the MoD (TsAMO). Since the earliest Cold War shoot-down incident occurred in 1950, it is not unreasonable to assume the Soviet military aircraft that shot down U.S. aircraft were equipped with gun cameras. However, except for the C-130 shot down on September 2, 1958 over Soviet Armenia, the Russian Side has not provided the U.S. Side with any photos related to Cold War incidents.

The U.S. Side has repeatedly asked for gun camera photos for the remaining Cold War shoot-down incidents. The Russian Side has answered that it searched its holdings and the gun camera photos no longer exist.

Discussion: The U.S. Side once again requested gun camera photos for the remaining Cold War losses. To make its case, the U.S. Side used as an example the shoot-down of a U.S. Navy P2V Neptune on November 6, 1951, as well as Soviet records from the Korean War.

The U.S. Side showed the Russian Side a contemporary Soviet report from 5th Fleet Commander Pantaleyev to Minister of the Navy Kuznetsov that laid out the circumstances surrounding the shoot-down on November 6, 1951. The report states a photograph was taken of the wreckage of the Neptune burning on the water. However, this photograph has not been provided to the U.S. Side.

The U.S. Side demonstrated that during the Korean War, Soviet units would compile photo albums of the heroic actions taken by its members. The U.S. Side provided an example of one such photo album copied from the records at TsAMO. This photo album contained prints taken from gun cameras, as well as photos of wreckage of U.S. aircraft shot down during the Korean War.

The U.S. Side argued that the shoot down of a U.S. aircraft would have been considered an event worthy of memorializing in a photo album for a subordinate unit of the Soviet 5th Fleet. The Russian Side agreed to search archives for any materials related to the possible gun camera photographs and the photo of the P2V wreckage burning on the water. However, General Khristoforov stated that during the Cold War, the level of classification was much higher, so it may be difficult to obtain access.

5. Joint Underwater Search

Background: In 1996, U.S. Side representatives and Russian Side commissioners met with Chief of Staff of the Russian Pacific Fleet, Vice Admiral Oleg Mikhailovich Faleyev to discuss the possibility of exploring the wreckage of downed U.S. aircraft in Russian coastal waters. The genesis of this meeting was from the Russian Side, who had offered to conduct the expeditions and investigate the sites, but at U.S. expense. The U.S. Side desired to find the wreckage, examine the condition of the wreckage, look for any clues or signs as to the fate of the crews, and if possible, recover remains.

In 1998, Captain First Rank Vorobyev, Chief of the Search and Rescue Directorate of the Pacific Fleet of the Russian Navy came back with a proposed plan. He looked at four Cold War shoot-down incidents: 1) the P2V Neptune shot down on November 6, 1951; 2) the RB-29 shot down on June 13, 1952; 3) the RB-50 shot down on July 29, 1953; and 4) the RB-29 shot down on October 7, 1952. The first three are near Vladivostok, and the fourth is near Yuri Island in the southern Kurils.

The plan was in three parts. The first part would involve a sonar search of the waters with equipment from the Institute of Marine Technology Problems mounted on Russian Navy ships in order to detect anomalies on the sea bottom. The second stage would involve collecting amplifying information on anomalies using underwater television and infrared

cameras and other sensors. The third part, if the anomaly was assessed to be aircraft wreckage, would be to raise the wreckage, if feasible.

Discussion: The U.S. Side requested any information that may pertain to this original proposal from Captain Vorobyev on a potential joint underwater survey of the area in the Sea of Japan. The U.S. Side stated it would like to seek out potential private partners to pursue the search for these Cold War losses. The Russian Side indicated it would be possible to pursue this option in the future. Colonel Taranov stated the Russians are using non-military partners for their excavation work. Some of these partners may have capabilities that could be used for U.S. water loss cases.

6. U.S. Aircraft that Crashed or Force-landed on Kamchatka during World War II

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 Forces 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 could land at the main airfield on the Kamchatka Peninsula. This area is remote, sparsely populated, and it is possible there are a number of U.S. World War II-era aircraft that were unable to reach the airfield and crashed either on or in the waters off Kamchatka and Paramushir and Shumshu Islands

The U.S. Side visited the crash site of a U.S. B-24 bomber at Vestnik Bay on Kamchatka in 2004, but was not able to correlate it to a specific loss incident.

Discussion: As an aside to the discussion on a possible underwater search for Cold War losses in the Sea of Japan, Colonel Taranov stated the Russian Side recently had people at the site on Kamchatka of an uncorrelated U.S. B-24 bomber. He stated the Russian Side is prepared to do the technical excavation augmented with U.S. scientific assistance in 2021.

Colonel Taranov also stated a third party found a U.S. bomber aircraft off the Kurils and the Russian Side would investigate further and inform the U.S. Side at a later date.

7. Trusted Agent

Background: In the past, the U.S. Side had been afforded a Russian archival professional who was dedicated to doing archival research on behalf of the U.S. Side. Known as a “trusted agent”, this person worked under contract for the U.S. Side. General Foglesong had inquired about designating a trusted agent once more. The Russian Side stated that identifying a dedicated professional could be the correct thing to do, and it would give the issue further consideration.

Discussion: Mr. Lyda and Colonel Taranov met separately to discuss the requirements and expectations of a trusted agent. The Russian Side had identified a candidate, who was also present at this sidebar meeting.

As it turned out, the candidate has no previous experience as an archival researcher. He also does not have the proper level of clearance nor access to required archives. The candidate was under the impression the position would be that of a liaison role between the U.S. Side and Russian veterans’ groups rather than that of a trusted agent. The position

remains vacant and the U.S. Side still has a requirement for such a person to facilitate access to classified archives.

Mr. Lyda urged Colonel Taranov to seek other candidates and reiterated the trusted agent must have access to classified information in archives which are not open to U.S. contract researchers. Colonel Taranov responded he understood our requirements, but it was a very difficult problem to solve in finding a fully qualified candidate to work as a trusted agent.

Joint Closing Comments

General Kirilin noted Colonel Tank had expressed a few recommendations for future meetings. [Colonel Tank suggested numerous times throughout the discussion that it would be helpful to ask clearer questions in both construction and intent.] He stated that through the work today, several deficiencies were noted. He expressed the desire to correct these. General Kirilin stated that by the upcoming meeting of the Co-chairmen, both sides would try to correct these problems or at least come up with a strategy forward. He said the most positive part of today's talks was the fact that both groups worked professionally and full of optimism, which provided a chance to thaw relations. He stated the Commission remains the venue for other mutually beneficial projects. General Kirilin stated this is not only his opinion, but also that of both the Russian MoD and Ministry of Foreign Affairs, as well as the Russian Embassy in Washington, D.C.

General Khristoforov thanked the participants and reiterated that both sides remain committed to this work. He stated these Cold War cases are particularly difficult due to the highly classified nature of the incidents and reiterated it had led to many rumors and conspiracy theories. He expressed gratitude that both sides were committed to relying on only the facts in these cases. General Khristoforov added he is committed to continuing this work and thanked the group for their mutual understanding.

Mr. Shea thanked the group and stated the high level of professionalism and trust between both sides has allowed our work to progress. He added that this session was the most balanced Cold War Working Group to date. He remarked both sides had an equal number of issues to discuss and that it was an optimistic sign moving forward.

Colonel Tank thanked the group and expressed the wish of the group to continue this great work and to continue moving forward.

Mr. Lyda stated the Cold War breakout session was very engaging and productive. He reiterated it was a very positive sign for the future of the USRJC. He vowed to take back the questions the Russian Side had and to work diligently to provide the answers it sought. He thanked the Russian Side for their gracious hospitality and said he will see them in January with General Foglesong. General Kirilin thanked the U.S. Side for their kind words and expressed his hope the U.S. Side would be able to reestablish its office in Moscow soon.