

Telegram From the Embassy in the Soviet Union to the Department of State^o

Moscow, May 4, 1959, 2 p.m.

2180. I saw Khrushchev at 11:30 this morning. In order that he not have opportunity to interrupt or refuse to hear my representations I had prepared Russian translation of aide-memoire which I handed him and [\[Page 266\]](#) which he read carefully.¹ He then stated that in their notes on this subject they had already given us an exhaustive explanation of points raised in aide-memoire. They had not shot down this plane. Whenever they did shoot down one of our planes they said so. Nothing of the sort happened in this case. They had merely found remains of plane which had apparently crashed. Six bodies that had been found were returned to US. He had read in Western press about British plane which was lost in this area and was suspected of having come down in SOV Union.² He had been happy to learn it had crashed elsewhere. The two cases were similar. He then cited a number of other cases of airplane accidents including a SOV plane which had preceded him on a flight to Siberia several years ago. Although remains of plane had been found they were never able to locate pilot. He was aware of our alleged report of conversations of SOV pilots. This sort of thing was done in films and we were doubtless very good at it. He asked me to inform President he could not help in any way despite his wish to do so. He then asked in whose interest it was for US to make this move at this time just before FM meeting.³ Was our objective to split relations between the two countries and stir up public opinion? He did not think this was in our mutual interests. It was best not to fly over their territory. He said a short time ago there had been a case in Far East but their planes did not go up because our plane was over their territory only for short time. However in cases like this accidents could happen. Their fighter planes were stationed to guard their frontiers and it could lead to accidents if our planes crossed their frontiers without permission.

He thought our military people were well disciplined and it therefore seemed that our government must know about these incursions. Apparently they were for reconnaissance to ascertain information re Soviet radar. This could not help good relations. I had spoken of 11 missing men but they knew nothing about them. Perhaps they had parachuted out but he did not know if they had parachutes. Sovs did not fly over our territory and did not think we should fly over theirs. Referring to statements in aide-memoire about shooting down plane he repeated that had not happened.

I pointed out we had evidence in form of conversations of SOV fighter pilots which proved that plane had been shot down. I could assure him this evidence had not been manufactured and we had offered to make it available to SOV authorities and that offer still stood.

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I emphasized that plane had not deliberately crossed frontier and he must realize we would not send such slow plane on deliberate mission to fly over SOV territory. I said I wished particularly to emphasize we were not pursuing this matter with any objective of worsening relations. There were 13 families who did not know whether their sons were living or dead and apart from our own desires he should realize pressure these families are naturally bringing upon govt to ascertain fate their sons. As evidence our desire not worsen relations but on contrary improve them I cited impending visit of VP.⁴ I said we did not intend at this time to announce anything other than fact that I had taken up this matter with him.

Khrushchev replied he understood distress of relatives but what could he do? They had not found any other bodies. He then cited crash of TU-104 with number of foreigners on board and said many bodies of these passengers had not been found.⁵

I said that although it might now be very late, it could be of some help if our Air Attache could see scene of crash and remains of plane pointing out that we have previously asked permission for such inspection.

He replied crash had occurred in very sensitive military area. It was near frontier of Turkey with which SOV relations were not good and SOV military did not wish foreigners visit this area.

After conversation on other subjects which is being reported separately Khrushchev said as I was leaving "Let's forget about this affair. You come to us as guests and we will welcome you."

Thompson

1. Source: Department of State, Central Files, 761.5411/5-459. Secret; Priority; Limit Distribution.↵
- 1 Reference is to an aide-memoire on the C-130 airplane that crashed in the Soviet Union on September 2, 1958; see [Document 55](#).↵
- 1 Not further identified.↵
- 1 Documentation on the Foreign Ministers Meeting in Geneva May 11-August 5 is in [volume VIII](#).↵
- 1 Regarding Nixon's forthcoming visit to the Soviet Union, which the White House announced on April 17, see [Documents 92](#) ff.↵
- 1 The crash of the TU-104 has not been further identified.↵

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