U. S. AIR FORCE

PROJECT RAND

RESEARCH MEMORANDUM

CASE STUDIES OF ACTUAL AND ALLEGED OVERFLIGHTS, 1930-1953 -- SUPPLEMENT

A. L. George

RM-1349(S)

August 15, 1955

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PREFATORY NOTE

The twenty-nine case studies of actual or alleged overflights that are contained in the present volume supplement the 114 cases studied in the main volume of RAND Research Memorandum RM-1349 (SECRET). The present twenty-nine all carry a TOP SECRET classification; they have been collected into a single, separate volume in order to make possible wider distribution of the SECRET volume than would have been possible if all the case studies had been presented in the same volume, regardless of classification.

The character of the intelligence mission of United States reconnaissance aircraft referred to in case studies Nos. 115-118, 120-123, and 129-131 is not precisely identified in the discussion of those cases.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
PREFATORY NOTE	
CASE STUDIES:	
115.* Soviet Interception of U.S. Navy Reconnaissance Aircraft Over the Baltic Sea (October 5, 1949) .	1
116. Soviet Interception of U.S. Reconnaissance Plane Off Vladivostok (Sea of Japan) (October 22, 1949)	1
117. Soviet Nonhostile Interception of U.S. Reconnaissance Aircraft (B-17) in North Baltic (March 6, 1950)	3
118. Soviet Interception of U.S. Reconnaissance Aircraft (B-29) Near Dairen (March 22, 1950)	7
119. U.S. Reconnaissance Plane in Overflight of Shantung Peninsula (April 1, 1950)	7
120. U.S. Reconnaissance Plane in Sixty-Five Mile Penetration of Soviet Territory (April 7, 1950)	8
121. Soviets Shoot Down U.S. Navy Privateer Plane on Reconnaissance Mission in the Baltic Sea (April 8, 1950)	9
122. Soviet Interception of U.S. Reconnaissance Plane (B-29) Off the East Siberian Coast (July 18, 1950)	33
123. Possible Soviet Detection of U.S. Reconnaissance Aircraft in European Theater (August 30, 1950) .	34
124. U.S. Air Attack on Soviet Airfield in Siberia (October 8, 1950)	35
125. Turkish Plane Fired Upon While Making Overflight of Soviet Territory (August 3, 1951)	40
126. U.S. Navy Patrol Planes Intercepted by Unidentified Planes in Shantung Peninsula Area (September 28 and 29, 1951)	40

* N.B.: The case studies in RM-1349 and RM-1349-Supplement are numbered consecutively from No. 1 to No. 143. Case studies Nos. 1-114 are contained in RM-1349 . The first case study in the present Supplement volume (TOP SECRET). therefore, is numbered No. 115.

Page

127. U.S. Navy Patrol Plane Fired Upon Off Shantung Peninsula (September 30, 1951) 41

128. U.N. Patrol Plane (U.S. Navy) Fired Upon in Vicinity of Shantung Peninsula (October 4, 1951) 41

129. U.S. Navy Reconnaissance Aircraft Fired Upon by Soviet Missiles in the Baltic (January 23-24, 1952) 42

130. Soviet Ground-to-Air Rocket Fire on U.S. Reconnaissance Plane (RB-50) Off Dairen (March 29, 1952) 44

131. Hostile Interception of, and Guided Missile Attack on, U.S. Navy Reconnaissance Plane in Black Sea Area (April 18, 1952) 44

132. U.S. Navy Patrol Plane Attacked by MiG's Off Port Arthur (May 11, 1952) 45

133. British Reconnaissance Aircraft Fired Upon Near Hong Kong (May 18, 1952) 45

134. Loss of U.S. Reconnaissance Plane (RB-29) in Sea of Japan Due to Unknown Causes (June 13, 1952) . . 46

135. U.S. Weather Reconnaissance Plane Attacked by MiG off Dairen (July 16, 1952) 48

136. U.S. Navy Plane Attacked by MiG's East of Port Arthur (July 31, 1952) 49

137. British Reconnaissance Plane Fired Upon Off Hong Kong (August 4, 1952) 50

138. The Shooting Down of a U.S. RB-29 and Other Soviet Overflights of Northern Japan (August, 1952, to August, 1953) 50

139. Absence of Air Incidents During NATO Naval Exercise "Mainbrace" in the Baltic (Autumn, 1952) 89

140. U.S. Navy Patrol Plane Attacked by MiG's (September 20, 1952) 90

141. U.S. Commercial Plane Fired Upon During Unintentional Overflight of Bulgarian Territory (September 27, 1952) 91

Page

142. Engagement Between U.S. Navy Jets and MiG's (Probably Soviet) Off North Korea in Sea of Japan (November 18, 1952) 91

143. U.S. MATS C-54 Fired Upon in South China Sea (November 24, 1952) 94

115.* SOVIET INTERCEPTION OF U.S. NAVY RECONNAISSANCE AIRCRAFT OVER THE BALTIC SEA[1] (October 5, 1949)

A U.S. Navy reconnaissance plane was intercepted over the Baltic Sea by two Soviet fighters on October 5, 1949. The two Soviet fighters made approaches to the U.S. plane but took no hostile action. No further details were available.

116. SOVIET INTERCEPTION OF U.S. RECONNAISSANCE PLANE OFF VLADIVOSTOK (SEA OF JAPAN) (October 22, 1949)

Two Soviet fighters, tentatively identified as La-7's, intercepted a U.S. B-29 over the Sea of Japan in broad daylight on October 22, 1949. The Soviet fighters made four passes; the lead plane fired short bursts of three to seven rounds past the B-29's nose.[2] The B-29 in question was on a reconnaissance mission.[3]

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* N.B.: The case studies in RM-1349 and RM-1349-Supplement are numbered consecutively from No. 1 to No. 143. Case studies Nos. 1-114 are contained in RM-1349 . The first case study in the present Supplement volume (TOP SECRET), therefore, is numbered No. 115.

1 The only available reference to this encounter appears in passing in the account of the March 6, 1950, interception of a U.S. B-17 in the Baltic Sea; see cable from USAFE to USAF, March 22, 1950; TOP SECRET.

2 USAF Air Intelligence Digest, February, 1950; pp. 14-15; SECRET. The mission of the B-29 was not given in this report.

3 USAF briefing, ("Countermeasures Against Radar") by Lt. Col. Harry H. Towler to Department of State (Mr. Thompson

Insofar as can be determined, neither the Soviets nor the United States publicly disclosed the above encounter. Nor is there any indication of a diplomatic protest by either side. No mention of the incident was found in the New York Times. The Department of State files examined give no indication of any public disclosure or of confidential diplomatic communications between the United States and the Soviet government.

Significance

Soviet fighters apparently did not attempt to hit the B-29. Evidently, Soviet policy toward air intruders at that time was to take only nonhostile military counteraction.

The Soviet preference for letting such incidents remain the private knowledge of the governments concerned is also noteworthy. Since the United States did not publicly announce the above incident, the U.S.S.R. was under no pressure to make a diplomatic protest or to publicize the incident. Evidently, in this case, the Soviets did not desire to initiate disclosure, either via public or via private (diplomatic) channels.

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3 (Cont'd)

and Mr. Rusk), November 2, 1949; TOP SECRET. See also letter of July 9, 1950, to Director of Operations from Maj. Gen. T. H. Landon, Director of Plans; TOP SECRET.

A different version of the reconnaissance mission of the B-29 is given in the draft of a cable, apparently not sent, from USAF to FEAF; TOP SECRET. (The cable is undated, but appears to have been drafted in mid-summer of 1950.)

117. SOVIET NONHOSTILE INTERCEPTION OF U.S. RECONNAISSANCE AIRCRAFT (B-17) IN NORTH BALTIC (March 6, 1950)

A B-17 reconnaissance plane was intercepted on March 6, 1950, by two Soviet fighters (tentatively identified as Yak-9's) when it was approximately twenty miles off Libau in the Baltic area. The two Soviet fighters began interception passes, but broke off before coming to within effective firing range. They then took up positions at about 150 yards from either wing tip of the B-17 and remained there for about seven minutes. No recognizable international signals were given by the Soviet fighters, and they did not fire their guns.

The two Soviet fighters broke off after the B-17 made a slow turn. A third fighter, whose type was not indicated in the mission report, then approached for about thirty seconds. The B-17 resumed its normal route, and the remainder of the flight was without incident.

The crew of the B-17 believed that the interception was a chance encounter. With perfect weather prevailing, the B-17 was visible for miles.[4]

Significance

The interception definitely was a nonhostile one. This fact strongly suggests (though the incident is not conclusive

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[4] Cable from USAFE (Wiesbaden) to USAF, March 22, 1952; TOP SECRET.

in this respect) that Soviet air-defense policy in the Baltic area had not yet been changed to one calling for more active military countermeasures against foreign aircraft nearing or overflying Soviet waters or territory.

However, the possibility remains, as the mission report indicated, that the Soviet aircraft (conventional, propeller-driven Yaks) encountered the B-17 by chance. We might speculate, further, that the Soviet planes were perhaps not part of the effective Soviet air-defense fighter force. If so, their failure to take more hostile measures would not conclusively demonstrate that the Soviets were observing a relatively mild air-defense policy in this area at this time.

The weight of the evidence, however, favors the alternative conclusion. It seems highly unlikely that a foreign plane (one, moreover, whose intelligence mission was probably known or surmised by Soviet forces in the area) would encounter Soviet fighter planes by chance in an area considered extremely sensitive by the Soviets. It seems quite unlikely that the B-17 could have passed as close as twenty miles to Libau without being detected, and without the Soviets' attempting to intercept it, if only to investigate it in order to remain alert to the possibility of hostile action. Since no other Soviet planes were sent up to investigate, it seems most unlikely that the Yaks were there by chance. It is more plausible that they were directed to do exactly what they did,

and that their nonhostile interception reflected the standing Soviet policy of the moment for dealing with foreign flights in that area.

The third Soviet fighter, which attempted to intercept the B-17 shortly after the Yaks broke off, is not described in the mission report. We may assume, however, that it was also a propeller-driven craft, for, had it been a jet, this fact would probably have been noted. Also, it seems plausible to assume -- in the absence of any effort at hostile action by the third fighter -- that it, too, was governed in its actions by the air-defense instructions in force at the time.

We do not know, of course, what would have happened had the B-17 ventured a bit closer to Soviet territory or made an actual overflight. United States planes engaged in perimeter reconnaissance were supposed, at the time, to remain at least twenty miles from Soviet territory. The Soviets themselves claim a twelve-mile territorial-waters limit. Hence the passage of the B-17 -- as stated in the B-17 mission report -- within twenty miles of Libau may not have been considered by the Soviets to be an actual violation. On the other hand, it was close enough to furnish the Soviets with a convenient opportunity -- if they wanted one -- for staging an international incident by shooting it down.

Since a U.S. Navy Privateer was shot down in the same area only shortly after the nonhostile interception of the B-17, the

apparent change or divergence in Soviet behavior in the two instances invites close attention. Three alternative explanations suggest themselves:

(1) It is possible that, shortly after the nonhostile interception of the B-17, Soviet air-defense instructions were changed in favor of a policy of hostile action against intruding foreign planes.

(2) Another possibility is that a policy of shooting down foreign planes making overflights was already in force at the time of the interception of the B-17, but that it was not implemented until the April 8 flight of the Navy Privateer, which the Soviets regarded as an overflight.

(3) The Soviets may not have had an actual policy of shooting down air intruders either before or after the air encounters in question, but may have decided, shortly after the nonhostile interception of the B-17, to discourage further flights of this character by taking hostile action against the next U.S. plane which ventured into the area.

118. SOVIET INTERCEPTION OF U.S. RECONNAISSANCE AIRCRAFT (B-29) NEAR DAIREN (March 22, 1950)

The mission report[5] stated that the city of Dairen was lighted and visible as the U.S. B-29 plane approached, and that then it "completely blacked out." Following this, the B-29 was intercepted by four aircraft of unidentified type and nationality. Two of the four, which were single-engined aircraft, made no pass at the B-29. A third made a level pass within fifty feet of the tail of the B-29, having flashed its wing-tip lights immediately prior to making the pass. The fourth aircraft passed one thousand feet over the B-29. No gunfire was observed.

The B-29 turned and increased its speed; it took no evasive action other than heading for home.

In the opinion of the B-29 crew, the encounter probably represented a visual interception due to torching of two engines of the B-29.

119. U.S. RECONNAISSANCE PLANE IN OVERFLIGHT OF SHANTUNG PENINSULA (April 1, 1950)

A U.S. Air Force reconnaissance plane (type of plane and mission not indicated in the report examined) apparently made an

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5 FEAF cable to USAF, March 22, 1950; TOP SECRET.

overflight of the Shantung Peninsula on April 1, 1950. Such an overflight would have violated standing Air Force instructions that flights of this character observe a twenty-mile limit. Accordingly, after examining the mission report, which seemed to indicate such an overflight, SAC cabled a query on the matter to the appropriate Air Force reconnaissance wing in Japan.[6]

120. U.S. RECONNAISSANCE PLANE IN SIXTY-FIVE-MILE PENETRATION OF SOVIET TERRITORY (April 7, 1950)

A U.S. reconnaissance plane (type unspecified) reported a "major deviation" from its assigned route on April 7, 1950.

The route followed by the reconnaissance plane in question was indicated by code number only. It has not been possible in the course of the present study to identify the route or the area of penetration into the U.S.S.R.

A penciled notation (added within USAF) to the cable copy of the mission report stated that, judging from information contained in the report, the U.S. plane in question had made a penetration of approximately sixty-five miles into Soviet territory.[7]

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6 SAC cable, April 11, 1950; TOP SECRET. This was the only report on the flight available for this study; the mission report itself was not located.

7 Cable from HKUB, Wiesbaden, to C/S, USAF, April 11, 1950; TOP SECRET.

The weather encountered during the trip was reported as "solid undercast"; no sightings of other craft were made. Thus, it is at least possible that the penetration went undetected; the mission report did not indicate whether the U.S. plane might have been identified by Soviet radar.

121. SOVIETS SHOOT DOWN U.S. NAVY PRIVATEER PLANE ON RECONNAISSANCE MISSION IN THE BALTIC SEA (April 8, 1950)

On April 8, 1950, while on a reconnaissance mission in the Baltic Sea, a U.S. Navy Privateer plane was intercepted and shot down by Soviet fighter planes. The only public version of the encounter available is that contained in the Soviet note of April 11. It is not known whether U.S. sources received an authentic account of the encounter with the Soviet planes, either from personnel aboard the Privateer, before it was destroyed, or from other sources. A recent USAF intelligence memorandum (TOP SECRET) summarizing briefly a number of air incidents stated that the incident of April 8, 1950, took place thirty-five miles west-southwest of Latvia. The same memorandum stated that the Navy plane was attacked and destroyed by two flights of four and two Soviet planes, "probably" La-7 or La-9 type fighters. (The source for this information was not given in the USAF memorandum.)

Insofar as can be established, initial disclosure of the incident was made by the Soviets in their note of April 11 protesting a violation of Soviet territory near Libau by a U.S. "B-29" /sic/ on April 8. The note was handed to U.S. Ambassador Kirk in Moscow on the morning of April 11, and it was released to the Soviet press before noon on the same day. The first news from U.S. sources that the Navy plane was missing was issued apparently later on the same day.[8] We do not know whether knowledge of the Soviet note influenced the U.S. decision to make public the fact that a Navy plane had been missing since April 8. In any event, the initiative in public as well as diplomatic disclosure of the incident must evidently be assigned to the Soviets. This fact has interesting implications, which are considered below.

Efforts by the United States to obtain satisfaction by diplomatic means were not vigorously pushed and remained unsuccessful.

There were no survivors from the Navy plane, nor, so far as is known, was any substantial wreckage recovered.[9]

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8 The New York Times, April 12, 1950.

9 An Associated Press dispatch of February 24, 1951, from Frankfurt, Germany, reported that the U.S. Navy was probing the possibility that the wreckage of a four-engine U.S. plane discovered by a German diver off Lübeck might be that of the Privateer. (The New York Times, February 25, 1951.) An Associated Press dispatch of April 20, 1951, from Washington, D.C., stated that intensive search had recovered pieces of the plane's equipment but that bodies of the crew members were never found. At the same time the crew of the Privateer was declared legally dead. (The New York Times, April 21, 1951.)

Significance

Summary

The shooting down of the Navy plane, and especially the Soviet diplomatic treatment of the incident, marked a major turning point in Soviet policy toward air encroachments around the Soviet perimeter. For the first time in the postwar period, the Soviets asserted the right to force foreign planes suspected of violating their territory to land upon Soviet territory, and, to shoot them down if they refused to land and attempted instead to return to international air space.

The ensuing diplomatic exchange between the United States and the U.S.S.R. was taken up by a fruitless disagreement as to the "facts" of the incident. It is not certain whether U.S. officials recognized or suspected that the Soviet action against the Navy plane inaugurated a new, severe policy, which was to be manifested again in many subsequent incidents. The net result of the Baltic incident may be regarded as an important cold-war defeat for the United States.

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9 (Cont'd)

The possibility that some members of the crew of the Navy plane might be alive and imprisoned by the Soviets was raised by the account given by an American, John H. Noble, upon his release from Soviet captivity. According to press accounts of Noble's story, he had been told by a Yugoslav that he had talked to eight American fliers, whose plane had been shot down over the Baltic Sea, and who were imprisoned not far from the Vorkuta prison camp. (Third in series of articles by John H. Noble, The New York Times, April 5, 1955; see also The New York Times, January 12, 1955.)

Perhaps more serious than the loss of the plane and the attendant loss of international prestige was the great caution which the incident induced upon subsequent U.S. reconnaissance operations in this important intelligence target area. Following the Baltic incident, U.S. military authorities ordered the use of armed B-50's for reconnaissance missions of the type flown by the Navy Privateer in the above incident, and introduced certain operational policy changes governing such flights.

Soviet Motives and Policy

Available evidence indicates that the Soviet action in shooting down the U.S. Navy plane was deliberate -- i.e., a matter of policy -- rather than accidental in any sense. The best evidence of this comes from highly classified Swedish intelligence sources. Although, according to available information, U.S. military authorities apparently had no direct report of the incident from the Navy plane concerned or from possible survivors, Swedish intelligence intercepted radio communications to Soviet fighter aircraft ordering them to pursue the plane and to shoot it down.[10]

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10 Department of State, "Memorandum of Conversation" with Ambassador Boheman, Swedish Embassy (June 23, 1952), by Mr. U. Alexis Johnson (FE), and Mr. William B. Sale (EUR); SECRET. Ambassador Boheman added that, for security reasons, such information could not be used publicly against the Soviets, since to do so would give away the fact that Swedish intelligence was intercepting Soviet military communications.

That the incident was not accidental but a reflection of Soviet air-defense policy was indirectly, and probably deliberately, conveyed by the Soviets in their note of April 21, 1950, which explicitly described Soviet air-defense instructions in justifying the action taken:

> It is not difficult to understand that the aviation of any country, under obligation to guard the inviolability of its frontiers, in a case of violation of the frontier of its country by a foreign plane, should conduct itself in exactly such a manner as Soviet aviation did....
>
> As concerns the instruction for Soviet aviators of which the American note speaks,[11] an appropriate instruction has already existed for a long time and needs no changes whatever. This instruction reads: "On the occasion of violation of the frontiers of Union of Soviet Socialist Republics and penetration into Soviet territory by a foreign airplane, Soviet aviators are under obligation to compel it to land at a Soviet aerodrome and in case of resistance to open fire on it."[12]

The same air-defense policy had already been implicitly conveyed in the version of the facts of the incident contained in the first (April 11, 1950) Soviet note:

> ...a four-motored military airplane B-29 (Flying Fortress) with American identification signs...went into territory of the Soviet Union

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11 The U.S. note of April 18 had demanded that the Soviet government issue "the most strict and categorical instructions" to the Soviet air force "that there be no repetition, under whatever pretext, of incidents of this kind...." For a complete text of the U.S. note of April 18, 1950, see the Department of State Bulletin, May 1, 1950.

12 Ibid., May 15, 1950.

> for 21 kilometers. As the American plane continued going deeper into Soviet territory, a flight of Soviet fighters arose from a nearby airdrome, demanding that the American airplane follow them for landing at the airdrome. The American airplane not only did not submit to this demand but opened fire on the Soviet airplanes. In view of this, the leading Soviet fighter was compelled to return fire, after which the American airplane turned toward the sea and disappeared.[13]

The deliberate, policy character of the Soviet action was confirmed indirectly, though not conclusively, when, shortly after the incident, four Soviet flyers were decorated for the "excellent performance of their official duty." The unusual, front-page, prominence given this announcement in the Soviet press on April 14 suggested an obvious, though unstated, connection with the recent air incident. Given the nature and habits of the Soviet press, there could be little doubt that the decorated flyers were those who had shot down the U.S. Navy plane.[14]

Recency of Hostile Policy Toward Air "Intruders"

The Soviet air-defense policy revealed by this incident, it is hypothesized here, was adopted only shortly before the

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[13] Ibid., May 1, 1950.

[14] On April 18, 1950, Michael J. McDermott, chief press officer for the Department of State, commented publicly on the significance of the decoration of these Soviet flyers as follows: "The cause of peace is not furthered when the U.S.S.R. ostentatiously decorates Soviet airmen in a manner calculated to give the impression that they are being rewarded for shooting down a defenseless American plane." (Department of State Bulletin, May 1, 1950.)

incident. It is true that, in disclosing the orders under which Soviet air-defense forces operated, the Politburo (in its note of April 21) asserted that these instructions had been in effect "for a long time." But, given the likelihood that the Politburo would deny its opponents the true facts concerning changes in air-defense policies, this assertion need not be taken at face value. Soviet deception in this respect would be all the more plausible if, as suggested here, a new air-defense policy was being implemented for the first time and the Politburo expected some difficulty in maintaining the policy in the face of likely opposition of other powers.[15]

All previous encounters between Soviet and foreign planes in this and other perimeter areas, it should be noted, had been "peaceful"; that is, while the Soviet fighters may have intercepted planes approaching the Soviet perimeter and may occasionally have engaged in warning fire, they had never resorted to hostile fire or other hostile tactics such as attempting to force them to land. Even the then recent encounters with Soviet planes in the Baltic area had been peaceful.[16]

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15 Soviet leaders were probably aware that the air-defense policy they were introducing implied an international law position on treatment of aerial intruders which was in sharp conflict with the position successfully imposed on Tito by the United States following the shooting down of two U.S. transports over Yugoslavia in August, 1946. (See case study No. 13 on the latter incidents for a discussion of the probable impact on Soviet planning of their new air-defense policy.)

16 See case studies Nos. 115 and 117.

The foregoing facts lead us to infer that, in ordering the attack upon the U.S. Navy plane, the Politburo was putting into effect a new air-defense policy. Whether the new policy was ordered simultaneously in all areas, or whether any significance should be attributed to the fact that the first incident stemming from it occurred in the highly sensitive Baltic area, we cannot say. It is possible, of course, that, for the time being, the new instructions to Soviet fighters applied only to the Baltic area, and that they were extended to other areas only after this test case. If the latter hypothesis is correct, then the Politburo was trying out the new air-defense policy in an area in which it could most easily justify such extreme military counteraction against unfriendly flights.

Reasons for New Hostile Policy

The postulated shift in Soviet policy toward perimeter reconnaissance and overflights by foreign planes may have been motivated by one of several calculations. The Politburo may have been disturbed by what it took to be an increase of such reconnaissance activity by U.S. airplanes. The Baltic incident may have been staged, therefore, to demonstrate Soviet capability and willingness to challenge such reconnaissance efforts, and to induce greater caution and restraint on the part of the United States. Similarly, the Soviets may have feared that their earlier passivity in the face of border

reconnaissance was being interpreted as weakness on their part, and that it was encouraging, or might encourage, the United States to make overflights and deeper penetrations.

An alternative explanation would be that the stiffening of Soviet air-defense policy simply reflected an augmented Soviet air-defense capability. In other words, the Politburo may have decided that its air-defense capability was now sufficient to permit it a more forceful opposition to perimeter reconnaissance.

Lack of Diplomatic Warning Prior to Introduction of New Policy

The new Soviet air-defense policy was applied in this instance without prior verbal warning of any sort. It is possible that earlier nonhostile interceptions of U.S. planes approaching the Soviet perimeter were themselves intended by the Soviets to convey a warning.[17] But there is no evidence that they were thus understood by U.S. officials.

In contrast to what appears to be the U.S. practice -- i.e., to give notice, or warning, of any intention to apply a restrictive or punitive international policy before implementing it[18] -- the Soviet practice seems to be to rely on action itself to convey warning or notification of a new policy. Accordingly,

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17 See case studies Nos. 115, 116, 117, and 118.

18 See, for example, the policy discussions which preceded the decision to strengthen U.S. air-defense policy regarding overflights of Northern Japan by Soviet planes. (Section C of case study No. 138.)

the best way to indicate a negative disposition toward reconnaissance and overflights is to create an incident rather than file a diplomatic protest. To the Bolshevik way of thinking, a mere verbal protest would, in certain circumstances, signify a low Soviet military capability for defense against air-border violations or other types of encroachment on Soviet rights and interests.

Reason for Soviet Disclosure of Incident

The Soviet diplomatic protest of the alleged violation of its air space by the Navy plane -- filed, as it was, three days after the event -- was probably designed to deal with certain consequences of the incident rather than to communicate the fact of the incident itself or to exploit it in propaganda.

The usual pattern of Soviet behavior in instances where they have taken military counteraction which in itself demonstrates their negative attitude toward air intruders has been to let the action speak for itself.[19] In the present instance, however, the Politburo may have considered it desirable to make a diplomatic and public disclosure because it was concerned with certain aspects of the U.S. reaction to the incident.

What probably distressed Soviet leaders was the immediate and extensive air search for the missing plane initiated by

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19 For an analysis of the relevant cases, see RAND Research Memorandum RM-1346, "Soviet Reactions to Border Flights and Overflights in Peacetime" (TOP SECRET).

U.S. authorities.[20] It is likely that the Soviets, who themselves place a low value on life, became highly suspicious that the prompt and intensive U.S. air search for survivors, which showed no sign of letting up after the first days, was simply being used as an excuse for U.S. authorities to make further and far more extensive reconnaissance in the Baltic, and to extend their military influence in that area.

The best evidence of such suspicion is contained in a Swedish intelligence report at the time. Immediately after the air search for the U.S. plane had begun, the Swedish report noted, the activity of all Soviet air units located on the west coast of the Baltic was increased to what appeared to be a maximum border-patrol effort.[21]

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20 A United Press dispatch of April 11, 1950, (The New York Times, April 12, 1950) reported that the search for the missing U.S. plane was being extended to the eastern end of the Baltic, outside Russian territorial waters. A conservative Copenhagen paper, Nationaltidente, suggested -- before news of the Russian note became known -- that the search for the missing plane might actually be large-scale U.S. maneuvers. In another dispatch from Wiesbaden, the New York Times (April 12, 1950) reported U.S. Air Force officials there as stating that they knew of no change in the search area as a result of the Russian announcement, but that the searchers would fly in "ever-widening circles" from the Danish isle of Bornholm.

In a public statement, on April 18, the State Department press officer, Michael McDermott, criticized the Soviet government for its lack of co-operation in the air search. But, of course, given the character of the Navy plane and its mission, the Soviet government had not been notified of the air search, or asked to assist in it.

21 Cited in USAIRA, Stockholm (Hardy Douglas) to ALUSNA, Copenhagen, and CG, USAFE, Wiesbaden, Number AFCC 123 (April 17, 1950); SECRET.

Soviet concern in this respect is revealed also in the initial propaganda which accompanied Soviet disclosure of the incident. The first Moscow press publicity given to the incident, on April 12, was accompanied by a half-column of TASS items from abroad under the heading: "'Search' for American Bomber in Baltic Sea." One of these TASS dispatches, datelined Stockholm, April 11, noted that American military planes were continuing to arrive at Danish airfields, "violating Danish sovereignty," and that the United States had concentrated a considerable military force there.[22]

The Moscow press of April 15 contained a TASS dispatch from New York, which held that the U.S. press was attempting to "hide the fact that 'searches' for the fallen airplane in fact are a mask for air intelligence in the Baltic." The Soviet weekly New Times (April 19, 1950) referred to the Danish "democratic press" as having revealed that the first group of "rescuers" had arrived in Denmark before April 8, when the Navy flight in question took place; "it follows that this is a question of a previously prepared provocation."

The Politburo's attitude toward the U.S. search effort will be illuminated if we consider the manner in which the Soviets themselves would react in such an incident, were the positions of the two powers reversed. If its own agents were caught by the enemy while trying to obtain intelligence, the

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22 The New York Times, April 12, 1950.

Politburo would normally accept the loss quietly and without fanfare as one of the risks of the game, and would not make a political or diplomatic issue of it.[23] When the United States failed to accept the loss of a plane and personnel engaged in a secret intelligence mission, the Politburo was faced with the necessity of estimating the intentions underlying what it must have regarded as an unusual reaction on the part of U.S. authorities. A standing concern of Soviet policy-makers is the fear of being led into incorrect and inexpedient policies by the provocations of an opponent. Accordingly, it is extremely important, in the Soviet view, to make a correct estimate of the intent behind an opponent's hostile provocations before committing the Soviet Union to a policy reaction to them. In the nature of things, such estimates are difficult to make, and the problem of arriving at the "correct" reaction to an instance of provocation is likely to be accompanied by uncertainty and anxiety.

The Politburo's decision to disclose the incident publicly as well as diplomatically (in the note of April 11) must be seen in the context of the uncertainty it experienced in attempting to estimate the intention behind large-scale and extensive U.S. air searches for the missing Navy plane. Such search flights were provocative, in the Soviet view, since they could easily have placed the Soviets in a position of having to

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23 See case study No. 40.

create new incidents. Such incidents, in turn, might have intensified international tension and led to a crisis, which, the Politburo could have suspected, might have been the real intention behind the U.S. search activities. In the interest of avoiding a serious crisis, the Soviets might have been tempted to overlook the further provocations which U.S. search activities constituted, thereby revealing "weakness" to the enemy. This would have created a policy dilemma which, it may be assumed, was distasteful to Soviet policy-makers.

Therefore, the Soviet note of April 11, publicly announcing and protesting the incident, may have been intended, in the first instance, to bring about a clarification of the underlying U.S. intention.[24] Secondly, the Soviets may have taken the diplomatic initiative with regard to the incident in order to delimit its consequences and to prevent the U.S. search effort from presenting further challenges to the Soviets. By indicating publicly, though euphemistically,[25] that the U.S. plane had

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[24] Something of the serious concern which motivated the Soviet note of April 11 is conveyed by the fact that Vishinsky himself read the note to Ambassador Kirk in Moscow, and that foreign correspondents had been alerted by TASS that "very important news" was to be announced. (The New York Times, April 12, 1950.)

[25] The Soviet version of the incident merely stated that "the American plane turned toward the sea and disappeared" after being fired upon. (Department of State Bulletin, May 1, 1950.) This purposely obscured the question whether Soviet fire hit the American plane and whether, if so, the Soviets knew of, and were responsible for, the loss of the plane. This stereotype, repeated in subsequent incidents, is euphemistic in avoiding the impression of a calculated hostile attack driven home with determination.

been shot down three days earlier, the Politburo may have attempted to undercut the expanding U.S. search effort.

U.S. Diplomatic Handling of the Incident

The discontinuance of U.S. air-search operations in the Baltic, around April 16, may be assumed to have given the Politburo the best clarification and assurance possible regarding U.S. intentions. The U.S. reply (on April 18) to the Soviet note of April 11 and the subsequent exchange of additional notes (April 21 and May 5) may further have served to clarify U.S. intentions. The U.S. protests were probably regarded as constituting a not very strong effort to induce the Soviet Union to retreat from the air-defense policy which it had adopted.

The U.S. State Department's note of April 18 attempted to construct a legal case around the fact that the U.S. plane had been unarmed and could not have opened fire. It requested the Soviets to make a more thorough investigation of the incident, and demanded that the Soviet air force be categorically instructed not to repeat the incident.

The effort of the United States to argue the facts of the case from a legal standpoint may have been regarded by the Politburo as mere quibbling. To the Politburo's way of thinking, the essentially aggressive and hostile character of the Navy plane's flight was determined by its quest for intelligence and

its close proximity to, or possible overflight of, Soviet territory, rather than by such minutiae as whether it was armed or fired first. Facts of this sort are considered unimportant in themselves, and may be freely altered to conform to the deeper significance of an event, as seen by the Politburo.[26] Therefore, the statement in the Soviet protest note that the U.S. plane was an armed "B-29" which fired first probably was deliberately contrived for public consumption. It is likely, moreover, that the Politburo assumed that U.S. leaders, being big-time political operators themselves, would know why the Soviet note had altered the facts of the case and would grasp the implicit meaning of the communication, namely, that the Politburo regarded flights such as that made by the Navy plane as hostile.

In other words, the Politburo would assume that U.S. leaders did not really attach great importance to what the Soviets regarded as trivial facts, and did not really take offense at the Soviets' alteration of the facts for public consumption. Therefore, the fact that U.S. leaders spent so much time in verbal quibbling and, at the same time, called off the air search, may very well have been interpreted by the Politburo as signs of hesitation, uncertainty, and embarrassment.

The second Soviet note was issued on April 21, by which time Soviet anxiety about U.S. intentions must have been

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26 See, for example, Margaret Mead, Soviet Attitudes toward Authority, McGraw-Hill Book Co., Inc. New York, 1951, pp. 44 ff. (The RAND Corporation, Report R-199).

dispelled. It firmly rejected the U.S. request that the Soviets make a new investigation, defended the right to maintain Soviet frontiers inviolable, and for the first time -- now that it was clear that no Soviet retreat would be necessary -- quoted the instructions under which Soviet fighters had acted in shooting down the U.S. plane. The stronger, more assertive tone of the second Soviet note stood in contrast to the more moderate tone of the first. Subsequently, the Politburo did not even bother to answer the last (May 5) U.S. note on the subject[27] and justified its unwillingness to do so in a jeering Pravda editorial.[28]

If the above interpretation is correct, the net result of the Baltic incident and its aftermath was probably to leave the Politburo with the feeling that it had successfully asserted, against half-hearted and purely verbal opposition, a new, tough policy regarding foreign air forays near or over Soviet borders. Subsequently, as the United States and other powers discovered, the Soviets were to extend a similar air-defense policy to other areas of the world.

Soviet Propaganda Exploitation of the Incident[29]

The Baltic incident and its propaganda aftermath have been considered by some observers as an example of Soviet "muscle-

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27 For the text of the U.S. note of May 5, 1950, see Department of State Bulletin, May 15, 1950.

28 FBIS, Survey of U.S.S.R. Radio Broadcasts, May 17-23, 1950; CONFIDENTIAL.

29 For a detailed summary and analysis of Soviet and Satellite propaganda comment on the incident. see "Special Roundup:

flexing." According to the interpretation advanced here, however, the shooting down of the Navy plane was not so much that as it was an attempt to communicate to the United States by action rather than words the new Soviet attitude toward flights which had hostile purposes and/or which violated Soviet sovereignty. For example, an article on the incident in the Soviet weekly New Times (April 19, 1950) contained the sentence: "If the Americans wanted to test the security of the Soviet air borders, they have been convinced that these borders are carefully watched and that the Soviet pilots excellently fulfill their duty."

The "muscle-flexing" came later, after U.S. intentions were clear, and was primarily a propaganda celebration of the Soviet military victory and the retreat forced upon the United States in this case. The incident received, further, propaganda exploitation in connection with the celebration of Soviet Aviation Day in July, 1952.[30]

It is important to note, finally, that the incident did not occur in a political context of great international tension. The verbal content of the Soviet propaganda celebration, too, carefully refrained from suggesting an imminent war contingency.

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29 (Cont'd)

Soviet-Satellite Propaganda on the Baltic Incident" in FBIS, Survey of U.S.S.R. Radio Broadcasts, April 19-25, 1950; CONFIDENTIAL.

30 See case study No. 85.

Soviet propaganda charges that the event showed U.S. imperialists preparing for war were flavored with no greater sense of immediacy than similar pronouncements in the past.[31]

Factors Hampering U.S. Diplomatic Challenge of Soviet Action

U.S. efforts by means of diplomacy to hold the Soviets to account in this case were severely limited by several factors. First, there was no treaty in force between the United States and the U.S.S.R. under which the U.S. could present any claim in connection with the incident.[32] More important limitations on the use of various instruments of diplomatic pressure and accommodation stemmed from the fact that the Navy plane had been on a classified intelligence mission. While the intelligence mission of the Navy plane was known or surmised by the Soviets and referred to in their second (April 21) note and in their propaganda on the incident, and while serious leaks on this point occurred in U.S. sources (see below), it was apparently considered harmful to the U.S. interest for such facts to be established officially. In any event, the details of such intelligence operations would have had to be safeguarded for security reasons.

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31 See "Special Roundup," op. cit., pp. L-2, L-7.

32 This was pointed out, during the Department of State's consideration of the case, by one of its legal experts; CONFIDENTIAL.

Thus, one reason the State Department gave for not placing the Baltic incident before an international body, as it would normally have done after bilateral negotiation broke down, was "the unwillingness of the Department of Defense." Apparently, the Defense Department feared that the Soviet government might accept a proposal for consideration of the issue by a neutral power or international body, and that the resulting investigation might then elicit information from the U.S. government that would be of military interest to the U.S.S.R.[33]

Failure to take strong diplomatic steps in such cases may subject the State Department to domestic public and political pressure and to unfair criticism. In the present case, a member of the House of Representatives introduced a resolution calling upon the Secretary of State to request an investigation of the incident by the United Nations. At the same time, this representative issued an explanatory statement criticizing the State Department's timidity in this case. The State Department was thus put in the position of having to justify a governmental decision based on the Defense Department's confidential views and desires. In the State Department memorandum cited above, it was suggested that an appropriate statement be secured from the Department of Defense, "so that we may be able to justify the Government's decision that the

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33 Department of State internal memorandum from Deputy Legal Adviser Jack B. Tate to Mr. Thompson (EUR), "Loss of U.S. Navy Plane in Baltic Sea Area"; SECRET.

matter be allowed to rest....We should be in a position to avoid any possible misapprehension on the part of Congress or the public concerning the reasons why the United States is not pressing its claim against the Soviet Union."[34]

The decision to discontinue diplomatic pressure in this matter was made at the highest governmental level. In considering a possible reply to the Soviet note of April 21, President Truman, at a meeting with State Department officers, decided against requesting the matter to be taken to the World Court. He expressed the belief that it would be wiser to reiterate the U.S. position in another note to the Soviet government, but doubted whether any further diplomatic discussion after that would be profitable.[35]

Impact of Incident on U.S. Reconnaissance Operations

The Baltic incident had a profound impact on U.S. reconnaissance operations of the type with which the Navy Privateer plane had been concerned. At the behest of the State Department, reconnaissance operations of this kind were temporarily suspended in all geographical areas. They were resumed shortly thereafter in all areas except the important

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34 Ibid. This was followed by a letter from a high State Department official to the Office of the Secretary of Defense, suggesting that the Defense Department make known its views on the matter to members of Congress who were urging submission of the issue to an international forum; SECRET.

35 Department of State memorandum on meeting with President Truman, April 24, 1950; SECRET.

ORIGINAL

intelligence target area of the Baltic; there they were not resumed until January, 1952, largely because of political considerations.[36] In forcing, indirectly, a cancellation of reconnaissance flights of this character in the area for some twenty-one months, the Baltic incident had an important payoff from the Soviet standpoint.

The curtailment of such U.S. reconnaissance operations was probably noted by Soviet intelligence. At one time, USAF considered a plan for "simulating" such flights with regular B-29's or B-50's in order to avoid giving the Soviets evidence that operations had been curtailed.[37] The materials examined for the study, however, do not indicate that such a plan was ever put into effect.

The Soviet military challenge to U.S. perimeter reconnaissance operations, as exemplified in the Baltic incident, led the Defense Department to reconsider the basis for future missions of this type. J.C.S. directive No. 2120 of May 19, 1950, approved by the President, attempted to strengthen the military components of the U.S. capability in this field, a requirement imposed by the successful Soviet action in the April 8 encounter. The J.C.S. directive (TOP SECRET) provided,

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36 Memorandum for the record by Col. Fulcher, USAF State Department Liaison Officer, December 7, 1951; TOP SECRET. For an account of the first mission following resumption of activity in this area, see case study No. 129.

37 Memorandum for the record, April 18, 1950, by Brigadier General Hamilton, Chief, Policy Division, Plans and Operations, USAF; TOP SECRET.

among other things, the following:

(a) Reconnaissance flights of this type along the Baltic route were to be resumed, utilizing armed SAC B-50's or B-29's. On routes over the land mass of Allied occupation zones and the Berlin and Vienna air corridors, such flights were to use CINCAFE's unarmed C-47's and RB-17's.

(b) The armed planes engaged in such missions over the Baltic could fire back in self-defense.

(c) Planes engaged in such missions were to remain twenty miles from Soviet borders.

Inadequacies in U.S. Disclosure and Security Handling of Incident

The Baltic incident may be studied also as an example of inept handling of disclosure and security problems by the United States. Although U.S. Air Force and Navy officials in Frankfurt were reported in the press[38] to have been placed under "security restraint" by Washington, the dispatch added:

> Privately, it is taken for granted in Air Force circles that the plane in question /referred to in the Soviet note as a "B-29"/ was the missing

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38 Dispatch of April 11, published in The New York Times, April 12, 1950. The Times report was based in part on an interview with Stephen Zaklan, an electronics technician and a member of the regular crew of the ill-fated Navy plane, who missed the April 8 flight because of illness.

ORIGINAL

> Privateer, a craft completely equipped with reconnaissance radar and aerial photographic equipment....It is also pointed out here that the Baltic coast, with its reported extensive rocket launching bases, is an interesting locale for aerial observation.

The dispatch also quoted an observation by aerial navigators that, if the Navy plane had, at one time, been over Bremerhaven, as reported, it would take a navigational error of nearly 90 degrees to cause the craft accidentally to wander over the Baltic states. Accordingly, the Times dispatch concluded, the explanation for the presence of the Navy plane in the East Baltic was "thoroughly implausible." A dispatch from Washington reported:

> Observers noted that the crew had been composed predominantly of special technicians. It included three electronics specialists, two machinists mates and a communications technician. This fired speculation, wholly unconfirmed by the authorities, to the effect that the plane might have been on a submarine detection mission.[39]

Subsequent communist propaganda, and the second Soviet note of April 21, attempted to discredit the U.S. position by referring to the intelligence mission of the missing aircraft. (Interestingly, however, the Soviets themselves never spoke in terms of an electronics mission;[40] on the few occasions when they were more specific -- as in their note of April 18, 1950 -- they referred to it as a photographic mission.)

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39 The New York Times, April 12, 1950.

40 However, radio Moscow did pick up foreign sources which commented on the reconnaissance radar of the Navy aircraft. (FBIS, Survey of U.S.S.R. Radio Broadcasts, April 5-11, 1950; CONFIDENTIAL.)

Worldwide communist propaganda sought to discredit the United States also by quoting from a New Orleans Times-Picayune interview with the wife of the missing plane's co-pilot. The latter supposedly had written his wife, just before taking off on the ill-fated flight, that he was on a "secret mission"; communist propaganda contrasted this statement with the U.S. announcement that the Navy plane had been on a "routine flight." Communist sources then reported that the wife had retracted her original story after being visited by Naval Intelligence officers. Communist propaganda also quoted noncommunist Allied comments on the implausibility of the official U.S. account of the plane's whereabouts and mission.

122. SOVIET INTERCEPTION OF U.S. RECONNAISSANCE PLANE (B-29) OFF THE EAST SIBERIAN COAST[41] (July 18, 1950)

While on a reconnaissance mission on the night of July 18, 1950, a U.S. B-29 was intercepted by two Soviet fighters in the vicinity of the Permskoye airfield. The route followed by the B-29 covered an area from the 38th Parallel in Korea northward along the Siberian coast facing Japan and Sakhalin. (It has not been possible to identify more precisely the location of the Permskoye airfield, where the interception took place.)

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41 This case study is based on several cables in the USAF files dated July 19, 1950; . This incident is probably the one referred to as having taken place on July 15, in a USAF cable to CINCAFE of July 21, 1950, which gave information on these recent reconnaissance missions in the Far East; TOP SECRET

The crew of the B-29 was unable to determine whether the intercepting planes were conventional types or jets, but noted that they used searchlights or landing lights in taking off. Searchlights were also used by the Soviet interceptors to position while overtaking the B-29. When two of the Soviet fighters approached within a mile and a half of the B-29, they turned on their searchlights. At that point the B-29 executed a dive and a turn. The Soviet craft were under observation a total of seven minutes. There was no gunfire.

123. POSSIBLE SOVIET DETECTION OF U.S. RECONNAISSANCE AIRCRAFT IN EUROPEAN THEATER (August 30, 1950)

A report on a reconnaissance mission from the European theater mentioned cryptically that "one incident" had taken place during the flight. The route covered by the flight was indicated by code number only.[42] It was not possible, for purposes of this study, to identify the geographical area covered by the flight.

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[42] Cable from CINCAFE to USAF, reporting on mission of August 30, 1950; TOP SECRET. A penciled notation on the copy of the cable indicated that OIN had asked CINCAFE for clarification.

124. U.S. AIR ATTACK ON SOVIET AIRFIELD IN SIBERIA (October 8, 1950)

On October 8, 1950, two U.S. jet fighters attacked a Soviet airfield at the Dry River, on the eastern coast of Siberia, about sixty miles north of the Korean-Soviet border, near Vladivostok. The incident was disclosed by the Soviets, who publicized their diplomatic protest almost immediately.

On October 9, Gromyko attempted unsuccessfully to give the U.S. Minister-Counsellor in Moscow a protest on this incident. The latter refused to accept the note, however, on the grounds that, since the U.S. Air Force in the Far East was under the command of the United Nations, the note should be addressed to the United Nations or to General MacArthur, the U.N. Commander. A public announcement to this effect was made by the U.S. State Department on October 10. In the meantime, the Moscow radio and press publicized the Russian note, and the U.S. refusal to accept it, almost immediately after Gromyko's unsuccessful effort to deliver it to the U.S. Embassy in Moscow. But the Soviet government did not bring the issue before the United Nations.

The Russian charges were at first denied by official U.S. sources.[43] However, on October 19, the U.S. representative at the United Nations, Warren Austin, informed the U.N. Secretary

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[43] The New York Times, October 11, 1950.

General that an investigation of the facts by the commander-in-chief of the United Nations Command had shown that two U.S. aircraft had inadvertently made the attack in question. Disciplinary action was said to be underway, and, the communication continued, the United States was prepared to pay any damages that might be determined by a U.N. commission or through any other appropriate procedure. There was no Soviet response to the offer.

Significance

Soviet Air-Defense Policy

It is striking that, apparently, no defensive action was taken against this gross violation of Soviet territory.[44] Since the Vladivostok area is a most important and sensitive military area, the apparent failure of Soviet air defenses in this instance to detect, intercept, fire upon, or pursue the U.S. planes may not have been due to lack of capability, such as an inadequate radar warning system. While surprise may have been a factor, the possibility should not be discounted that, at least at that particular time, Soviet air defense in the

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[44] This seems to be a safe conclusion from the accounts examined. A memorandum of October 17, 1950 (TOP SECRET) for the Secretary of Defense from the Joint Chiefs of Staff, intended as a reply to an earlier State Department letter, summarized General MacArthur's official report on the incident. The memorandum does not refer explicitly to the question of Soviet military defense action, if any, against the attack. It is not clear, therefore, whether General MacArthur's report included more on this subject than was conveyed in the JCS memorandum.

area was under orders to maintain a passive attitude toward isolated U.S. air intrusions.[45]

A permissive air-defense policy of this type would most likely represent a top-level decision of the Politburo. The motive may have been to avoid any action that might lead to overt entanglement in the Korean war; passivity in the face of U.S. acts of "provocation" may have been deemed necessary in order to avoid being drawn into a Far East crisis.

Soviet Handling of the Incident

The Soviet government's diplomatic handling of the incident like that of the earlier incident involving a Russian plane in the Yellow Sea,[46] evinced a determination to keep the matter out of the United Nations.

The mildness of the Politburo's reaction to a military attack on a Soviet airfield eighteen miles southwest of Vladivostok is impressive. Not only was there no military counteraction or reprisal, but the Soviet protest contained no threat of counteraction. And, although the Soviet note itself was rebroadcast in twenty-seven transmissions -- not unusual

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45 The fact that the U.S. penetration was not made at low level, that the Soviet airfield was occupied by twenty fighter-type aircraft, and that three strafing runs were made (above memorandum; TOP SECRET) argues against the possibility of technical failure of Soviet air defenses to detect the attack and to take appropriate countermeasures.

46 See case study No. 40.

in such cases -- there were no commentaries, and there was no propaganda follow-up.[47]

The Soviet reaction to the incident must be examined in terms of the situational and policy context in which it took place. At the time of the incident, the North Korean army was being routed in Korea, and the question was what the Soviets and Chinese would do. Moscow was being reticent and was avoiding all discussion of the Korean crisis. Soviet spokesmen, including Stalin, were limiting their support of the North Koreans to expressions of sympathy and good wishes.[48] In fact, the Politburo's desire to avoid giving the west indicators of belligerent or threatening Soviet intentions was being explicitly implemented, at the very moment that the incident took place, by a propaganda campaign stressing the Soviet desire to peaceful collaboration with the United States and the rest of the capitalist world. Thus, on the same day that the Soviet press printed the Soviet protest note and news of the U.S. refusal to accept it, the press also carried quotations from Lenin and Stalin designed to demonstrate an unswerving desire for peaceful collaboration. It was possible, therefore, for the New York Times to report from Moscow a generally reassuring picture of the official Soviet reaction to the U.S. attack: "...no indication here that the new plane

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47 FBIS, Trends and Highlights of Moscow Broadcasts, October 12, 1950; CONFIDENTIAL.

48 Cf. the Department of State (OIR) monthly intelligence report, Soviet Affairs, October, 1950; SECRET.

incident would produce any alteration in the fundamental line that the Soviet press has taken."[49]

In brief, the Politburo apparently had decided not to permit the latest U.S."act of provocation"to deflect it from what is doubtlessly considered correct policy for handling the Korean crisis and the international opponents of the U.S.S.R.

Soviet disclosure and publicity policy in the present case is of special interest. As in the case of the Russian plane downed in the Yellow Sea only shortly before, the fact that U.S. Embassy officials in Moscow had refused to accept the Soviet diplomatic protest note was immediately publicized in domestic Soviet media.[50] The Politburo must have appreciated the fact that such news of a U.S. refusal to accept a Soviet note after an American encroachment on Soviet territory would tend to arouse anxiety in the Soviet public regarding a war possibility, and would contribute to the image of U.S. strength. The Politburo's decision to publicize the difficulty of diplomatic communications on this issue may have been motivated, therefore, by a desire to safeguard its own position in the event that a diplomatic or military crisis ensued.

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[49] The New York Times, October 11, 1950.

[50] The New York Times, October 10, 1950.

125. TURKISH PLANE FIRED UPON WHILE MAKING OVERFLIGHT OF SOVIET TERRITORY (August 3, 1951)

On August 3, 1951, a Turkish Air Force B-26 on a training mission in the vicinity of Lemakan overflew the Soviet border. It was fired upon by Soviet antiaircraft. An attempt to intercept the Turkish plane was made by Soviet Yak-3's or Yak-9's. No damage was inflicted on the Turkish aircraft.[51]

Insofar as can be established, neither Soviet nor Turkish sources publicized this incident. It does not seem likely that it was the same incident which formed the basis for the Soviet diplomatic protest of August 13.[52]

126. U.S. NAVY PATROL PLANES INTERCEPTED BY UNIDENTIFIED PLANES IN SHANTUNG PENINSULA AREA (September 28 and 29, 1951)

On September 28, and again on the following day, a U.S. Navy aircraft on a patrol mission in the Shantung Peninsula area was intercepted and tracked by unidentified aircraft, probably Chinese Communist.[53] Apparently the Navy planes were not fired upon, and no damage was inflicted on the American plane.

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51 USAF Air Intelligence Memorandum; TOP SECRET.

52 See case study No. 51.

53 USAF Air Intelligence Memorandum; TOP SECRET.

The U.S. government apparently made no diplomatic protest; nor was the incident publicly disclosed by either side. Nothing on the subject was found in the New York Times.

127. U.S. NAVY PATROL PLANE FIRED UPON OFF SHANTUNG PENINSULA (September 30, 1951)

On September 30, 1951, a Navy patrol plane received antiaircraft fire from two unidentified naval ships, thought to be Chinese Communist destroyers, in the area seventy-five miles south of the tip of the Shantung Peninsula. No damage was sustained.[54]

Apparently no diplomatic protest was made by the U.S. government, and neither side made a public disclosure of the incident. Nothing on the subject was found in the New York Times.

128. U.N. PATROL PLANE (U.S. NAVY) FIRED UPON IN VICINITY OF SHANTUNG PENINSULA (October 4, 1951)

On October 4, 1951, a U.S. Navy patrol plane serving under U.N. command was fired upon by a Chinese Communist naval vessel

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[54] USAF Air Intelligence Memorandum; TOP SECRET.

in the vicinity of the Shantung Peninsula. No damage was sustained.[55]

The U.S. government apparently made no diplomatic protest; and the incident does not seem to have been publicly disclosed by either side. Nothing on the subject was found in the New York Times.

129. U.S. NAVY RECONNAISSANCE AIRCRAFT FIRED UPON BY SOVIET MISSILES IN THE BALTIC (January 23-24, 1952)

On the night of January 23-24, 1952, a U.S. Navy plane, a P4M-1Q, made the first of three reconnaissance flights, shortly after such flights had been approved again for the Baltic area. (Principally for political reasons, reconnaissance operations of this type in the Baltic had been at a standstill since the shooting down of the Navy Privateer on April 8, 1950.)

The Navy plane reported several incidents during its flight on the night of January 23-24:

(1) Four known radars tracked it (probably more in another megacycle range); the Navy plane was continuously tracked during the early part of its flight.

(2) At one stage in the flight, lighted surface vessels were sighted; the Navy plane thereupon altered its course.

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55 USAF Air Intelligence Memorandum; TOP SECRET.

(3) The Navy plane took evasive action on its return trip, after receiving a signal. (The flight, out of Wiesbaden, passed by Lübeck, south of Bornholm, between Gotland and Ventspils, past Libau, northward a bit farther, and then back.)

(4) Several (ground-to-air?) missiles were fired at the Navy plane on its return trip; some came very close to hitting it, but there was no damage to craft or crew.

The Navy plane itself did not fire in the course of the trip.

Apprised of the experiences of the Navy plane, the D/C, DCS/C, USAF, ordered that the remaining two reconnaissance missions which had been authorized in this area be conducted by fully armed RB-50G's, and that all precautions be taken. The next flight in the series took place on February 29, 1952. A solid overcast prevailed over the Baltic, and no unusual occurrences were reported. The last of the three authorized missions was not staged, apparently primarily for technical reasons.[56]

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[56] The above account summarizes a series of cables exchanged between CINCAFE and USAF shortly after the incident; TOP SECRET. A more recent summary of air incidents states that the U.S. Navy aircraft in question had sustained four possible attacks by unidentified aircraft. (USAF Air Intelligence Memorandum; TOP SECRET.)

130. SOVIET GROUND-TO-AIR ROCKET FIRE ON U.S. RECONNAISSANCE PLANE (RB-50) OFF DAIREN (March 29, 1952)

On March 29, 1952, a U.S. RB-50 plane, while engaged in a reconnaissance mission, encountered four surface-to-air rockets launched from five miles off Dairen.[57] No further details were available.

131. HOSTILE INTERCEPTION OF, AND GUIDED-MISSILE ATTACK ON, U.S. NAVY RECONNAISSANCE PLANE IN BLACK SEA AREA[58] (April 18, 1952)

While on a reconnaissance mission in the Black Sea area on the night of April 18, 1952, a Navy plane encountered more than one unknown aircraft, which made attacking passes at least ten times. The Navy plane countered by taking evasive action. The account of the mission does not make clear whether the attacking craft fired upon the Navy plane.

The crew of the Navy plane also reported that it was fired upon on one occasion by what seemed to be a guided missile with a heavy explosive charge.

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57 FEAF cable to USAF, April 4, 1952; TOP SECRET.

58 Summary of several Navy cables sent shortly after the incident; TOP SECRET.

132. U.S. NAVY PATROL PLANE ATTACKED BY MIG'S OFF PORT ARTHUR (May 11, 1952)

On May 11, 1952, a U.S. Navy PBM patrol plane was attacked by two MiG's over the Korea Bay off Port Arthur, approximately seventy-five miles south-southwest of Takushan airfield. The Navy plane sustained minor damage but no casualties.[59]

Apparently, the U.S. government did not make a diplomatic protest of the incident; neither is there any indication of a public disclosure of the incident by either side. Nothing on the suoject was found in the New York Times.

133. BRITISH RECONNAISSANCE AIRCRAFT FIRED UPON NEAR HONG KONG (May 18, 1952)

On May 18, 1952, a British reconnaissance aircraft was fired upon by two Chinese Communist gunboats near Lingting Island, in the vicinity of Hong Kong. No damage was sustained by the British craft.[60]

Apparently, the British government did not protest the incident diplomatically, nor does either side seem to have disclosed the incident publicly. Nothing about it was found in the New York Times; British sources were not consulted.

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59 USAF Air Intelligence Memorandum; TOP SECRET.

60 USAF Air Intelligence Memorandum; TOP SECRET.

134. LOSS OF U.S. RECONNAISSANCE PLANE (RB-29) IN SEA OF JAPAN DUE TO UNKNOWN CAUSES (June 13, 1952)

A U.S. RB-29 was lost in the Sea of Japan on June 13, 1952. The reasons for its loss are not known, but it is suspected that Soviet aircraft shot it down.[61]

The loss of the plane was publicly announced by FEAF, on June 15, in a statement which did not implicate the Soviets in any way.[62] The FEAF announcement reported that wreckage, tentatively identified as that of a missing B-29 with twelve persons aboard, had been sighted in the Sea of Japan. The plane, attached to the 91st Strategic Reconnaissance Squadron, was said to have been on a "routine survey mission" on June 13, when it was reported missing. The cause of the accident, according to the Air Force announcement was undetermined, and no sign of survivors had yet been found. The press also reported that, prior to the discovery of the wreckage, it had been feared that the B-29 had crashed or landed in Russian-held territory off northern Japan.

There is no indication that the above FEAF announcement drew any comment, public or diplomatic, from Soviet sources.

On June 18, 1952, a diplomatic inquiry was addressed by U.S. Ambassador Kirk to Soviet Foreign Minister Vishinsky, which

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61 Letter of November 5, 1952, from Hq. FEAF to USAF (TOP SECRET); however, the letter did not state the reasons for suspecting that the RB-29 was a victim of Soviet action.

62 The New York Times, June 15, 1952.

mentioned the loss of the U.S. B-29 and observed that wreckage and life rafts suggested the possibility of survivors, who may have been picked up by Soviet ships. The inquiry requested the Soviet government to make an investigation and inform the U.S. government of the results.[63] No evidence of a Soviet reply to the U.S. inquiry was found in the materials examined for this study; nor did the USAF officers consulted in preparing the study know of any such reply.

The possibility that survivors were being held by the Russians was also mentioned, apparently, in inquiries addressed to USAF by dependents, who referred to an unspecified Russian broadcast in this connection. U.S. authorities, however, know of no such broadcast.

Even if it were a fact that survivors were picked up by the Soviets, this would not in itself be proof that the Soviets were responsible for the loss of the RB-29.

Significance

The fact that the Soviets did not protest the alleged violation of their territory by the RB-29 (which would at the same time have implied that they had shot it down) cannot be taken as a conclusive indicator that they were not responsible for its loss. For the Soviets do not, as a rule, take the

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63 The inquiry apparently was not publicly disclosed by either the U.S. or the U.S.S.R. A copy of it has been examined in the State Department's files.

initiative in disclosing such incidents diplomatically or publicly. Soviet protest notes in such cases usually follow prior disclosure of the incident by U.S. or Western sources. In the present case, the public disclosure by the United States of the loss of the RB-29 did not in any way implicate the U.S.S.R. Therefore, the Soviets, if they were indeed responsible, were under no pressure to issue a note protesting the violation of their air space and justifying their hostile military counteraction.

135. U.S. WEATHER RECONNAISSANCE PLANE ATTACKED BY MIG OFF DAIREN (July 16, 1952)

On July 16, 1952, a U.S. RB-26 on a weather reconnaissance mission over the Korea Bay was attacked by a MiG-15 when forty-five miles southeast of Dairen. No damage was sustained by the U.S. plane. The nationality of the MiG was not identified in the account consulted.[64]

The U.S. government apparently did not protest the attack, and neither side seems to have made a public disclosure of the incident. Nothing on the subject was found in the New York Times.

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64 USAF Air Intelligence Memorandum; TOP SECRET.

136. U.S. NAVY PLANE ATTACKED BY MIG'S EAST OF PORT ARTHUR (July 31, 1952)

On July 31, 1952, a U.S. Navy PBM-5 aircraft was attacked by two MiG's when it was sixty miles east of Port Arthur. According to a classified USAF account, the U.S. plane suffered substantial damage and was forced to land at Paengyong-do. Two crew members were killed and two injured.[65]

The incident was described in substantially the same terms in an official U.S. Navy announcement of August 4, 1952. The public version of the incident described the MiG's as Chinese Communist and pointed out the official U.S. Navy position, namely, that the PBM-5 was on a legal target at the time, since it was engaged in direct support of Korean combat. The latter statement evidently was intended to distinguish the present, Chinese Communist, attack from earlier international air incidents which had resulted from Soviet action against U.S. planes. (The Navy statement referred to early reports on the present incident, originating in Japan, which had suggested a parallel with earlier incidents involving the Soviets.) The Navy announcement also gave the precise position of the PBM-5 when it was attacked, placing it at approximately 100 miles from the Shantung Peninsula, within easy range of enemy jets.[66]

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65 USAF Air Intelligence Memorandum; TOP SECRET.

66 The New York Times, August 5, 1952.

There is no evidence of any diplomatic protest or comment on the incident (or on the U.S. Navy announcement) from either the Chinese Communists or the Soviets.

137. BRITISH RECONNAISSANCE PLANE FIRED UPON OFF HONG KONG (August 4, 1952)

On August 4, 1952, a British reconnaissance plane was fired on by two Chinese Communist gunboats off the coast of Hong Kong. No damage was sustained by the plane.[67]

There is no indication that either side gave publicity to the incident.

138. THE SHOOTING DOWN OF A U.S. RB-29 AND OTHER SOVIET OVERFLIGHTS OF NORTHERN JAPAN (August, 1952, to August, 1953)

The present case study brings together a number of air violations and incidents which took place over northern Japan between August, 1952, and August, 1953. These air encounters are dealt with under one heading because they reveal a deliberate pattern in Soviet overflights. The significance of the shooting down of a U.S. RB-29 on October 7, 1952, is weighed here within this larger context.

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67 USAF Air Intelligence Memorandum; TOP SECRET.

A. Soviet Overflights of Hokkaido, Japan (August to November 1952)[68]

Incidence of Overflights

In August, 1952, and perhaps somewhat earlier, Soviet planes based in the Kuriles began to make overflights of the northern Japanese island of Hokkaido. The frequency of the overflights soon reached a level which indicated deliberate violation of Japanese air space. Following is a summary account of available information on those overflights:

On August 7, 1952, two unidentified aircraft followed an RB-29, which was engaged in a night shipping-surveillance mission, inland over the northwest tip of Hokkaido for ten miles.[69]

On September 20, 1952, U.S. radar picked up two unidentified tracks going in and out of the Japanese three-mile territorial-waters limit near Nemuro. A U.S. F-84 took off quickly to investigate, but could make no visual sightings owing to clouds.[70]

A summary report of September 24, 1952, for the ten preceding days listed twelve overflights of northern Japan by "unidentified aircraft." Two of these flights were intercepted by U.S. fighters, but no contact was established as the Soviet planes turned away. The depth of penetration

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68 For subsequent Soviet overflights of Hokkaido, see below, pp. 83-87.

69 FEAF to USAF, AX 1590C CG, October 8, 1952; SECRET.

70 Ibid.

in these cases was from one to fifteen miles.[71]

In a public statement on October 13, after the RB-29 incident of October 7, Brigadier General Delmar T. Spivey, Commander of the U.S. Air Defense Force for Japan, declared that "by purpose or accident, Russian planes from time to time fly over Japanese territorial waters.... Sometimes our planes take off on alerts and sometimes we just sit tight to see what will happen."

An overall FEAF summary of "confirmed" and "suspected" Soviet overflights of northern Japan in the three-month period, September 1 to November 29, resulted in the following tabulation:[72]

confirmed violations - 34

suspected violations - 38

Of the total "confirmed," only two of the intruding planes had been visually identified by U.S. fighters as Soviet aircraft. Both these visual sightings took place on November 4, when two Soviet La-11's were intercepted by two F-84's.

Possible Soviet Motives

It is difficult to pinpoint the Soviet motive or motives behind the intensified overflights of Hokkaido. Several

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71 Cable from Far East Command, September 24, 1952; SECRET.

72 CG, FEAF, Tokyo, to USAF, No. A 3124 C D/O, November 29, 1952; SECRET. (Operational definitions of "confirmed" and "suspected" violations were provided in this cable but are not reproduced here.)

explanations are here suggested, and more than one of these may have been present:[73]

(a) Reconnaissance (testing U.S. air defenses and radar; effort to discover U.S. capabilities and intentions in the defense of Japanese territory).

(b) Probing maneuver (effort to take over control of air over Hokkaido).

(c) Effort to put political pressure on the Japanese.

(d) Effort to discredit the United States in Japanese eyes as a weak and unreliable ally, either by shooting down U.S. planes or by forcing the United States to show unwillingness or inability to prevent Soviet overflights.

(e) Demonstration of the U.S.S.R.'s strength and readiness to meet any challenge to its position in this part of the world.

(f) Effort to create a Soviet threat to the rear of U.S. troops in Korea, and to warn the United States of the possible consequences of enlarging the war against China.

As is generally the case with Soviet efforts to "advance," no clear limits may have been assigned to the objectives of Soviet pressure tactics in this case. Soviet leaders may have stood ready to exploit in one way or another whatever results

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73 Some of these possibilities are suggested in the Department of State (OIR) publication, Soviet Affairs, November, 1952, p. 6; SECRET.

their general pressure on Hokkaido achieved. It is important to note that Soviet overflights of Hokkaido took place in the context of an impressive build-up of Soviet military capability in this part of the Far East, and that these overflights were but one form of pressure on Hokkaido and the Japanese population in the area.

Similarly, the motive for Soviet pressure on Japan must be seen in the context of the long-range Soviet objective of removing Japan from the U.S. orbit. The threat to Japan implicit in overflights and armed clashes with U.S. forces stationed there may have been designed to exploit Japanese fears of involvement in the Koreanwar or in a possible enlargement of the war. Finally, Soviet pressure on Japan took place in the absence of formal diplomatic relations between the two powers, and must have served, therefore, to remind the Japanese of the desirability of a peace treaty with the Soviets.

B. The Shooting Down of the U.S. RB-29 (October 7, 1952)

On October 7, 1952, an unarmed RB-29 (referred to in public accounts as a "B-29") disappeared while on a "routine photo mapping mission"[74] off eastern Hokkaido, the northernmost island of Japan.

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[74] B-29's converted for reconnaissance operations are referred to by USAF as "RB-29's." The mission of the RB-29 in question indicated here may be considered authentic since

The fullest account of the facts of the incident was presented in the U.S. note of September 25, 1954,[75] in which the U.S. government preferred a formal diplomatic claim against the Soviet government for the amount of $1,620,295.01. The note summarized the results of a thorough investigation of the circumstances of the incident, and presented a number of important statements of fact which had not previously been disclosed:

(1) On the morning of October 7, 1952, an unarmed U.S. Air Force B-29 airplane was dispatched on a "duly authorized flight mission over the Island of Hokkaido, Japan." Neither the mission nor the activities of the B-29 were "in any way hostile to the Soviet Government or any other government, or directed against Soviet installations or personnel of the Soviet Government or any other government in any place."

(2) At approximately 2:00 p.m. local time, "Soviet Government authorities...deliberately dispatched

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74 (Cont'd)

this information was contained in a TOP SECRET letter from FEAF to USAF, dated November 5, 1952. The cover story was that the missing plane had been on a weather survey. Some newspaper accounts, apparently based on authoritative information, referred to a "routine training flight." The U.S. Department of State protest note to the U.S.S.R. of October 17 stated merely that the B-29 had been on a "routine flight" and "was not equipped for combat operations of any kind." See also the U.S. note of September 25, 1954, cited below, which described the mission of the B-29 as not in any way hostile to the U.S.S.R.

75 Department of State Bulletin, October 18, 1954.

two fighter aircraft to intercept the B-29 over Japanese territory." The Soviet fighters assumed a position in the air space of Hokkaido approximately thirty-two miles west of Yuri Island and six miles north of Nemuro Peninsula, "substantially directly above the B-29's position, flying and continuing to fly at a height at which the view of the B-29 could not then or thereafter observe the presence of the Soviet aircraft but at which the B-29 could be and was continuously observed by the pilots of the Soviet fighter aircraft and undoubtedly by the Soviet authorities controlling the pilots. Then the Soviet fighter aircraft, continuing to act under the direction and control of the Soviet authorities, proceeded to pace the flight of the B-29 from 2:15 p.m. local time to 2:31 p.m. local time...."

(3) In order to fly westward and farther into the mainland of Hokkaido, the B-29 made a turn at the end of the Nemuro Peninsula, of Hokkaido, in the course of which it "came over the water area adjacent to the tip of the Nemuro Peninsula close to the Nosappu Lighthouse there when, undoubtedly upon instructions from the Soviet controlling authorities, the pacing Soviet fighter aircraft dived from their high altitude...and without any warning whatsoever opened fire on the B-29, with several deliberate and successive bursts. Simultaneously, likewise upon the

orders of the competent Soviet authorities, in concert with the pilots in the fighter aircraft, Soviet personnel then stationed on the Island of Yuri east of the Nemuro Peninsula, opened fire upon the B-29 from the ground."

(4) The B-29 was struck by the fire of the Soviet fighters and by ground fire. It was disabled and plunged into the sea, "hitting the water at a point between Yuri Island and Akiyuri Island, southwest of Harukarimoshiri Island, all in territory rightfully belonging to Japan."

(5) Upon being attacked, the crew of the B-29 sent out an extreme-distress message[76] and attempted to abandon the plane in the air. "The United States Government has concluded, and charges, that some or all of the crew of the B-29 successfully parachuted to the sea at approximately the position where the aircraft hit the water." (Details were cited indicating that a Soviet patrol boat was sent from Suisho Island to the site of the crash for the purpose of picking up survivors and objects from the aircraft.) "The United States Government concludes, and

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76 This was referred to in public accounts at the time. A FEAF spokesman stated at a press conference that "The tracks of the unidentified aircraft and the B-29 were followed until they merged on the radarscope about eight miles northwest of Nemuro, which point is in Japanese territory about fifteen miles from the international border. The merged radar tracks, still over Japanese territory, continued southeast for a few moments and then disappeared from the radarscope. Shortly thereafter a singled unidentified 'May Day' call /voice SOS/ was heard, presumably from the Superfort. Then there was silence." (The New York Times, October 9, 1952.) A similar account was contained in a cable from FEAF to USAF (AX 1590C CG), October 8, 1952; SECRET.

charges, that the Soviet Government's patrol boat did pick up items of interest to the Soviet Government as well as survivors still alive and bodies of other crew members, if dead."

Soviet Motives

The manner in which Soviet fighter aircraft deliberately entered the air space over Hokkaido in order to stalk their prey and then pounced upon the RB-29 when it ventured over the adjacent waters in making a turn, suggests that this was more than the routine implementation of standing Soviet air-defense instructions. Whether or not, in turning, the RB-29 made what the Soviets chose to regard as a violation of their air space, it is difficult to avoid the conclusion that the Soviets had deliberately set a trap for this particular plane.

It is possible that the shooting down of the RB-29 was in some way connected with the pattern of deliberate Soviet overflights of Hokkaido, which has already been noted. The action against the U.S. plane may have been intended to further some of the objectives which, we have speculated, those overflights were serving. It is even possible that the Soviets had been trying for some time to shoot down a U.S. plane in the area. It must be recalled that, according to available records, none of the known Soviet air violations of Hokkaido preceding the RB-29 incident had involved visual contact or

interception by U.S. planes.[77] In several cases, the intruding Soviet planes turned away when U.S. fighters were sent up to intercept them.[78] If those Soviet planes were out to create an incident, their turning away might be explained on the ground that they were looking for U.S. planes that would be easy to shoot down, and that they did not wish to tangle with U.S. jet fighters.

Another possibility is that the Soviets were specifically interested in shooting down a U.S. reconnaissance plane in order to discourage this type of intelligence activity around the Soviet perimeter in the area. (The fact that B-29's were being used for several types of reconnaissance must be assumed to have been known to the Soviets.) On August 7, 1952, two unidentified aircraft (type of plane not indicated) had followed an RB-29, which was engaged in a night shipping-surveillance mission, inland over the northwest tip of Hokkaido for ten miles.[79] And, according to FEAF, U.S. reconnaissance flights had been repeatedly subjected to harassment by communist interceptors.[80]

Less likely than either of the above explanations is the possibility that the RB-29 incident had no connection whatsoever

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77 CG, FEAF, Tokyo, to USAF, No. A 3124 C D/O, November 29, 1952; SECRET.

78 FEAF cable, September 24, 1952; SECRET.

79 Cable from FEAF to USAF, AX 1590C CG; October 8, 1952; SECRET.

80 Letter from Headquarters FEAF to USAF, November 5, 1952, requesting authority to credit certain reconnaissance flights peripheral to Communist China and the U.S.S.R. as combat missions; TOP SECRET.

with the Soviet overflights of Hokkaido, but was merely an implementation of standing Soviet air-defense instructions in this area. (By this interpretation, the action against the RB-29 would have been motivated not by any political concerns, but solely by technical air-defense considerations. And the occurrence and timing of the Soviet action would have to be regarded as the purely fortuitous result of a violation of Soviet air space by a U.S. plane.)

While such an exclusively technical interpretation of Soviet action in this case seems dubious, we feel that the technical motive did enter into Soviet calculations. Technical and political motives were probably combined in the sense that a demonstration of Soviet air-defense capability and intentions in the particular area and at that particular time was regarded by the Soviets as a means of furthering their broader political strategy.

It must not be overlooked that, in justifying their action against the RB-29 in terms of the diplomatic stereotype associated with their air-defense policy, the Soviets were serving notice that the severe air-defense policy manifested elsewhere in the Soviet orbit was now in effect over the Soviet-occupied territory of the Habomai Islands, whose rightful ownership remains a matter of diplomatic dispute. Thus, another intention behind the shooting down of the RB-29, allegedly over one of the Habomai group of islands, may have

been to emphasize and reinforce the Soviet claim to those islands.[81] In their note of October 12, 1952, the Soviets used a by-now familiar stereotype to justify their military action: after "violating" Soviet territory, the note said, the B-29 was asked to land at the nearest Soviet airfield; when, instead, the B-29 opened fire, the Soviet fighters returned fire, and the B-29 "departed in the direction of the sea." Since the same stereotype had previously been used to justify the downing of Western planes that allegedly had violated Soviet territory proper, its use in this instance probably was intended to convey that Yuri Island (in the Habomai group), too, was regarded as Soviet territory and therefore subject to the same air-defense policy.

The Soviets know very well that U.S. and Japanese authorities have never recognized that the Habomais, which were occupied by the Soviets following World War II, are part of the Kuriles awarded to the U.S.S.R. at Yalta. A reservation on the status of these islands was publicly stated by the United States at the Japanese peace conference at San Francisco. The question of rightful sovereignty over the Habomai group (and the lesser Kuriles -- or Shikotan -- also occupied by the Soviets) is a major political issue in Japan. The Japanese government has taken the position that no peace treaty with

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81 This possibility was also suggested by Hanson Baldwin (The New York Times, October 19, 1952).

the U.S.S.R. is possible until the status of the Habomai and Shikotan is clarified.[82]

In effect, and possibly by intention, therefore, the shooting down of the RB-29, allegedly over one of the Habomai Islands, demonstrates Soviet determination and capability to maintain possession of the disputed islands.

Exchange of Diplomatic Notes[83]

It may be noted that the incident was made public by the United States almost immediately. Soviet disclosure of the incident, however, came only five days later, in the October 12 note protesting the "violation" of Soviet territory and reporting the allegedly defensive action by Soviet fighters. The facts of the incident were argued to no avail in the subsequent exchange of notes, and the Soviet government rejected the U.S. demand for indemnities.

In its note of November 24, the Soviet government listed its standing air-defense instructions under which the Soviet

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82 The background of this dispute was given in a Department of State internal memorandum from Mr. Young (NA) to Mr. Barbour (EE), October 13, 1952 (SECRET), which referred to another memorandum on the legal status and economic importance of these islands by Conrad Snow (L/P) to Mr. Hamilton (FE), November 24, 1949.

83 For the initial Soviet note of October 12, 1952, and the U.S. reply of October 17, 1952, see the Department of State Bulletin, October 27, 1952. For the Soviet note of November 24, 1952, and the U.S. note of December 16, 1952, see ibid., January 5, 1953. For the U.S. note of September 25, 1954, see ibid., October 18, 1954.

fighters had acted in downing the U.S. B-29. As in the June, 1952, dispute with the Swedish government, an effort was made to portray Soviet air-defense policy as similar to that of other countries.

To the U.S. government's query whether Soviet forces had picked up any survivors of the B-29, the Soviet note of November 24 replied in the negative.

The U.S. note of October 17 had been couched in much stranger terms than the language used in protesting earlier air incidents resulting from Soviet action.[84] The relevant passage in the note read as follows: "The responsibility must be borne by the Soviet Government, however, and the United States Government would urge the Soviet Government seriously to consider the grave consequences which can flow from its reckless practice, if persisted in, of attacking without provocation the aircraft of other states."

The fact that the Soviet note of October 12 alleged that the B-29 had violated the air space over Yuri Island forced the United States to take a public position on the status of the Habomai group, of which Yuri is part.[85] The U.S. note of October 17 held that Yuri was not Soviet territory; evidently, this was the first time that the United States had publicly and officially espoused the Japanese position on this issue.[86]

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84 This was pointed out in U.S. Embassy, Moscow, to Secretary of State, No. 688, October 17, 1952; CONFIDENTIAL.

85 Department of State internal memorandum from Mr. Young (NA) to Mr. Barbour (EE), October 13, 1952; SECRET.

86 This was noted in U.S. Embassy, Tokyo, to Secretary of State, No. 1243; CONFIDENTIAL. This dispatch also noted

The respective positions of the two governments on the status of Yuri were reiterated in the Soviet note of November 24 and the U.S. notes of December 16, 1952, and September 25, 1954. In accepting the U.S. note of October 17, Soviet Foreign Office representative Pushkin took immediate issue with the U.S. statement on Yuri,[87] and, in its reply of November 24, the Soviet Foreign Office stated that the U.S. contention in this respect was "in crude contradiction with provisions of the Yalta Agreement regarding the Kurile Islands which was signed by the Government of the United States." The U.S. note of September 25, 1954, contained a detailed interpretation of the Yalta Agreement in support of the view that sovereignty over the Habomai Islands and Shikotan had not been transferred to the Soviet government.

In the course of the diplomatic dispute, and especially in its note of September 25, 1954, the U.S. government challenged the Soviet action against the RB-29 as having violated international law in several respects. Following are the two paragraphs in that note which bear directly on the question of the proper treatment of air intruders:

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86 (Cont'd)

that the implication of the U.S. diplomatic position was that the U.S. government was willing to assume the consequences of its position, i.e., U.S. protective responsibility for Yuri.

87 U.S. Embassy, Moscow, to Secretary of State, No. 688, October 17, 1952; CONFIDENTIAL.

> Assuming, contrary to fact, that the Soviet authorities had any legal justification for seeking to bring the B-29 down to land, these authorities willfully violated all applicable rules of international law, first, in that they failed to give to the B-29 and its crew any prior warning or any prior direction or request to land; secondly, in that they did not lead the B-29 or its crew to an appropriate landing field or point out such a landing field to them; thirdly, in that they did not in the circumstances described give the B-29 or its crew prior warning of intention to fire.
>
> It was unlawful, regardless of prior warning or direction to land, for the Soviet authorities either in the air or on the ground to fire on the B-29 under the circumstances mentioned and in the area above mentioned.

C. U.S. Military Reaction: Stronger Air-Defense Policy for Japan

Background and Development of the New Policy

Ten days after the U.S. note of October 17, which had warned the Soviets of "grave consequences," USAF announced that fighter escorts would, at times, be provided for B-29's and other aircraft that approached "sensitive" areas and thus risked attack by Soviet fighter planes. When a U.S. plane in such an area was armed, the USAF spokesman indicated, its commander would return fire at his own discretion. According to a New York Times account, the Air Force would not specifically state whether new instructions had been issued, but said that the assignment of fighter aircraft for protection of larger planes

depended on "day-to-day tactical considerations."[88]

The first opportunity to demonstrate the new "get-tough" policy toward Soviet overflights came on November 4, 1952, when two U.S. F-84's, while flying an escort for a B-26 surveillance mission, intercepted a Soviet La-11. The F-84's broke contact because of fuel shortage; two additional F-84's took off quickly but failed to make contact.[89]

Further details of the encounter, somewhat at variance with the preceding account, appeared in press reports of the incident.[90] The official FEAF announcement cited by the press evidently did not mention that the F-84's had been flying an escort for a B-26 surveillance mission, but stated only that they were on "routine patrol" when they sighted the La-11 with Soviet markings on it. In excellent visibility, the F-84's closed with the La-11 and flew a parallel course until the Russian plane neared the frontier. According to the official FEAF announcement, the F-84's "then broke contact and returned to base."[91] Thus, the public account apparently did not

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88 The New York Times, October 28, 1952.

89 FEAF to CS, AF, Washington, D.C., AX 2371C Cp-OP2, November 4, 1952; SECRET. It will be noted that, according to another classified report, two La-11's were involved in the interception of November 4. (CG, FEAF, Tokyo, to USAF, No. A 3124 C D/O; November 29, 1952; SECRET.)

90 The New York Times, November 5, 1952.

91 From this account it might be inferred that the U.S. planes deliberately did not pursue the La-11 beyond the international boundary because their instructions did not permit it. This incident has relevance, therefore, for a study of the principle of "hot pursuit."

mention that the F-84's broke contact because of fuel shortage, and that other F-84's unsuccessfully attempted to intercept the La-11. According to the official statement, pilots of the F-84's reported that they had been in contact with the Soviet craft for about five minutes, and that no shots had been fired by either side.

The same press dispatch quoted a Japanese police report that residents in the area had heard three machine-gun bursts for about ten minutes at about the time the interception took place. This report, however, was not confirmed by FEAF.

Had it not been for the shooting down of the RB-29 on October 7, U.S. military counteraction to Soviet air activity over Hokkaido might not have gone beyond the point indicated in the USAF announcement of October 17 and the interception of November 4. But the deliberate, repeated, and frequent character of Soviet overflights added to the concern felt by General Clark's Far East headquarters. On October 25, 1952, General Clark informed the Department of Defense of his concern and his intended course of action, which included authorization of engagements with unfriendly Soviet aircraft over Japanese territory.[92]

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92 General Clark's CX 57735 of October 25, 1952, passed on by the Department of Defense to the Department of State, and referred to in Department of State (Bruce) to U.S. Embassy, Tokyo, No. 1158, November 4, 1952; TOP SECRET.

Shortly thereafter, the Department of Defense granted General Clark authority to adopt a new policy regarding military countermeasures against Soviet overflights.[93] Accordingly, United States aircraft were authorized thenceforth to intercept, engage, and destroy combat or reconnaissance aircraft in Korea, over the Japanese home islands and Okinawa, and over territorial waters three miles seaward thereof, if such aircraft committed hostile acts, were manifestly hostile in intent, or bore military insignia of the U.S.S.R. or Satellites, and if they did not immediately obey signals to land, except in cases where the aircraft had been properly cleared or were obviously in distress. Unarmed transport aircraft were to be forced down, if possible, but not destroyed.[94]

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93 Cable JCS 923816 to CINCFE; SECRET.

94 Ibid., as paraphrased in Department of State (Bruce) to U.S. Embassy, Tokyo, No. 496, November 17, 1952; TOP SECRET.

A FEAF operational order to CG JAP AIR DEFENSE (AX 3644c D/O; December 17, 1952; SECRET), based on the above JCS 923816, specified (1) that a burst of gun fire across the nose of the hostile aircraft would be used by U.S. fighters as a signal to the hostile craft to land; and (2) that, where the water distance between Japanese and Soviet territory was less than six miles, the territorial-waters limit would be considered to be one-half the water distance.

Whether U.S. planes in an engagement with an air intruder were permitted to pursue it beyond the three-mile territorial-waters limit was not explicitly discussed in the paraphrase of JCS 923816 or in the subsequent FEAF operational order. The implication, however, was that "hot pursuit" was not authorized. Secretary of Defense Robert A. Lovett was specifically asked at a news conference about the possibility of pursuing Russian planes across the border if they intruded over Japan. He replied that his references

In order to challenge Soviet air intrusions over Hokkaido effectively, U.S. air-defense capability in northern Japan had to be improved in several respects. From their stations in the southern part of Hokkaido, U.S. defense fighter planes had not been able to take off quickly enough to intercept Soviet planes over northern Hokkaido before they returned across the international boundary. An abandoned Japanese airstrip was therefore reactivated near Nemuro in northern Hokkaido. Also, the unavailability of the F-86 Sabrejet fighter had been an obstacle to effective defense against Soviet overflights, and this drawback, too, was remedied.[95] Furthermore, all-weather jets (F-94's) were added to the U.S. air defenses. Toward the end of December, FEAF was considered adequately prepared to deal with Soviet overflights, which had not been the case in November.[96]

Political Considerations Affecting the Decision

The decision to adopt a stronger air-defense policy against Soviet overflights involved a series of unusual political

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94 (Cont'd)

to the new air-defense policy in the Far East were to Japanese territory, and that this did not necessarily involve the principle of "hot pursuit." (The New York Times, January 14, 1953.)

95 Tokyo (Murphy) to Secretary of State, No. 2078, December 30, 1952; TOP SECRET.

96 U.S. Embassy, Tokyo (Murphy), to Secretary of State, No. 2007; TOP SECRET.

considerations. Japanese attitudes had to be taken into account in weighing the advisability of such a military step and in planning the most advantageous implementation of the policy. An analysis of that particular political problem may well prove of general interest, in view of the possibility of similar air-defense problems in the future in places where U.S. air forces are located on Allied territory.

At an early stage in the consideration of stronger air-defense measures against Soviet overflights of Hokkaido, the Department of State noted that Japanese attitudes were relevant to such a decision. Specifically, the Department was interested in two questions:[97]

(a) The political desirability of authorizing engagements with Soviet aircraft over Japanese territory. This required estimates of Japanese reactions to previous overflights and of their probable reactions to future overflights if the U.S. made no determined effort to prevent them;

(b) The most effective way of maximizing favorable, and minimizing adverse, public reactions in Japan to the stronger air-defense policy contemplated. Specifically, this required a consideration of diplomatic steps which the

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97 As indicated in Department of State (Bruce) to U.S. Embassy, Tokyo, No. 1158, November 4, 1952; TOP SECRET.

Japanese and U.S. governments might take in conjunction with each other to oppose future violations of Japanese territory. A related question was the political desirability of citing the U.S.-Japanese Security Treaty as a basis for new and stronger air-defense measures against Soviet violations.

With regard to the first question (the political desirability of stronger air-defense measures), the opinion of the U.S. Embassy in Tokyo appears to have been influential in supporting the decision. Ambassador Murphy pointed out that information about Soviet overflights had been very closely guarded, and that, therefore, the Japanese public was not aware of the number of violations. He expressed concern lest a picture of U.S. weakness be conveyed by recent press stories reporting U.S. failure to take strong action against Soviet overflights in connection with the loss of the B-29. He feared that Japanese opinion leaders might be led to question the firmness of U.S. intentions to defend Japan under the Security Treaty. (The picture of the United States as a weak and unreliable power was one of the chief communist propaganda objectives in this area.) Ambassador Murphy reported that only a small group, mostly from leftist circles, regarded the very presence of U.S. forces in Japan as provocative. The bulk of Japanese opinion, he felt, would welcome an indication of firm

action on the part of the United States. The shooting down of a Soviet plane caught in an overflight would be regarded favorably, and would stimulate Japanese support of the rearmament program. (Murphy indicated that the Japanese foreign minister had agreed with this estimate in an informal discussion of the problem.)[98]

Since the ratification of the Japanese Peace Treaty, U.S. forces no longer occupied Japan, but were stationed there only as "security forces" by special agreement with the Japanese government. The unusual status of U.S. forces in Japan, and the need to defer to Japanese sensitivities regarding their recently restored sovereignty, made it necessary to lay the diplomatic groundwork for the new air-defense measures with the greatest care. A second task faced by U.S. political leaders, therefore, was to work out the most effective diplomatic and legal basis for the new policy.

The State Department took issue with General Clark's opinion[99] that the United States, in the Security Treaty, had contracted to protect Japanese territory. The Department observed that the treaty contained no statement to justify such a position, and thought it unwise to establish a precedent or presumption acknowledging an automatic commitment of that

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98 U.S. Embassy, Tokyo (Murphy), to Secretary of State, No. 1513, November 11, 1952; TOP SECRET.

99 CX 57735, October 25, 1952; TOP SECRET. See above.

sort. It preferred to have the determination of the United States to oppose any aggression against Japan regarded, not as a treaty obligation, but as a matter of U.S. policy. And it was in favor of basing the proposed air-defense measures on the need to maintain the security of the U.S. forces lawfully stationed in Japan.[100]

The timing of the approach to the Japanese government, with a view to co-ordinating American and Japanese action in the strengthened air-defense policy over northern Japan, was also of political significance. For two reasons, General Clark and Ambassador Murphy delayed the approach until late December, 1952: They felt, first, that it was best to wait until the necessary improvement in U.S. air-defense capability over northern Japan had been accomplished. Also, they delayed taking up the matter with Premier Yoshida in order to skirt a complicated internal political situation in Japan, and in order to be able to tie the air-defense problem to the general question of Japanese rearmament. The delay involved some risks since, in the meantime, a new air incident over Japan might have complicated the problem of co-ordination. But, fortunately, this danger did not materialize.[101]

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100 Department of State (Bruce) to U.S. Embassy, Tokyo, No. 1158, November 4, 1952; TOP SECRET.

101 U.S. Embassy, Tokyo (Murphy), to Department of State, No. 1979, December 21, 1952; TOP SECRET.

Co-ordination between the two governments was also necessary on such questions as the wisdom of disclosing the new air-defense policy before it was implemented, the possibility of Japan's issuing a public warning or protest to the U.S.S.R. regarding overflights, and the diplomatic and publicity procedures to be followed by the U.S. and Japan in the event that an incident occurred in the implementation of the new air-defense policy.

The Question of Warning the Soviets about the New Air-Defense Policy

Following private discussions with General Clark and Ambassador Murphy, the Japanese government, on January 13, 1953, issued a public protest against increasing violations of her air space by "foreign military planes." At the same time, the Japanese government took the opportunity to "caution the foreign power concerned" against any repetition of such violations. (The Soviet Union was not named in the announcement, but was identified explicitly later by a Japanese Foreign Office spokesman.) The announcement stated that the Japanese government had decided to take the necessary measures, "with the co-operation of the United States security forces stationed in Japan," to prevent such violations.

The public Japanese warning to the Soviets was accompanied by a diplomatic note to the U.S. government requesting it to

take measures to repel Soviet overflights of Hokkaido. Subsequent public statements by Japanese officials and U.S. spokesmen made it clear that the Japanese government had taken the initiative in seeking U.S. co-operation, that the two governments had been in complete agreement regarding the issuance of the warning, and that the Japanese government would take full responsibility if a foreign plane were shot down.

The impression of Japanese independence and initiative in the sphere of foreign policy was strengthened by the fact that General Clark's headquarters waited until after the Japanese announcement before issuing, on January 14, 1953, its own statement regarding the new air-defense policy.

While Japanese announcements and statements had avoided citing the U.S.-Japanese Security Treaty as a basis for the new air-defense policy, a U.S. press account of General Clark's subsequent announcement interpolated the statement (which the State Department had wished to avoid) that, under the Treaty, American forces are charged with the defense of Japan.[102]

The above paragraphs have outlined the fact and the manner of the warning to the U.S.S.R.; but they do no more than suggest the detailed consideration of the desirability,

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102 Associated Press dispatch, Tokyo, January 14, 1953, as reported in the New York Times.

contents, source, and timing of the warning which preceded it. In the remainder of this section, we shall examine in some detail the policy preparation behind the warning action just noted.

Whether to give the Soviet government prior notification, or warning, of the new air-defense policy over Japan was discussed by U.S. policy-makers for two months before the Japanese government and General Clark's headquarters made their respective announcements on January 13 and 14, 1953. The discussion of this step is paraphrased at some length in this report, since the problem of disclosure and warning is of general and continuing interest, and since the policy discussion in this instance illuminates several dimensions of the problem.

The basic policy alternative was simple enough: whether or not to give the U.S.S.R. prior notice (i.e., warning) that a new air-defense policy would be applied over Japan. However, if a warning were to be given, the additional question was whether it should be in the form of a private diplomatic communication or of a public announcement.

The decision to warn was complicated by the fact that there were <u>two</u> potential warning powers -- the United States and Japan. An additional policy problem, therefore, was whether both or only one -- and which one -- of the two powers should issue the notification. The solution was further complicated by the fact that, since the Japanese Peace Treaty.

Japan had had no formal diplomatic relations with the Soviet Union, and any Japanese diplomatic protest would therefore have to be channeled through the U.S. government or a third party.

If the warning were to be issued by the United States, another policy question was whether the announcement should come from General Clark in Tokyo or from Washington.

Still another problem arose over the question whether, in public announcements, the Soviet Union should be specifically named, or whether a more general designation -- e.g., "hostile" overflights -- should be used. While this was the major question regarding the content of the warning, other specific problems of wording were undoubtedly encountered.

Available records do not enable us to identify with complete assurance the reasons for the final decisions on the desirability, contents, source, and timing of a warning to the U.S.S.R. (The participating policy-makers would have to be interviewed for this purpose, since, evidently, not all deliberations were committed to writing.) We note, however, that the decision to issue a prior (and public) warning was arrived at rather late in the discussion. Many of the U.S. policy-makers concerned had, earlier, stated a preference for the opposite course of action. Perhaps the weightiest argument against a warning, however, was not raised in the early phase

of the discussion, according to the materials examined. This was the argument that, in the absence of an effective air-defense capability for halting Soviet overflights, the intention to do so should not be conveyed in a warning to the Soviets; rather, one should do whatever possible to oppose Soviet intrusions without issuing a diplomatic warning of a new policy. Ambassador Murphy raised this important consideration somewhat later, and then only implicitly, when the U.S. Embassy in Tokyo reversed its previous recommendation against a warning. However, in November, while the U.S. air-defense capability over Japan was still inadequate, the U.S. Embassy in Tokyo had advocated a non-warning policy for the positive advantages that it would entail,[103] which are discussed later in this study.

Whether, indeed, this rule of action -- that warnings of intentions should be made only when backed by an effective capability -- was the most important factor in the decision we cannot say. Other arguments, advanced by the U.S. Embassy in Moscow (O'Shaughnessy) may also have been influential (see below).

Since the range of possible alternatives was not fully explored in the exchange of correspondence on this question, the listing which follows should probably be considered as reflecting policy alternatives that were either seriously considered by U.S. policy-makers or at least discussed by them.

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103 As a result, a reading of the dispatches from the U.S. Embassy, Tokyo, on this matter gives the impression of an abrupt reversal of its recommendation, accompanied by a change in the nature of the factors deemed relevant to the decision.

The fact that the written record does not fully reproduce all discussions has been a handicap in attempting to reconstruct the basis for the decisions taken.

A. Arguments against a public warning to the U.S.S.R. prior to the new air-defense policy

(a) Military:

(1) Little would be gained by putting the Soviets on guard. (Ambassador Murphy, November 19, 1952.)[104]

(b) Political and diplomatic:

(1) No special risk would be incurred in not forewarning the Soviets; the Soviets would not expect to be warned, in view of their own recent shooting down of the U.S. B-29. (Murphy, November 19, 1952.)

(2) Prior announcement of intended air-defense action would precipitate public discussion in Japan, and play into hands of anti-U.S., anti-rearmament, neutralist elements in Japan. (Murphy, November 19, 1952.)

(c) Political warfare:

(1) The shooting down of a Soviet plane caught in overflight would provide a more dramatic, more effective setting for a public announcement of a new air-defense policy. (Murphy, November 19, 1952.)

B. Arguments against any prior warning

(a) Diplomatic and political warfare:

(1) To give the Soviets prior warning that we are going to take a firmer attitude

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104 U.S. Embassy (Murphy) to Secretary of State, No. 1603, November 19, 1952; TOP SECRET.

toward their overflights would be disadvantageous as long as we lack an effective air-defense capability to back up the intention conveyed by such a warning. (Implicit in Murphy, December 23, 1952.)[105]

C. Arguments in favor of a prior warning (not necessarily a public one)

(a) Military:

(1) It would reduce possibility of incidents arising from implementation of new air-defense policy. (Davis, November 18, 1952.)[106]

(b) Political:

(1) Prior warning will provide stronger legal and diplomatic basis for any subsequent Japanese government protest of specific Soviet air violations. (O'Shaughnessy, November 22, 1952.)[107]

(2) Prior warning is desirable in view of the fact that, in contrast to the Soviet government, the Japanese government has not yet made public its attitude toward overflights. (O'Shaughnessy, November 22, 1952.)

(3) Prior warning is particularly desirable in this case because U.S. forces in Japan and the Japanese government have for some time permitted and ignored Soviet overflights. (O'Shaughnessy, November 22, 1952.)

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105 U.S. Embassy, Tokyo (Murphy) to Secretary of State, No. 2007, December 23, 1952; TOP SECRET. See also ibid., No. 2078, December 30, 1952; TOP SECRET.

106 As listed in State Department internal memo from R. H. Davis (EE) to Walworth Barbour (EE), November 18, 1952; TOP SECRET.

107 U.S. Embassy, Moscow (O'Shaughnessy) to Secretary of State, No. 813, November 22, 1952; TOP SECRET.

(c) Political warfare:

(1) To shoot down intruding planes without having given prior warning would place us in same category as Soviets; prior warning would be more likely to gain support for our position in other countries. (O'Shaughnessy, November 22, 1952.)

D. Argument for a warning by the U.S. rather than the Japanese government

(a) Since the new air-defense policy is ours, it is preferable for the United States to take responsibility for it directly. (A simultaneous Japanese statement is not, however, ruled out.) (Davis, November 18, 1952.)

E. Arguments for U.S. warning via Far East Commander (General Clark) rather than Washington

(a) Announcement by General Clark's headquarters would stem from recent events; it would be less likely to create an international stir. (Davis, November 18, 1952.)

(b) Announcement by General Clark would seem less like an "ultimatum" than would a note from Washington to the U.S.S.R. (Davis, November 18, 1952.)

F. Arguments against naming the U.S.S.R. specifically in a public warning

(a) If the U.S.S.R. were not explicitly mentioned, the warning would appear less like an "ultimatum" to the Soviets. (Davis, November 18, 1952.)

(b) If not specifically mentioned, the U.S.S.R. would have no basis for protesting the air-defense policy, since such a protest would imply that its planes have been violating Japanese territory. (Davis, November 18, 1952.)

G. Argument in favor of private Japanese diplomatic protest to U.S.S.R. against past violations (without warning of future air-defense policy)

(a) There would be advantages in terms of Allied and Japanese public opinion if Japanese government would later, after a Soviet plane was shot down, disclose that it had made earlier diplomatic protest against such violations.[108]

D. Soviet Reaction to New U.S.-Japanese Air-Defense Policy

Military Reaction

Soviet overflights of northern Japan, we have noted, became frequent and deliberate in late summer and autumn of 1952, and culminated in the October 7 shooting down of the U.S. RB-29. After this incident, Soviet overflights continued for a while; but, as the U.S. military counteraction began to shape up, Soviet policy on overflights showed sensitivity to the announcement of progressively stiffer U.S. air-defense intentions. Some overflights were made, evidently to test whether the stated U.S. intentions would be implemented. But more impressive is the fact that Soviet overflights became less frequent after U.S.-Japanese air-defense policy stiffened. The Soviets were moving ahead cautiously to feel out their opponents, as suggested by the fact that each major indication of a stiffening U.S. attitude was followed by a temporary cessation of Soviet overflights. Evidently, Soviet overflights were being carefully

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108 Department of State (Bruce) to U.S. Embassy, Tokyo, November 21, 1952; TOP SECRET.

controlled in order to permit Soviet policy-makers to take a new reading of the situation on each of these occasions. The possibility cannot be ruled out, however, that the Soviets will continue, periodically, to arrange clashes with U.S. planes in order to further their political warfare against Japan. The most recent intelligence estimate -- as of August 1, 1953 -- places Soviet overflights of northern Japan at an average of one every two weeks (see below, p. 86).

Evidently, the threat of "grave consequences" in the U.S. protest note of October 17, and the October 27 USAF announcement that fighter escorts would at times be provided for B-29's forced to approach sensitive areas, did not lead to a reconsideration of the Soviet policy on overflights, for such overflights continued to occur.

The November 4 encounter between the U.S. F-84's and the Soviet La-11's -- evidently the first occasion on which Soviet intruders were successfully intercepted -- was taken more seriously by the U.S.S.R. as evidence of both U.S. capability and U.S. intentions. For, immediately thereafter, a definite lull was noted in all Soviet air activity in the area, and especially in overflights of Hokkaido.[109]

Some time later, Soviet overflights apparently resumed after, we may judge, a top-level Soviet review of the situation

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109 CG, FEAF, Tokyo, to USAF, No. A 3124 C D/O, November 29, 1952; SECRET.

and its risks. In mid-December, FEAF headquarters made known that F-94 all-weather jets had been added to the air-defense force in Japan. Thereupon, Soviet overflights again ceased.[110]

We do not know whether Soviet overflights were resumed once more before the new air-defense policy was announced by the Japanese government on January 13, 1953. However, the immediate effect of the announcement was evident. On January 20, 1953, Major General Delmar T. Spivey publicly announced that, since the Japanese government's warning, there had been no proven violations of Japanese territory by Soviet planes.[111] A similar statement was made by a FEAF spokesman two weeks later.[112]

Data are lacking on the incidence of Soviet overflights, if any, for the period between February 5 and 16, 1953. On February 16, a hostile encounter between Soviet La-11's and U.S. F-84's took place three miles within Japanese territory.[113] The two La-11's answered warning maneuvers by the F-84's, which ordered them to land by opening fire. A ten-minute battle ensued, during which one of the La-11's was hit. The F-84's broke off

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110 Dispatch by Lindesay Parrott, Tokyo, January 17, 1953, in The New York Times, January 18, 1953. Confirmation of this report on the appearance of the F-94's and cessation of Soviet overflights has not yet been available.

111 Associated Press dispatch, Tokyo, January 20, 1953.

112 Associated Press dispatch, Tokyo, February 5, 1953.

113 Only unclassified newspaper sources were available for the February 16, 1953, encounter over Hokkaido (The New York Times, February 17, 1953). An account on the incident said to have been based on classified cables was published by Drew Pearson on March 7, 1953.

the chase, under standing orders, when the Soviet planes flew back across the international boundary. Neither of the F-84's was damaged.

It is difficult to establish the Soviet motive behind the incident. If the La-11's were deliberately sent over Japanese territory, the intention may have been to stage an incident in order to test Japanese reactions. Part of Soviet political warfare against the Japanese government might be the use of such incidents to increase Japanese fear that their homeland might become a battleground, and thus to encourage anti-American and neutralist sentiment in Japan. Incidents of this sort might well help to widen political cleavages within Japan over rearmament and foreign policy.[114]

On the other hand, the La-11's may have violated Japanese air space unintentionally in this instance, and may have opened fire because, having been signaled to land, they expected to be fired on.[115]

The absence of any Soviet diplomatic or propaganda communications on the February 16 incident should also be noted, though its significance in terms of the Soviet motive is

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[114] Following the February 16 incident, the Japanese government promptly endorsed the action of the U.S. F-84's. But, despite the backing of the government itself, the incident prompted urgent questions in the Japanese Diet from members of opposition groups. (The New York Times, February 17, 1953.)

[115] See case study No. 40, in which a Russian bomber opened fire when intercepted by U.S. Navy fighters over the Yellow Sea.

obscure.[116] (In the case of the Russian bomber shot down over the Yellow Sea, the Soviets had filed a diplomatic protest. But, in that case, their plane had been over international waters, whereas the La-11's violated Japanese air space.)

Sometime after the February 16 incident, Soviet overflights of northern Japan began once again. Not having utilized classified data on the subject for the more recent period, we cannot date the recurrence of such flights, nor can we assume that the planes employed and the pattern of the activity were the same as before. A brief Associated Press dispatch from Tokyo on May 25 -- the earliest public indication of a resumption of Soviet air reconnaissance over Hokkaido that has come to our attention -- quoted a U.S. spokesman to the effect that an "unidentified plane" moved out of range before it could be identified or intercepted.[117] Later, on August 1, unidentified U.S. officials in Washington stated authoritatively that Soviet scouting expeditions over Japan averaged one every two

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116 In contrast, the communist clandestine Radio Free Japan, which generally comments more freely on current events than do official Soviet transmissions to Japan, stated that the February 16 incident showed that Eisenhower was the "ring-leader," not Clark or Murphy, and that Eisenhower was "resorting to war" as the only way of getting out of the Korean war. (FBIS, Survey of U.S.S.R. Broadcasts, February 18-March 3, 1953; CONFIDENTIAL.

117 The New York Times, May 26, 1953.

weeks.[118] This would indicate that the frequency of such flights had declined appreciably since the autumn of 1952.

Propaganda Reaction

Moscow waited two weeks before denouncing the Japanese warning of January 13, 1953, as a "slanderous" publication against the U.S.S.R. Writing in Pravda, political observer Pavlov asserted that it was superfluous to prove the "known fact that Soviet airplanes have not violated and do not violate Japanese frontiers." The purpose of the Japanese statement, it was charged, was to create Japanese fears of the Soviet Union and to cloak U.S. military preparations for the use of Hokkaido as a base against the U.S.S.R.[119]

It would seem that the Japanese warning of January 13 came as an unexpected development to Soviet leaders. This is suggested by the fact that, in order to make a plausible propaganda reply to it, Soviet leaders had to spend ten days preparing the way, by propaganda, for the Pravda statement of February 3. In those ten days, the Soviet public was told in some detail about the "remilitarization" of Hokkaido by U.S. forces and its transformation into a complex of air and naval bases. Thus, the way was prepared for the counteraccusation that Hokkaido was being transformed into a "bridgehead for an attack on the U.S.S.R.," a charge which accompanied the

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118 The New York Times, August 2, 1953.
119 FBIS, Survey of U.S.S.R. Broadcasts, January 21-February 3, 1953; CONFIDENTIAL.

disclosure and refutation of the Japanese statement in Pravda.

To those familiar with Bolshevik language and logic, this counteraccusation in effect justified Soviet reconnaissance of northern Japan. Though, for public consumption, Pravda overtly denied that Soviet overflights took place, it was covertly providing the initiated with a justification for such flights. Whether, at some future date, this justification will be made explicit and public remains to be seen.

If the above interpretation is correct, the Pravda reply to the Japanese statement was designed, not to convey any intention of Soviet leaders to call off the policy of overflights, but to leave wide open the question of future Soviet decisions in the matter.

Both Radio Peking and the communist-directed Radio Free Japan replied earlier than did Moscow to the Japanese government's statement of January 13. Apparently, the only interesting difference in treatment was that only Radio Peking referred to the U.S. "militarization" of Hokkaido in terms of a possible expansion of the war in the Far East.[120]

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120 FBIS, Trends and Highlights of Peking Broadcasts, January 19-25, 1953; CONFIDENTIAL.

139. ABSENCE OF AIR INCIDENTS DURING NATO NAVAL EXERCISE "MAINBRACE" IN THE BALTIC (Autumn, 1952)

Prior to NATO maneuvers in the Baltic, Radio Moscow warned against provocative incidents that might result, though it did so indirectly by quoting leftist Scandinavian periodicals to this effect.[121]

So far as is known, no incidents involving NATO and Soviet forces took place during exercise "Mainbrace."

Earlier NATO air exercises (Belgium, July 13) had been ignored by Moscow; but Soviet domestic news broadcasts did mention the joint Canadian-U.S. air exercises. The difference in Moscow's propaganda handling of these two events may have been due to the proximity of the NATO exercises to the U.S.S.R. Swedish fleet exercises in the Baltic at about the same time were also ignored by Moscow.[122]

Significance

It may be assumed that, had the Politburo considered it advantageous, Soviet forces could deliberately have created an incident of some sort involving NATO forces. Therefore, the fact that no incidents took place should not necessarily be regarded as fortuitous, but may indicate special Soviet efforts to avoid incidents. The Politburo may have believed,

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121 FBIS, Survey of U.S.S.R. Broadcasts, August 6-19, 1952; CONFIDENTIAL.

122 FBIS, Trends and Highlights of Moscow Broadcasts, July 23, 1952; CONFIDENTIAL.

for example, that the possible advantages of an incident were counterbalanced by the danger of setting into motion an uncontrollable, dangerous sequence of events.

It is also possible that self-imposed restrictions on the area in which NATO forces would maneuver not only reduced the likelihood of an inadvertent NATO overflight of Soviet territory, but also altered the circumstances under which the Politburo would have considered a Soviet-staged incident desirable or feasible. (While information is lacking on the scope and geographical area of the NATO maneuvers, it has been noted that the State Department had requested that NATO air flights in the Baltic be restricted during the maneuvers and that special precautions be observed to avoid violating Soviet territorial waters, in order to minimize the possibility of an incident.)[123]

140. U.S. NAVY PATROL PLANE ATTACKED BY MIG'S (September 20, 1952)

On September 20, 1952, a U.S. Navy P4Y patrol aircraft was attacked by two MiG's (nationality apparently not identified) while on a reconnaissance mission in the East China Sea. No damage was sustained by the Navy plane.[124]

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123 Department of State cable (date not available); TOP SECRET.
124 USAF Air Intelligence Memorandum; TOP SECRET.

Apparently, no diplomatic protest was made by the U.S. government. Neither is there any indication that either side made a public disclosure of the incident. Nothing about the case was found in the New York Times.

141. U.S. COMMERCIAL PLANE FIRED UPON DURING UNINTENTIONAL OVERFLIGHT OF BULGARIAN TERRITORY (September 27, 1952)

On September 27, 1952, a Pan American Airways clipper deviated from its normal course and made an overflight of the Yugoslav-Bulgarian frontier near Bosiljgrad into Bulgarian territory. It was fired upon by antiaircraft guns but suffered no damage.[125]

Apparently, the U.S. government did not protest the incident diplomatically, nor does either side seem to have made a public disclosure of the incident. Nothing about the incident was found in the New York Times.

142. ENGAGEMENT BETWEEN U.S. NAVY JETS AND MIG'S (PROBABLY SOVIET) OFF NORTH KOREA IN SEA OF JAPAN (November 18, 1952)

On November 18, 1952, a U.S. Naval Task Force was engaged in a combined air-and-surface strike in the Chongjin (Seishin)

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125 USAF Air Intelligence Memorandum; TOP SECRET.

area. The location of the task force was latitude 41°, 25' north, longitude 131°, 20' east. Shortly before midnight, an air engagement took place thirty-five miles north of this point, close to the Soviet border, between three Navy Panther jets and four MiG's.

Although suspecting that the MiG's were Soviet, the Navy decided not to indicate this in its public account of the action. The incident was reported back to Washington by General Mark Clark, and the Joint Chiefs of Staff, in a cabled reply, agreed that no release should be made at that time of the suspected nationality of the MiG's or their points of take-off.[126]

Accordingly, on November 19, Navy headquarters released an account of the engagement which did not explicitly raise the possibility that the MiG's were part of the Soviet air force based in Siberia. Press agency reports noted that the action had taken place only thirty-five miles from U.S. Naval Task Force 77, at a point close to the Soviet border. Times correspondent Lindesay Parrott noted that the action had taken place in an area in which enemy aircraft are rarely sighted. However, while citing speculation regarding new jet bases in North-East Korea, this account did not raise the possibility that the MiG's may have been Soviet planes operating from Siberian bases.[127]

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126 The cables from General Mark Clark and the Joint Chiefs of Staff were referred to in a letter from Deputy Secretary of Defense William C. Foster to Secretary of Defense; TOP SECRET.

127 The New York Times, November 19, 1952.

It is not known whether any of the press accounts at the time speculated that the planes were Russian. Several months later, however, a very much inflated account appeared, which alleged that one hundred Soviet MiG's had been involved. The U.S. Navy, on March 16, 1953, denied the truth of this account, recalling its earlier announcement (of November 19, 1952) and referring for the first time to the four MiG's as being unmarked and presumably part of the Chinese Communist or North Korean air forces. The Navy added, thereby apparently going beyond its initial disclosure, that seven other MiG's had been picked up by Navy radar on that occasion, but that these had not joined in the fight.[128]

There is no indication that the Soviets gave any publicity to the encounter.

Significance

Assuming that the MiG's in question were indeed Soviet planes sent up to investigate the U.S. Navy task force or to intercept planes flying close to the Soviet border, the incident throws considerable light on Soviet disclosure policy in matters of this sort.

On the basis of materials examined in this study, we have hypothesized that the Politburo generally does not take the initiative in protesting diplomatically, or in publicizing

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128 The Washington Post, March 17, 1953.

incidents in which its planes have taken hostile action against alleged air intruders. In many such incidents, the initial disclosure came from U.S. or Allied sources. The present incident is one of the few involving damage to U.S. planes and/or casualties in which the United States decided against initiating public disclosure. Since the U.S.S.R. did not thereafter initiate disclosure either, its behavior in this case lends strong support to the above assumption. (This hypothesis does not apply to Soviet behavior in cases of air violations in which no Soviet military counteraction takes place; these violations have, as a rule, been protested by the Soviets.)

143. U.S. MATS C-54 FIRED UPON IN SOUTH CHINA SEA (November 24, 1952)

On November 24, 1952, a MATS C-54 received three bursts of antiaircraft fire from an unknown source, possibly a destroyer-type vessel, in the South China Sea. No damage was sustained by the plane.[129]

Apparently no diplomatic protest was made by the U.S. government, and neither side made a public disclosure of the incident. Nothing about it was found in the New York Times.

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129 USAF Air Intelligence Memorandum; TOP SECRET.