

**OPENING SESSION OF THE 17TH PLENUM OF
THE U.S.-RUSSIA JOINT COMMISSION ON
PRISONERS OF WAR/MISSING IN ACTION
(NOVEMBER 14, 2000)**

The opening session of the Seventeenth Plenum of the U.S.-Russia Joint Commission on Prisoners of War/Missing in Action (USRJC) convened on November 14, 2000 at 10:30 a.m. at the offices of the Presidential Administration of the Russian Federation, Staraya Ploshchad, (Old Square), Moscow.

INTRODUCTORY REMARKS

General-Major Vladimir Antonovich Zolotarev, Russian Co-Chairman of the USRJC, introduced Mr. Valentin Alekseyevich Sobolev, a deputy at the Russian National Security Council. On behalf of the Secretary of the Russian National Security Council, Mr. Sergei Ivanov, Mr. Sobolev welcomed General Roland Lajoie and the U.S. and Russian members of the USRJC, then opened the plenary session by reading remarks from a letter to the USRJC from Secretary Ivanov:

"In the years of its existence the Commission has achieved significant results in its noble, humanitarian mission attempting to resolve the fate of those who perished, were captured or are missing in action from post-World War II conflicts and incidents. The work of the Commission has honored the memory of the time when the United States and the Soviet Union were allied against German Nazism. The relatives and friends of those missing servicemen whose fate the Commission has been able to establish are grateful."

"The activities of the USRJC are constantly and closely followed by the Presidents of Russia and the United States and are publicized by the mass media of both countries. The activities of the USRJC serve to broaden the bilateral relationship between our two countries. Further, they have prompted great interest in other countries such as Germany, Italy, Finland, Poland, Kuwait and others who face similar problems with unaccounted for personnel."

"The Security Council of the Russian Federation pays much attention to the work of the USRJC and is always ready to render necessary assistance and support. I hope that the Seventeenth Plenum will be fruitful and wish all USRJC members success in their work. I am convinced that the Seventeenth Plenum will be another step in resolving the many issues before the Commission."

Mr. Sobolev again noted the aforementioned remarks were from a letter to the Commission by Mr. Sergei Ivanov, Secretary of the National Security Council of the Russian Federation.

Mr. Sobolev added a few points of his own. He noted that the work of the Commission is viewed with great respect not only during the plenary sessions, which are

held once or twice a year, but also throughout the year. The many letters of thanks which the Commission receives from relatives and friends of missing service personnel are evidence of this, Mr. Sobolev continued.

Noting that the issue of unaccounted-for personnel would be the subject of careful review during the meetings, Mr. Sobolev focused upon the large number of missing personnel from World War II whose fate had been clarified by the Commission. According to his figures, the fate of approximately 450,000 unaccounted-for Soviet citizens and more than 28,000 American military personnel from the World War II time period has been clarified.

Mr. Sobolev underlined that since its inception in 1992, the Commission has held 16 Plenums and was beginning its Seventeenth. This demonstrates the importance of the Commission's work, the stability it has achieved and the spirit of partnership which has been established.

Mr. Sobolev expressed gratitude to General Lajoie and the U.S. side for all the documents on Soviet MIAs which have been located in the U.S. archives and provided to the Russian side. He also thanked the U.S. side for information on Soviet pilots and aircrew members who were shot down and held prisoner in Angola.

In closing, Mr. Sobolev stressed that no matter how important the Commission's achievements, both sides realize that much work remains to be done. To this end he again wished everyone success in the week's work.

RUSSIAN CO-CHAIRMAN'S REMARKS

General Zolotarev welcomed General Lajoie and the U.S. side of the Commission to Moscow and the Seventeenth Plenum. He remarked on the importance of the Commission's work and the symbolism of holding the opening session of the Seventeenth Plenum in the Marble Hall of Staraya Ploshchad, a place where many politically significant events have taken place over the years. General Zolotarev expressed appreciation for the high-level support for the work of the Commission from President Putin and the Russian National Security Council.

Citing the Commission's four main areas of research, each pursued by a separate working group, General Zolotarev observed that progress in each group has been achieved between plenary sessions. He attributed this in large measure to the work of Dr. James Connell, who manages the Joint Commission Support Directorate's office in Moscow.

General Zolotarev read greetings from Russian Minister of Defense Marshal Igor Sergeyev and Russian Minister of Justice Yuriy Chayka. In his greetings Marshal Sergeyev commended the work of the Commission and its honorable mission. The results of the Commission's work and its successes in resolving the fate of unaccounted-for servicemen are received with gratitude at the Russian Ministry of Defense and by President

Putin, Marshal Sergeyev said. He wished all participants in the Seventeenth Plenum success in resolving issues which remain outstanding.

In written remarks to the Commission, Russian Minister of Justice Chayka thanked the two Co-Chairmen for their diligent work on the POW/MIA issue. He commented that every successful resolution of the fate of a serviceman increases the trust those in uniform today have for their commanders and their government. On the eve of the Seventeenth Plenum, he congratulated those serving on the Commission and wished them success in the upcoming meetings.

General Zolotarev expressed gratitude to a number of U.S. public figures for their support to the work of the Commission. He named specifically: Senators Bob Smith, John Kerry, Strom Thurmond, Trent Lott, Tom Daschle, Arlan Specter, Robert Byrd, Jesse Helms, Joseph Biden, John Warner and Carl Levin.

General Zolotarev then passed to General Lajoie a document highlighting some of the work of the Korean War Working Group at the Russian Ministry of Defense archives at Podolsk including the circumstances of loss of many U.S. pilots shot down in Korea. This information, General Zolotarev observed, is of tremendous significance to the family members of the missing.

Colonel Vladimir Mikhailovich Ovchinnikov, the new Director of the Russian Ministry of Defense Archival Service, was introduced. General Zolotarev suggested Colonel Ovchinnikov might bring a new perspective to the Commission's archival work. On October 6, 2000, President Putin signed a decree establishing the membership of the Russian Presidential Commission on Prisoners of War, Internees and Missing in Action. Forty-seven members from the executive branch, the legislature and private groups comprise the Commission, from which Russian members of the U.S.-Russia Joint Commission on POW/MIAs have been selected. From among the new members, General Zolotarev introduced General-Major Nikolay Maksimovich Bezborodov, a member of the Russian State Duma and the new Russian Co-Chairman of the Commission's Vietnam War Working Group.

At this point, General Zolotarev offered the floor to the U.S. Co-Chairman, General Lajoie.

U.S. CO-CHAIRMAN'S REMARKS

General Lajoie thanked General Zolotarev and the Russian side for their kind reception to Moscow and thoughtful words on the work of the Commission. He described as encouraging the remarks of the Russian Minister of Defense, Minister of Justice and the National Security Adviser in support of the Commission's work.

General Lajoie noted it was impressive to see such a large gathering of people at the opening session. He hoped that the group would contribute directly to furthering the efforts the Commission has undertaken. He drew particular attention to the young people in

uniform at the session, identifying them as the new generation of the military who have taken on the responsibilities of accounting for those who served before them and who remain unaccounted for.

The U.S. Co-Chairman stated that important work would be conducted in each of the Commission's four working groups. He invited the U.S. Co-Chairmen of the working groups to speak briefly on their expectations for the working group sessions. Normally, said General Lajoie, he would begin with Senator Smith and Congressman Johnson, but a rare post-election session of Congress precluded their attendance.

General Lajoie then offered the floor to Mr. A. Denis Clift, President of the Joint Military Intelligence College and the U.S. Co-Chairman of the Cold War Working Group.

U.S. WORKING GROUP CO-CHAIRMEN'S REMARKS

U.S. Co-Chairman, Cold War Working Group

Mr. Clift said he was pleased to be at the Seventeenth Plenary Session and looked forward to progress in the working group. He noted that tragic incidents which had befallen Russian and American servicemen in the past year reminded us of the solemnity of the Commission's work. He also noted that his hopes, along with those of many other people, had been renewed this past August, when a Hungarian prisoner of war who was captured by the Soviet Army in 1944 and presumed dead for more than fifty years, was found in a Russian psychiatric hospital; this man was reunited with his family after so many years.

Mr. Clift said he would present Colonel Vladimir Konstantinovich Vinogradov, the Russian Co-Chairman of the CWWG, a set of U.S. Government documents on U.S. Cold War loss incidents that Colonel Vinogradov had requested at the Sixteenth Plenum. He would also pass results from research on the list of nine Soviet prisoners of war from the war in Afghanistan that Colonel Vinogradov had passed at the previous plenum.

Finally, Mr. Clift said he looked forward to continuing discussion on the ten U.S. Cold War loss incidents. He reminded those present that most of these losses were over waters close to the former Soviet Union. Accordingly, Mr. Clift looked forward to hearing reports on the status of research work at the Russian Naval Archives in Gatchina and hoped to find ways to improve research at the Border Guards Archives. He pointed out that our Commission does not operate in a vacuum: the U.S. Coast Guard and the Russian Border Guards have been cooperating closely as a result of an agreement made by the Commander of the Northeast Border Guards District of the Russian Federation and the Commander of the 17th Coast Guard District of the United States. Mr. Clift expressed the hope that the close cooperation and hard work between the Border Guards and the Coast Guard could be extended to include the work of the Commission. He concluded his remarks expressing confidence in the success of the work of the Joint Commission.

At this point, General Lajoie introduced Mr. R. Michael McReynolds from the U.S. National Archives, the U.S. Co-Chairman of the World War II Working Group.

U.S. Co-Chairman, World War II Working Group

After thanking the Russian side for their hospitality, Mr. McReynolds outlined four specific areas the working group would address during the meetings in Moscow. The first area was to follow-up on the Commission's successful August mission to Kamchatka, where a U.S. Navy World War II patrol bomber was positively identified. Secondly, in response to a Russian request, the U.S. would present information and documents relating to an air clash between U.S. and Soviet airplanes near Vienna, Austria on April 2, 1945, continued Mr. McReynolds,

As a third point, Mr. McReynolds suggested that a number of issues, which had been discussed in previous plenary sessions, should be revisited. To this end he specifically cited the memoirs of a gulag camp survivor presented at the Sixteenth Plenum and the follow-on "Gulag Study," which was presented since then. Both the memoirs and the "Gulag Study" contain names and citations from the World War II time frame and need to be researched. Lastly, Mr. McReynolds noted he would present the Russian side a draft of the WW II section of the planned U.S.-Russia Joint Report on work conducted by the Commission from 1995-2000. In closing, Mr. McReynolds looked forward to making progress on the agenda he had outlined and again thanked the Russian side for their assistance.

Following up on Mr. McReynolds mention of the Commission's trip to Kamchatka, General Lajoie stated that participating in the mission to Kamchatka with Mr. McReynolds and Colonel Golumbovskiy was perhaps the most moving personal experience of his tenure as U.S. Co-Chairman. General Lajoie further noted Mr. McReynolds was retiring from government service in December and this was his last Commission meeting after five years of distinguished service. He thanked Mr. McReynolds for the dedication and diligence with which he approached his work on the Commission.

General Lajoie next introduced Mr. Norman Kass, the Commission's U.S. Executive Secretary, who was asked by U.S. Korean War Working Group Co-Chairman Congressman Sam Johnson to chair the working group during the Seventeenth Plenum.

U.S. Co-Chairman, Korean War Working Group

Mr. Kass joined his colleagues in expressing appreciation to the Russian side for their hospitality in hosting the plenum. He noted that the work of the Korean War Working Group very much reflected the overall trend of the work of the Commission in that it is characterized by a certain amount of accomplishment and a considerable amount of work that remains to be done. On behalf of Congressman Johnson, Kass expressed appreciation for the efforts of the Russian members of the Commission and thanks to the many people across Russian society who have cooperated with the Commission in furthering the working group's goals. He specifically thanked the staff at the Central Military Archives at Podolsk for their hard work.

Mr. Kass looked forward to working with Colonel Orlov in the working group sessions and to hearing the results of work conducted at Podolsk at the behest of General-Colonel Manilov, Deputy Chief of the Russian General Staff, who met with the Commission's Co-Chairmen during the Sixteenth Plenum. Mr. Kass identified expanded access to search-group records from the Korean War era as a primary goal of the U.S. side of the working group. Such records, known to exist at Podolsk, could be instrumental in resolving the fate of many unaccounted-for U.S. pilots from the Korean War.

A joint visit to Vorkuta/Inta undertaken in October 2000, was cited by Mr. Kass as the first step in a comprehensive investigation of reports that American servicemen were sighted in the Soviet Gulag camp system. These reports have been compiled into what has become known as the "Gulag Study." He looked forward to discussing the results of this trip during the working group sessions and building on these results to further the Commission's investigation into this complex issue.

General Lajoie stated he had been asked by Senator Smith to chair the U.S. side of the Vietnam War Working Group. In that capacity he made several opening remarks.

U.S. Co-Chairman, Vietnam War Working Group

General Lajoie looked forward to meeting General Bezborrowodov and welcoming him to his new position as Russian Co-Chairman of the working group. He opined that General Bezborrowodov's assumption of duties represented a good opportunity to get a fresh start on many issues within the purview of the working group on which little progress has been made to date. He noted Senator Smith's disappointment that General Bezborrowodov had been unable to accept an invitation to visit the United States last summer to discuss working group issues.

General Lajoie offered his assessment that, among the Commission's working groups, the most difficult problems seem to face the Vietnam War Working Group. It also appears to be, in the eyes of the American people and in General Lajoie's own assessment, the working group where the least progress is being made. This, noted General Lajoie, frustrates Senator Smith, who, nonetheless, is prepared to use his good offices in Washington to address, within the U.S. government, issues of concern to the Russian side.

At this plenum, the U.S. side plans to raise a number of issues relating to the Vietnam War, General Lajoie said. While many have been raised before, there has been, in the U.S. assessment, insufficient progress. Noting that the senior U.S. analyst in the working group briefed General Bezborrowodov on these issues earlier in the year, General Lajoie hoped substantive and meaningful discussions would be possible.

General Lajoie identified the principal issues which he would raise during the working group sessions. First, access to Vietnam War-related materials at the Central Military Archives at Podolsk is especially important to the U.S. side. To this end, a detailed research guide will be presented to the Russian side to facilitate archival review of the

materials. General Lajoie identified possible direct Soviet contact during interrogations with U.S. POWs in Vietnam as another issue which would be raised. He recalled that during the Sixteenth Plenum, the Russian side offered to conduct a new search of SVR (Foreign Security Service) archives and looked forward to hearing the results of this search. Additionally, continued General Lajoie, several issues remain on the U.S. agenda, to include the Volkogonov memoirs and the possibility of American access to the Quang documents.

After the brief reports of the U.S. working group Co-Chairmen were delivered, General Lajoie continued with some general remarks of an overarching nature.

U.S. CO-CHAIRMAN'S REMARKS (continued)

General Lajoie stated that summarizing in a joint report the progress that has been made by the Commission over the last five years is one of the most important tasks before the Commission. He hoped to make progress on the report during the Seventeenth Plenum. After the several months of work and the considerable amount of coordination which has already gone into the Executive Summary of the report, General Lajoie hoped that he and General Zolotarev could sign it during the plenum. He explained that more detailed reports from each working group would be included with the Executive Summary to comprise the Commission's Joint Report. As agreed previously, the U.S. side had prepared draft reports in each working group and would pass them to the Russian side at the plenum. General Lajoie hoped the Russian side would review and respond to the drafts with all due diligence.

General Lajoie expressed his belief that meetings at the level of this plenary session underscore the importance that the leadership of both countries attaches to the POW/MIA issue. However, he continued, more important than such meetings are the Commission's day-to-day efforts, conducting interviews and working in archives. Ultimately, he concluded, resolution of the questions before the Commission will be achieved through this careful and time-consuming research work.

Referring to the Commission's interview program, General Lajoie suggested that time did not work in our favor. Many people whom we wanted to interview are no longer living. We therefore believe the effort to locate and interview veterans and other knowledgeable individuals takes on new urgency. In general terms, according to General Lajoie, American efforts in the interview program are supported and encouraged by the Russian side.

A successful interview program, General Lajoie contended, depends on a successful research effort in the archives. Without archival support, much of the information obtained during interviews remains unsubstantiated and fragmentary. On the issue of archival research, General Lajoie noted that the two sides of the Commission do not always agree. Providing the U.S. perspective on this, he stated that good progress has been made in Podolsk but more remains to be done. General Lajoie recounted that General Zolotarev and he had met with General Manilov last year to discuss the Commission's efforts in Podolsk.

General Manilov promised to direct that a more comprehensive effort be conducted at Podolsk. General Lajoie looked forward to hearing about any results which might be forthcoming from this effort.

Putting the Commission's archival work at Podolsk in context, General Lajoie stated that Podolsk was only one repository of useful information. Information which would benefit the work of the Commission certainly resides in other archives as well, particularly the intelligence service archives, he said. As a former intelligence officer, General Lajoie noted his understanding of the sensitivity of such holdings. Nevertheless, he suggested that on the humanitarian issue of POW/MIAs, a way could and should be found to review even sensitive archives and provide unclassified accounts of any information which might be relevant to our cases. Alternatively, a way might be found to allow discreet viewing of such information without the right to make copies or notes.

General Lajoie concluded his remarks by expressing once again appreciation for the warm welcome extended to him and then turned the floor back over to General Zolotarev.

RUSSIAN WORKING GROUP CO-CHAIRMEN'S REMARKS

General Zolotarev gave the floor to the Russian Co-Chairmen of the Commission's four working groups. He began by introducing Colonel Vinogradov of the Federal Security Service and the Commission's Russian Co-Chairman of the Cold War Working Group.

Russian Co-Chairman, Cold War Working Group

Colonel Vinogradov thanked General Zolotarev, General Lajoie, and Mr. Sobolev for the opportunity to present some remarks on the work of the working group. He said he hoped for progress in the Cold War Working Group (CWWG). While the CWWG did not face the same difficulties as the Vietnam War Working Group, it also had some problems. This was because most of the Cold War incidents took place over oceans and seas. Required were not only archival research and interviews but other efforts as well. These efforts might include searching the bottom of the ocean, which had been discussed at previous plenums. Colonel Vinogradov said that, in light of the recent Kursk incident, the Russians knew how difficult and expensive such operations would be.

Colonel Vinogradov noted the Russian side of the working group was working on identifying documents and witnesses. This was especially important in the case of Major Eugene Posa (1 July 1960 incident). The Russians had been seeking witnesses such as former officers of the Special Department of the Northern Fleet (KGB). They were presently looking for 26 officers who were involved in events relating to the recovery of Major Posa's body or who might otherwise have information about these events. The work of finding these people has been complicated by the fact that some of them had ended up as citizens of other countries after the fall of the Soviet Union. To date, the Russians had informed the Commission about an interview with an officer who had been assigned to a trawler fleet. This man was convinced that Major Posa was laid to rest at a cemetery in Murmansk, where WWII British and American servicemen who had perished are buried.

Colonel Vinogradov said the Russians had returned to Cold War incidents that took place in the Soviet Far East, specifically the November 1951 and June 1952 incidents. This was in response to letters from American family members that were addressed to Russian President Putin and American President Clinton. Additional work had been done on these cases, to include sending requests to local archives in the Far East concerning these incidents.

Colonel Vinogradov said the Russian side faced the kinds of problems with interviews that General Lajoie had mentioned. For example, reporting sources were themselves not direct witnesses to events, but had heard from other people who said they had seen or heard about Americans in the GULAG. There was also, according to Colonel Vinogradov, the problem of a Russian émigré who reportedly provided the memoirs. In spite of the fact that the Russian side questioned the authenticity of the memoirs, they had done a considerable amount of work on them. Documents in the State Archives had been studied in an effort to identify the locations of camps during the period 1945-1954. Requests for information had been sent to local directors of the Federal Security Service in the areas mentioned in the memoirs. In addition, the Ministry of Internal Affairs' Information Center had been consulted.

Colonel Vinogradov said the Russian side was given information on 22 persons and had prepared six pages of comments that had been passed to the U.S. side of the Commission. The Russians had not rejected the U.S. proposal to study the document; they had offered comments intended to establish the truth. The author of the memoirs did not wish to deal with the Russian side of the Commission. Colonel Vinogradov found this puzzling, as providing such information was not against Russian law. The émigré's anonymity was problematic in that it cast doubt on the credibility of his remarks. Because the information in the memoirs touched on the work of almost all the working groups, Colonel Vinogradov proposed that the working group chairmen meet together to discuss the document.

Colonel Vinogradov said he agreed with General Lajoie that interviews needed to be done on an urgent basis. As for archival work, this was a very important aspect of the Commission's work. Colonel Vinogradov then commented about secret archives. Russia has no restrictions about providing information on American POWs and has never had such restrictions, Colonel Vinogradov said. In fact, most of the documents that had already been provided to the U.S. side of the Commission had come from secret files. The Commission is able to conduct research in all archives, both at the State and Departmental levels, he observed. He further noted that no obstacles had been encountered during work in archives.

Colonel Vinogradov concluded by saying the Russian side had worked on other aspects of the Cold War incidents, which would be discussed in more detail at the working group sessions.

General Zolotarev then introduced Colonel Nikolay Ivanovich Nikiforov of the Military Historical Center of the Russian Armed Forces and the Russian Co-Chairman of the World War II Working Group.

Russian Co-Chairman, World War II Working Group

Colonel Nikiforov thanked both Co-Chairmen and expressed optimism that the Seventeenth Plenum would yield positive results, as have other meetings before it. He noted that several sessions ago the work of the World War II Working Group (WWII WG) was considered all but complete. In practice, however, this has not been the case. The positive identification of the U.S. Navy PV-1 Ventura lost 56 years ago on the Kamchatka Peninsula demonstrates the continued viability and success of the working group. The future may well hold similar successes, Colonel Nikiforov suggested.

He explained that the PV-1 success was the culmination of over a year's work. Other issues are being researched and may require a similar length of time, he said. Colonel Nikiforov voiced his support for many of the technical comments made by Colonel Vinogradov. As regards the practical issues of the working group, he looked forward to discussing them with his colleague, Mr. McReynolds, whom he congratulated on his successes with the Commission and his upcoming retirement.

General Zolotarev introduced Professor (Colonel) Aleksandr Semenovich Orlov of the Military Historical Institute and the Commission's Russian Co-Chairman of the Korean War Working Group.

Russian Co-Chairman, Korean War Working Group

Colonel Orlov welcomed everyone and thanked Congressman Johnson for the letter he sent offering a number of useful recommendations and proposals to guide the working group's meetings. Summarizing the general nature of the working group's efforts to date, Colonel Orlov identified three primary areas of work: interviews, archival research and public outreach through the mass media. Certain positive results have been achieved in these areas, he said.

More than 18,000 pages of documents from Russian and U.S. archives have been studied and analyzed, Colonel Orlov noted. Further, more than 600 interviews have been conducted. Contacts with the public have been undertaken. Meetings with relatives and many civic and veterans' associations, both Russian and American, have been held, he stated. As a result of these efforts, Colonel Orlov affirmed that the fate of approximately 140 U.S. pilots unaccounted for from the Korean War has been clarified. Additionally, he continued, the circumstances surrounding the deaths of 54 Soviet Korean War pilots have been clarified.

Most important, in Colonel Orlov's view, has been establishing a proven framework for systematic research on unaccounted-for American citizens in the Russian Military

Archives at Podolsk and the Russian Naval Archives at Gatchina. He recognized that many unresolved cases remain before the working group and wished everyone involved success in resolving these cases.

General Zolotarev then introduced General-Major Bezbodov, Russian State Duma member and the Commission's Russian Co-Chairman of the Vietnam War Working Group.

Russian Co-Chairman, Vietnam War Working Group

General Bezbodov welcomed Russian and American participants to the opening session of the Seventeenth Plenum. He promised that the working group would look closely at the materials received from the U.S. side to which General Lajoie referred.

General Bezbodov noted that the Joint Commission has done much work during the years of its existence, but added that much more remains to be done. The working group does not attempt to hide the many difficulties facing it. He said that these difficulties are to be expected because, the closer to the present time that a war takes place, the more secrets and mysteries remain. This fact does not mean that we cannot achieve progress, he noted.

The Russian side is not hiding the fact that one of the working group's biggest problems is its difficulty attaining access to archives, especially to classified sections of archives, General Bezbodov said. The group of specialists at Podolsk, established by order of General-Colonel Manilov, is going to play an important role in searching these archives, he said. This group already has begun studying Vietnam War-era documents, and General Bezbodov expressed his hope that the results of this effort will be known very soon.

Information about U.S. citizens may be contained in the archives of various other agencies, in addition to the archives at Podolsk, General Bezbodov noted. It clearly is necessary to do work also in these archives, and in order to achieve success in this effort, researchers should use their time in a productive, effective way, he said.

General Bezbodov concluded his remarks by expressing his hope that the current session will be another step toward success in the Commission's work.

General Zolotarev again thanked both sides of the Commission, wished everyone success in their work and adjourned the opening session.

WORKING GROUP SUMMARIES
17TH PLENUM
(NOVEMBER 14-15, 2000)

World War II Working Group

The World War II Working Group (WWII WG) met twice during the Seventeenth Plenum at the Hotel National in Moscow. The working group was chaired on the U.S. side by Mr. R. Michael McReynolds of the U.S. National Archives and Record Administration and on the Russian side by Colonel Nikolay Nikiforov of the Russian Ministry of Defense's Institute of Military History. Also participating in the work of the group were: Mr. Vladimir Korotayev, Deputy Director of the Center for the Storage and Preservation of Historical Document Collections; Mr. Igor Pitelin of the Russian Ministry of Internal Affairs; and Mr. Albert Graham, Deputy Director, Joint Commission Support Directorate – Washington. Mr. Aleksandr Yudin served as the translator and interpreter.

As requested by the Russian side at the 16th Plenum, Mr. McReynolds presented Colonel Nikiforov with three U.S. Air Force operational reports from the archives at Maxwell Air Force Base in Alabama with regard to P-38 engagements with Soviet planes near Vienna, Austria, on April 2, 1945.

The WWII WG reviewed the mission of the past summer to Kamchatka to identify a U.S. Navy PV-1 bomber and agreed to plan a full-scale excavation of the site, tentatively scheduled for the summer of 2001. The Russian side was apprised that as many as 30 U.S. specialists from the U.S. Army's Central Identification Laboratory – Hawaii (CILHI) along with their equipment, would have to be transported to the crash site for a month-long stay.

The Russian side agreed to raise this issue at the highest levels of government and expects full approval for the excavation several months before it is to take place. Colonel Nikiforov expressed a desire to have Jim Connell provide the Russian side with more details on U.S. plans as they become available.

In response to the Russian side's request for more data on the downed PV-1, Mr. McReynolds presented Colonel Nikiforov with eight enlarged Kamchatka PV-1 crash-site photos, as well as copies of JCSD interviews with Mikhail Khotin and Mikhail Cheresko, who stated that they had observed human remains at the Kamchatka crash site in 1962 and 1970, respectively. The Russian side, at Colonel Golumbovskiy's initiative, promised to read these accounts and then search their archives, to include the local FSB archives, for any possible reports on the PV-1 incident, especially those that may relate to a reported 1970 mission to the site by a Soviet military team. The war diaries and operational reports of the PV-1 Ventura found in Kamchatka were also handed over to the Russian side at this time.

A detailed discussion was held on a list of 39 U.S. POWs who were under Soviet control at the end of WWII. Mr. McReynolds again raised the issue of the past Russian

promise to search through documentary records of Soviet Convoy Troops and specifically mentioned the case of PFC Rudolph Frisch, one of the 39 American servicemen who was known to have been under Soviet control at the end of World War II and who subsequently did not return to the United States. The Russian side agreed to keep searching the Convoy Troop records and promised to turn over to Jim Connell the personal data card on Rudolph Frisch that was found at the Center for the Storage and Preservation of Historical Document Collections. Colonel Nikiforov likewise pledged to approach the FSB archives for any documents on Frisch and, in general, to continue efforts to resolve the fate of the 39 individuals on the list.

Mr. McReynolds raised once again the issue of the Kogan ring, which had been discussed at previous plenums without any success. The U.S. side agreed to prepare a more detailed background paper on this case for the Russians, to include precise places, dates and times relating to the incident. Colonel Nikiforov, in turn, consented to provide copies of documentation on this matter which had been prepared and previously promised by Colonel Sergei Chuvashin, the Director of the Podolsk Archives.

The subject of the émigré memoirs and the “Gulag Study” was raised by Mr. McReynolds. Colonel Nikiforov suggested further deliberations on this issue be carried out in joint session with the other working groups at a later time. After a brief discussion, the U.S. side agreed with this approach. With regards to the “Gulag Study,” Colonel Nikiforov mentioned the possible use of “Memorial Society” researchers in conjunction with Russian government archives’ staff to search for data on Americans allegedly held in the Gulag.

Mr. McReynolds presented Colonel Nikiforov with the U.S. draft of the WWII Working Group report and asked him to review it. The following day, the Russian side reported their concurrence with the draft report with one suggested change to which the U.S. side agreed. Mr. McReynolds then handed over the co-signed WWII Working Group section of the report to the USRJC’s Co-Chairmen.

In closing, Mr. McReynolds presented Colonel Nikiforov with a copy of the *National Archives Guide to the Records on Holocaust Assets*, and Colonel Nikiforov gave Mr. McReynolds a Russian CD on World War II entitled, “From the Kremlin to the Reichstag” as well as an issue of the Russian periodical *Novyy Chasovoy*.

Cold War Working Group

The Cold War Working Group met twice during the Seventeenth Plenum in Moscow. The working group was chaired on the U.S. side by Mr. A. Denis Clift, President, Joint Military Intelligence College, and on the Russian side by Colonel Vladimir Vinogradov, Federal Security Service of the Russian Federation (FSB). Also participating in the work of the group were: Mr. Ivan Cherepkov of the FSB Archives; Captain 1st Rank Kazachenko; Mr. James MacDougall, Joint Commission Support Directorate (JCSJ)-Washington; Dr. James Connell, JCSJ-Moscow; and Ms. Carol Dockham, Senior Analyst,

Cold War Working Group, JCSD-Washington. Rear Admiral (retired) Boris Novyy participated as an expert researcher and witness during the working group sessions.

The first session, held on 14 November 2000, was devoted to a presentation by Admiral Novyy about his work on behalf of the CWWG at the Central Naval Archives in Gatchina and other places. His briefing was divided into three parts: the 8 April 1950 incident over the Baltic Sea, the 6 November 1951 incident over the Sea of Japan and the 1 July 1960 incident over the Barents Sea.

Admiral Novyy has performed extensive research at the Central Naval Archives in Gatchina near St. Petersburg and at other Russian archives on the 1 July 1960 shoot down of the RB-47 aircraft. One of the primary purposes of his research has been to determine the disposition of the remains of Major Eugene Posa, one of three missing crewmembers from the RB-47. Based on his archival research, Admiral Novyy has identified a number of potential witnesses, and together with U.S. representatives of the Joint Commission, has been able to locate and interview dozens of them throughout Russia and Ukraine.

Through a combination of archival research and interviews, Admiral Novyy has been able to trace Major Posa's remains from their recovery at sea to Severomorsk. To locate further information, Admiral Novyy thought the most fruitful lines of inquiry would be through personnel from the Northern Fleet Medical Service and the Special Department of the KGB of the Northern Fleet. He is currently seeking a former Soviet major who was probably a Medical Service administrative officer. This major met the ship that brought the body of Major Posa to Severomorsk, and Admiral Novyy thought he would have information about where the body was taken after it was offloaded from the vessel. As for personnel from the Special Department of the KGB of the Northern Fleet, Colonel Vinogradov was assisting Admiral Novyy in locating 26 officers who had been identified from documents. Interviews with several former KGB officers have already been conducted.

The Cold War Working Group is hopeful that it is close to finding Major Posa's burial site. The Joint Commission is considering a possible expedition to Kildin Island and Sayda-Guba in 2001 to examine several possible sites. The possibility of the Murmansk Cemetery as the burial site also remains under active consideration.

In addition to his work on the 1 July 1960 incident, Admiral Novyy had new information to report on the 8 April 1950 and 6 November 1951 incidents. In the case of the 8 April 1950 shoot down of a U.S. Navy PB4Y2 Privateer over the Baltic Sea, Admiral Novyy found documentation showing that two newly upgraded submarine hunters, the MO-201 and MO-206, had been dispatched on a "special mission" in the Baltic at approximately the time the Privateer was shot down. Admiral Novyy speculated the mission of these submarine hunters may have been to search for the Privateer. The fact there had been two of them increased the likelihood some witnesses might still be alive who could clarify the nature of the "special mission" in April 1950. Admiral Novyy had already contacted one of the former crewmen, who was unfortunately too ill to recall any information about this mission. He will continue research on this case.

Admiral Novyy also found documents relating to the 6 November 1951 shoot down of a U.S. Navy PV2 “Neptune” over the Sea of Japan. After Soviet fighters had shot the Neptune down, three torpedo boats of the 25th Group of the Pacific Fleet were dispatched to the scene where it went into the water. According to the documents, the boats found no wreckage or bodies. Admiral Novyy had identified everyone in the 25th Group who might have information on the search for the Neptune aircraft and had spoken with the chief technical specialist of the 25th Group in St. Petersburg. Admiral Novyy will continue to search for other crewmen, who he suggested might also have information on other Cold War incidents over the Pacific, such as the 13 June 1952, and 29 July 1953 shoot downs.

The second session of the Cold War Working Group took place on 15 November 2000. It opened with the issue of continued research at the Central Naval Archives at Gatchina. Mr. Clift noted the previous day’s working group session had ended with a report on documents relating to the 6 November 1951 incident, and said we should prepare to conduct similar research on the 13 June 1952, 29 July 1953, and 18 April 1955 incidents.

Secondly, Mr. Clift said the U.S. side thought it important to renew contacts with the Border Guards. The Border Guards had no doubt played a role in the various shoot down incidents, particularly in the search and recovery operations. Information from the Border Guards had in fact shed light on several Cold War loss incidents, and we needed to continue the search for additional documentation. Recognizing that the Border Guards were part of the KGB during the Soviet era, Mr. Clift said we probably could not expect exactly the same kind of research arrangement at the Border Guards Archives as we have at the Central Military Archives at Podolsk or at the Central Naval Archives at Gatchina. He proposed that Dr. Jim Connell, the Chief of the Joint Commission Support Directorate office in Moscow, work with Colonel Vinogradov and his staff on arrangements for further research at the Border Guards Archives. Colonel Vinogradov agreed to the need for continued work with the Border Guards and agreed to pursue Mr. Clift's recommendation.

The discussion then turned to the memoirs of the Russian émigré and the 13 June 1952 shoot down of a U.S. Air Force RB-29 over the Sea of Japan. Mr. Clift pointed out the memoirs were just one source of information the U.S. side possessed indicating the crew may have survived. Reports of sightings of the crew from the 13 June 1952 shoot down had been received by the U.S. Government almost from the day the plane went down. The other sources of information included a report about a Radio Moscow broadcast from 16 June 1952 that reported a U.S. officer had been picked up by a Soviet vessel two days previously; debriefings of another RB-29 crew, shot down on 4 July 1952 over Korea, who said they had been asked personal questions about Major Samuel Busch, the pilot of the aircraft, during interrogation sessions; and a diplomatic note from the U.S. State Department in 1956 that contained a report of an alleged sighting of an American aviator in a hospital north of Magadan. Copies of these items were included among the U.S. documents on U.S. Cold War losses over or near Soviet territory that were provided to the Russian side at the beginning of the first working group session.

At this point, Ms. Dockham suggested several concrete steps that could be taken to investigate these sources. The U.S. side was requesting a copy of the transcript of the Radio Moscow broadcast of 16 June 1952, as well as the individual interrogation reports of the aircrew members from the 4 July 1952 shoot down. We know these exist from documentation previously passed by the Russian side. These interrogation reports were most likely to be found in the Central Military Archives at Podolsk. As for the September 1956 diplomatic note, it was based on U.S. reports written from debriefs of foreign nationals who had been released from Soviet camps; one or two such reports were included among the documents passed to Colonel Vinogradov.

Colonel Vinogradov promised the Russian side would look for the Radio Moscow transcript and would also check for newspaper stories from the period. As for the interrogation reports from the crew of the 4 July 1952 shoot down over Korea; Vinogradov suggested making a request for these documents through Colonel Orlov, Co-Chairman of the Korean War Working Group. He asked Admiral Novyy to check for archival documentation on vessels that might have been sent to the place where the RB-29 went down. He promised to check the Border Guards and Federal Security Services Archives for materials, and said he would query local authorities in the Far East about the information contained in the U.S. documentation he had received.

Mr. Clift brought up the subject of the gun camera photography cited in a report from Kuznetsov to Stalin concerning the 13 June 1952 incident. Mr. Clift said he found it difficult to believe the gun camera photography had simply been discarded. Admiral Novyy suggested such photography, if it still exists, might be held in the Pacific Fleet archives. Colonel Vinogradov agreed a request should be made for a search for the photography at those archives.

During the course of the working group sessions, Mr. Clift handed Colonel Vinogradov information the U.S. side had obtained on three former Soviet prisoners of war from Afghanistan and passed a complete set of all U.S. documentation on U.S. Cold War losses that took place over or near Soviet territory. He also provided a draft of the Cold War Working Group section of the 1995-2000 report of the Joint Commission to Colonel Vinogradov.

Korean War Working Group

The Korean War Working Group (KWWG) met twice during the Seventeenth Plenum in Moscow. The working group was chaired on the U.S. side by Mr. Norman Kass, the Commission's U.S. Executive Secretary, and on the Russian side by Colonel Orlov of the Russian Ministry of Defense's Institute of Military History. Also participating in the work of the group were: Genera-Major Sergei Shauro of the Main Information Center of the Russian Ministry of Internal Affairs (MVD); Mr. Igor Pitelin of the MVD; Ms. Alina Belyukova, an archivist; Major Tim Falkowski, Senior Analyst, KWWG, Joint Commission Support Directorate (JCSD); Mr. Danz Blasser, KWWG, JCSD; SFC Michael Lunini, KWWG, JCSD; and SFC Joya Gooden, KWWG, JCSD.

At 1:30 p.m. the KWWG convened at the National Hotel on 14 November 2000. Mr. Kass began the session by expressing Congressman Johnson's best wishes for positive and productive results for the working group. Mr. Kass passed Congressman Johnson's letter to Colonel Orlov which expressed the Congressman's support for expanding access at the Podolsk archives to include reports from former Soviet crash site search groups, and for continued support for research into the reports compiled in the "Gulag Study."

Mr. Kass passed a copy of the U.S. side's draft of the KWWG section to the Commission's 1995-2000 Joint Report. He requested that Colonel Orlov review the document and provide feedback as soon as possible. Colonel Orlov agreed to do so.

Next, Mr. Kass praised the ongoing research at Podolsk that has been instrumental in clarifying loss circumstances not only of American pilots but Soviet pilots as well. Colonel Orlov agreed and commented that much more work needs to continue to determine the fate of the remaining pilots still missing in action from the Korean War. Mr. Kass interjected that now is the time to expand our efforts at the Podolsk archives. In particular, he asked for expanded access to archived reporting by search groups which investigated crash sites during the war. The search groups are important because they were directly involved in the recovery of live pilots, their remains and personal effects.

After a thorough review of the 64th FAC (Fighter Aviation Corps) archived material, the U.S. side has identified several of the Soviet search group members who participated in searches at U.S. crash sites. Mr. Kass presented Colonel Orlov a Russian language interview with one of the former Soviet search group members—former Senior Lieutenant Lukynikh. Lukynikh reported that his search group was under orders to return live U.N. pilots, pilot remains, aircraft parts, and personal effects to their respective Soviet division headquarters. After reading the report Colonel Orlov noted that there were two kinds of Soviet search teams during the Korean War. The first group was *ad hoc* in nature and consisted largely of Soviet mechanics and technicians who were responsible for locating downed Soviet aircraft. Colonel Orlov indicated that it was in such a unit that Lukynikh served when assigned to search for Soviet aircraft. Orlov therefore concluded that Lukynikh would not likely have had information on U.S. or U.N. aircraft or personnel. The second type of search group was composed of Soviets, North Koreans, and Chinese personnel responsible for searching for downed U.N. aircraft. In neither case did Orlov have knowledge of orders to return U.N. pilots, remains or personal effects.

Based on his work at Podolsk, Mr. Blasser suggested that the role of the Soviet search groups evolved during the course of the Korean War. Initially, the search groups seemed to lack standard operating procedures. However, as the war progressed, the search groups' mission was clarified. The search groups were responsible for assisting downed pilots, exploiting foreign technology, and preventing enemy sources from access to downed MiG aircraft. In the case of a downed American aircraft, parts would be removed as proof that the plane had been shot down. Every search group report that the U.S. side has seen was routed through the Air Force Operational Group, which was in China for the first year of the war. The U.S. side, therefore, requested access to finding guides to the Air Force

Operational Group and the Main Staff and the General Staff of the of the Air Force as a first, important step in locating additional search-group reports. It is believed that these reports may be instrumental in determining the fate of unaccounted-for U.S. airmen.

Colonel Orlov agreed as to the need to review these finding guides but indicated that requests for access to documents generated by higher headquarters such as the General Staff must be directed to General Manilov. The U.S. side should draft a letter and submit a formal request to General Manilov, Colonel Orlov suggested.

Colonel Orlov was then reminded that, at the 16th Plenum in 1999, General Lajoie provided a letter to the Russian side requesting all remaining classified material pertaining to U.S. servicemen from the Korean War be reviewed and declassified. This request was reiterated by U.S. Secretary of Defense Cohen in a meeting with Russian Minister of Defense Sergeyev. Mr. Kass asked Colonel Orlov what has been done with respect to this request. Colonel Orlov pointed out that the review of materials at Podolsk is ongoing but has been complicated by an influx of material from the Air Defense Forces (PVO) and the Air Forces (VVS). The large amount of documents received from the PVO and VVS covers both the Korean and Vietnam wars and requires an additional unspecified amount of time to review and ultimately declassify.

While Colonel Orlov could not provide a specific answer with regard to the declassification request, he referred to the document presented at the opening session of the Plenum entitled, "Several Accomplishments Concerning the Work of the Korean Section." This document is divided in two parts entitled "Confirmed Deaths of American Pilots Previously MIA," and "Clarification of the Fates of Several American Pilots." Colonel Orlov suggested that this document may represent the results of a review undertaken at Podolsk in response to General Lajoie's request. Mr. Kass acknowledged that possibility and noted that the U.S. side will review the document for any new information that could help identify the fate of American pilots. [Subsequent review established that the document presented by Colonel Orlov was a summary of research conducted to date by U.S. researchers at Podolsk. Therefore, the U.S. side continues to request the results of the review of classified holdings at Podolsk which the Russian side previously agreed to conduct.]

Colonel Orlov then presented the U.S. side with a list of Soviet casualties from the Korean War. The list, entitled "23 Soviet Pilots Who Perished in Korea and Whose Burial Place and Circumstances of Death are Unknown," provides the names of the Soviet pilots along with the dates on which they died in aerial combat. Colonel Orlov asked for the American side to assist in determining the loss circumstances of these servicemen through an interview program with American pilots from that period. Mr. Blasser offered to provide information on these Soviet pilots that he has garnered from his Podolsk research. Although a time-intensive project, Mr. Kass agreed that this was a good idea and could produce positive results for the Russian side and for the Commission.

Colonel Orlov requested assistance in developing communications with the relatives and veterans of the Korean War to improve the Russian side's ties with Western veterans'

organizations. He specifically mentioned the Veterans of Foreign Wars and the Society of Aces and asked for the U.S. side's assistance in organizing meetings with these organizations as well as with the relatives and other veterans of the Korean War. The U.S. side agreed to explore this request further.

Mr. Kass presented Colonel Orlov a copy of the "Gulag Study" which summarizes eyewitness accounts of U.S. POWs in the Gulag prison system of the former Soviet Union. He challenged Colonel Orlov to provide assistance in determining the veracity of these accounts and solicited ideas on how to approach this complex issue. Mr. Kass requested that the Russian side study the incidents in the Gulag Study thoroughly so that the Commission will be able to respond in detail to the many expressions of concern received from the American public and the media. Colonel Orlov responded that, as we all know, the Russian side has been working on this problem for the last seven years and that, of course, he and his staff will thoroughly check the evidence presented in the Gulag Study.

In the same vein, General Shauro commented that he has access to archives not only in Moscow but also throughout Russia and will painstakingly research all accounts of U.S. POWs presented in the Gulag Study. Mr. Kass urged the Russian side to be innovative and expansive in their approach to the research.

On 15 November 2000, members of the U.S. and Russian sides of the Korean War Working Group met at the Central Archive of the Ministry of Defense, Podolsk, Russia, to discuss current and future archival research with its director and other senior staff.

After a presentation touching upon the archive's history and mission, Colonel Chuvashin noted that U.S. researchers from the Commission spend eight days each month at Podolsk with nearly unlimited access to documents of the 64th Fighter Aviation Corps. Colonel Chuvashin then asked what his office could do to further assist research efforts of the U.S. side.

Mr. Kass said that the U.S. side was very grateful for the current support. He then stated that the purpose of the meeting was to explore ways to expand the scope of research at the Central Archive. More specifically, he stated that the U.S. side wishes to request access to documentary holdings of the General Staff of the Air Force and the Air Force Operational Group, the latter being the higher headquarters of the 64th FAC during the Korean War. Mr. Kass also asked that the Russian side present its findings on the review of classified document holdings of the 64th FAC, which was discussed during the opening plenary session and during the KWWG's working session on November 14. Once again, discussion turned to the importance of finding documents relating to Soviet search groups, which were dispatched to locate downed United Nations aircraft. It was noted that the quest for documents prepared by search groups should be part of a broader effort that includes locating items recovered by these search groups, specifically personal effects and aircraft wreckage.

Colonel Golumbovskiy explained that these search groups were formed from ground crews and other administrative personnel and that the majority of these records would be found in the documents of the technical support units of the 64th FAC. He also stated that items recovered were probably sent to military museums and other archival holdings. Colonel Chuvashin and Mrs. Pushkareva emphasized that holdings at Podolsk only contain paper documents and photocopies and no other physical items.

Colonel Chuvashin then stated that the review of classified holdings of the 64th FAC was finished and that the U.S. side soon would receive the results, although he did not specify exactly when. He said that any request to review holdings other than those of the 64th FAC would have to be approved by General Manilov. This would require General Lajoie and General Zolotarev to present a joint request to General Manilov for access to these documents.

Mr. Kass then discussed the possibility that the U.S. side could provide computer support to the Podolsk Archives. He stated that the U.S. side is coordinating in appropriate channels to gain permission to provide much-needed computers and microfiche readers to the archives in support of the Commission's work. The U.S. side agreed to keep Colonel Chuvashin informed of progress on this issue.

Colonel Chuvashin then took the members of the U.S. side on a tour of the archives, which included the reading and research rooms, the Hall of Esteemed Researchers, and Russian holdings concerning Soviet MIAs from WWII to the present. At the close of the tour, both sides of the working group agreed that the meeting had been productive and that mutual support could be expected to continue.

Vietnam War Working Group

The Vietnam War Working Group (VWWG) met twice during the Seventeenth Plenum in Moscow. The working group was chaired on the U.S. side by General Lajoie, the Commission's U.S. Co-Chairman, and on the Russian side by General-Major Bezborodov, Member of the Russian Duma. Other participants on the Russian side were: Colonel Valeriy Filippov, Ministry of Defense General Staff; Colonel Konstantin Golumbovskiy, Presidential Administration; Mr. Vladimir Sokolov, Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA); Mr. Dmitriy Vorobyov, Foreign Intelligence Service (SVR); Colonel Vladimir Ovchinnikov, Central Archives, Ministry of Defense; Colonel Sergey Chuvashin, Ministry of Defense; and Ms. Natalya Levina, Executive Secretary. Participating on the U.S. side were: Mr. Roger Schumacher, Senior Analyst, VWWG, JCSD; MSgt Jeff Farnquist, VWWG, JCSD; TSgt Thomas Shipp, VWWG, JCSD; and Yuriy Shkeyrov, U.S. State Department Interpreter.

The first session took place on 14 November 2000. A number of long-standing issues of importance to the American side were discussed.

Access to the Podolsk Archives

Colonel Chuvashin, Director of the Central Archives, Ministry of Defense, at Podolsk informed the U.S. side that, to date, 70 Vietnam War-related files at the Podolsk archives have been examined. Chuvashin said that no relevant information was found in these files. The U.S. side once again expressed their conviction that the Podolsk archives contain information of value to the American accounting effort. At a minimum, relevant data include: reports of the shoot down of American aircraft; POW interrogation reports; and the activities of the Soviet "special group" that acquired several thousand pieces of captured American combat equipment for eventual technical exploitation in the former USSR. The U.S. side urged the Russian side to continue and to broaden their search for such information in the Podolsk archives. The American side passed to the Russian side a detailed "archival search guide," which is intended to focus the search of the Russian archivists at Podolsk. General Bezborodov expressed his intent to expedite the Podolsk effort by working with the Russian General Staff.

Volkogonov Memoirs

The Russian side addressed several aspects of this issue during the Seventeenth Plenum. Some Russian Commissioners attempted to cast doubt on the credibility of General Volkogonov. Others continued to insist [as they have in the past] that Volkogonov's memoirs do not explicitly state that the purported KGB plan to "deliver knowledgeable Americans to the USSR for intelligence purposes" pertained to American POWs. The Russian side continued to deny that their archives contain the two documents referenced by Volkogonov in his memoirs. Nevertheless, General Bezborodov noted the continuing interest of the American side in this question, and he said it is the responsibility of the Russian side to prove or to dispel Volkogonov's assertion, despite the difficulties involved. He promised that the Russian side would work toward this end. The Russian side announced that former Russian Premier Yevgeniy M. Primakov, the only Russian official specifically tied by General Volkogonov to his discovery of the two documents in question, has again refused to meet with American representatives, stating he has already shared with American interlocutors everything he knows about this matter.

Direct Soviet Participation in POW Interrogation

The American side sought a status report from the Russian side on their effort to find archival evidence that a limited number of Soviet officials directly interrogated American POWs during the Vietnam War. [During the 16th Plenum in November 1999, the Russian side had pledged to research this issue and report back on their findings.] The Russian side reported that the issue had been referred to the First Deputy Chief of the Russian General Staff, whose response had not yet been received. Russian Commissioners expressed confidence that a response will be forthcoming, and they suggested that the passage of considerable time since the request was forwarded to the General Staff might indicate that information had been found pertaining to this request. The U.S. side expressed their continuing interest in this topic and requested the Russian side to continue their effort to acquire a response from the General Staff.

A New Search of the SVR Archives

The U.S. side reminded the Russian side that, during the 16th Plenum, the SVR (Foreign Intelligence Service) representative had suggested that a request from the American side for a new search of the SVR archives might be favorably considered. Since then, the U.S. request [sent to the Russian side in February 2000] has not received a positive Russian response. The Russian response during the Seventeenth Plenum does not give the U.S. side hope that such a request will be carried out. The Russian side simply promised that any new POW-related information that is found in the SVR archives would be shared with the American side. The Russian side does not intend to actively search the SVR archives for these materials.

"Quang Documents"

The American side presented their argument once again for "special arrangements" for American access to the two GRU (Main Intelligence Directorate) documents held in a Russian archive that purport to be wartime presentations to the North Vietnamese Politburo by General-Lieutenant Tran Van Quang, author of the so-called "1205 document." The Russian side adopted the position that Russian Commissioners who first suggested that such a "special arrangement" might be worked out had acted inappropriately, and no such access to these documents will be permitted.

A second, abbreviated working group session was held on 15 November 2000. Two issues of importance were discussed at this session.

VWWG Section to the Commission's Joint Report

The American side presented the Russian side with a draft of the working group's annex to the Joint Commission's Report. The Russian side will now examine this draft and provide their input before the close of this year.

Possible Soviet MIAs in Southeast Asia

The U.S. side briefed the Russian side on the results of their research into Soviet casualties during the Vietnam conflict. For the first time, the American side has developed information based on authoritative *Russian* sources that the USSR incurred more casualties in this conflict than has so far been acknowledged, and that 21 of these casualties were missing-in-action cases. The American side offered to work with the Russian side to clarify the fate of these MIA Soviet servicemen based on the possibility that unidentified remains recovered by the U.S. in Vietnam and Laos might be those of Soviet service members. The Russian side expressed interest in this issue and promised to consult on their side and determine whether cooperation with the American side might help the Russian side to clarify the fate of MIA Soviet personnel.

During the Seventeenth Plenum, the U.S. side also was afforded an opportunity to interview the current Director of the Archives of the President of the Russian Federation,

Mr. Vyacheslav Yakushev. Although it had been thought that General Volkogonov found at least one of the documents referred to in his memoirs in the Presidential Archives, Mr. Yakushev stated that his archive does not contain these materials. He claimed that his archive already has conveyed to the U.S. side all POW/MIA-related materials held therein. However, Mr. Yakushev offered to conduct a new search of the Presidential Archives for materials related to American POW/MIAs from all conflicts examined by the Joint Commission. The U.S. side agreed to provide Mr. Yakushev with an "archival search guide," providing focus to the efforts of Mr. Yakushev and his archivists in this search.

Finally, the U.S. side appreciated the opportunity during the Seventeenth Plenum to develop a rapport with the new Russian Co-Chairman, General Bezborodov. It is optimistic that, with his influence as a senior Russian military officer and as a deputy in the Russian State Duma, General Bezborodov may be able to advance a number of important issues before the Vietnam War Working Group that have been stymied for years. General Bezborodov has indicated that he is inclined to accept a second invitation from Senator Smith to visit the United States. The working group will plan such a visit in the upcoming year.

**CLOSING SESSION OF THE 17TH PLENUM OF
THE U.S.-RUSSIA JOINT COMMISSION ON
PRISONERS OF WAR/MISSING IN ACTION
(NOVEMBER 15, 2000)**

The closing session of the Seventeenth Plenum of the U.S.-Russia Joint Commission on Prisoners of War/Missing in Action (USRJC) was held on November 15, 2000 at 2:00 p.m. at the National Hotel in Moscow.

U.S. CO-CHAIRMAN'S REMARKS

General Lajoie convened the closing session by thanking everyone for their efforts and offered the respective working group Co-Chairmen a chance to report on their work. He noted that, after these reports have been heard, he and General Zolotarev will take the opportunity to give their own assessments of the Seventeenth Plenum and will sign the Executive Summary of the Commission's Joint Report on work conducted from 1995-2000.

U.S. Co-Chairman, World War II Working Group

Mr. McReynolds provided a summary of the work of the working group. First, he noted that the group had conducted a review of the Kamchatka mission and had agreed to begin planning for a full-scale excavation of the site tentatively scheduled for summer 2001. To support the on-going investigation of the PV-1 loss, the U.S. side requested an archival search be conducted for any records related to a reported 1970 mission to the site by a Soviet military team. The U.S. side provided copies of reports on interviews with Mr. Khotin and Mr. Cheresko, both of which relate to the PV-1 incident and may assist the Russians' search.

In response to a Russian request, Mr. McReynolds said the U.S. side provided three U.S. Air Force operational reports on P-38 air activity near Vienna on April 2, 1945.

A detailed discussion was held on the list of 39 U.S. POWs who were in Soviet hands at the end of World War II. Mr. McReynolds reported that the discussion focused on documentary records of Soviet Convoy Troops and also on the specific case of Rudolph Frisch. The Russian side agreed to provide a personal data card on Rudolph Frisch. Mr. McReynolds stated that both sides of the working group agreed that many questions remain on resolving the fate of the 39 individuals on the list.

Another task before the group, Mr. McReynolds related, is clarification of the details of the Kogan ring. On this point, the U.S. side agreed to prepare a background briefing on the case and the Russian side agreed to provide any documentation it could find which may shed light on the origin of the ring.

The working group held a discussion of the memoirs and "Gulag Study." Mr. McReynolds stated the two sides agreed to continue discussion of ways to follow up on the information contained in these reports.

Mr. McReynolds was pleased to report that the Russian side had agreed to the U.S. draft of the working group report, with minor modifications. The U.S. side accepted these modifications, and Mr. McReynolds thus reported completion of this task to the Commission's two Co-Chairmen.

On a personal note, Mr. McReynolds announced his retirement after 31 years at the U.S. National Archives. He described his work with the Commission as among the most significant and rewarding periods in his long career. The opportunity to meet and talk with families of POWs and MIAs and share with them the results of interviews and archival research, especially in those cases where a positive resolution was obtained, truly was an inspiring experience, Mr. McReynolds said. He emphasized the critical role of archival research in the Commission's work and was proud to have played a part in that effort. He wished everyone success in the grand humanitarian work of the Commission and expressed regret that he would no longer be an active participant in such a noble undertaking.

Russian Co-Chairman, World War II Working Group

Colonel Nikiforov endorsed the remarks made by Mr. McReynolds on the work of the WWII WG and looked forward to clarifying further those questions which still remain. Colonel Nikiforov expressed his belief that the work of the WWII WG has had and will continue to have much significance in the context of the Commission's overall efforts.

For the majority of issues which the working group discussed, more specific and detailed information provided by the U.S. side will allow the Russian side to conduct more deliberately and efficiently follow-on research, Colonel Nikiforov said. To illustrate this point, he mentioned the Kogan ring case and the incident of the PV-1 Ventura patrol bomber.

Colonel Nikiforov thanked Mr. McReynolds for his hard work and dedication and wished him well in retirement. In closing, he quoted the last line of the working group's Joint Report as an appropriate testimonial to the Commission's objectives: "With a sense of pride in what has been accomplished and renewed dedication to what remains to be done, the working group looks forward to continuing its work."

U.S. Co-Chairman, Cold War Working Group

Mr. Clift stated the talks during the working group sessions had been detailed and productive during both days. He believed these were the most productive CWWG sessions for some time. He thanked Colonel Vinogradov and his colleagues on behalf of the U.S. side for this productive work.

Mr. Clift continued, saying the working group had reviewed research from the past few months on three Cold War losses, the 1 July 1960 shoot down, the 8 April 1950 shoot down, and the 6 November 1951 shoot down incidents. The two sides had agreed on the next steps to be taken on these cases. They had also agreed on the next stage of research for three other cases: the 13 June 1952; 29 July 1953, and 18 April 1955 incidents. A discussion of the GULAG memoir as it related to the 13 June 1952 case was conducted. The importance of the Border Guards Archives was discussed within the context of defining the next phase of research on all these cases. Mr. Clift called on the staff at the Moscow office of the Joint Commission Support Directorate to work closely with the Russian side on this. Finally, Mr. Clift noted he had presented Colonel Vinogradov a draft of the CWWG section of the Commission's five-year Joint Report.

Russian Co-Chairman, Cold War Working Group

In his comments, Colonel Vinogradov said he wanted to mention the two sides had reached consensus on certain incidents and facts. He said he thought it was more necessary than ever to look back and see what had been done in the past ten years, because now we could re-examine our work with the knowledge and capabilities we now possessed. Looking to the future, Colonel Vinogradov thought there would be some closure, although perhaps it was a little premature to express this.

Colonel Vinogradov said representatives of military archives had also contributed to the working group discussions. [Captain 1st Rank Kazachenko, a representative of the Moscow Branch of the Central Naval Archives attended the first working group session.] Colonel Vinogradov noted that the group very much appreciated the independent expertise of Admiral Novyy and his work in the Central Naval Archives. The working group conducted a professional discussion on archival research. Colonel Vinogradov noted it is very difficult to verify much of the information the Commission receives. But he hoped all the same to do so with the help of further archival research.

As for the Joint Report, Colonel Vinogradov said the Russian side wished to add some language about the work the U.S. side had done to account for Russian losses.

Colonel Vinogradov noted the Commission began its work in the early 1990s, and issues that arose were not always followed up completely. He regretted the Border Guards representative was not present at this Plenum; nor was Mr. Biryukov, who handles the issue of missing Soviet servicemen from Afghanistan. Colonel Vinogradov said he would pass the information provided by Mr. Clift on three Soviet servicemen to Mr. Biryukov. In closing, Colonel Vinogradov said he was convinced that, as we parted, there was hope for continued cooperation and respect by both sides.

U.S. Co-Chairman, Korean War Working Group

Mr. Kass expressed appreciation for two days of productive discussions and visits which he believed will further the working group's efforts. He recalled that at the opening session Colonel Orlov and he had remarked on the number of open issues which were still

before the working group. He stated that, in large measure, the working group had either addressed these questions or moved significantly forward on resolving them.

Referring to work done at the Central Archives of the Russian Ministry of Defense at Podolsk, Mr. Kass stated that, in working group sessions and during a visit to Podolsk with Colonel Ovchinnikov, Colonel Chuvashin and Colonel Iliyunkov conducted earlier in the day, significant progress had been made. The importance of access to documents available at the archives was now clearly understood. Mr. Kass expressed the hope that a comprehensive review of all materials related to U.S. MIAs from the Korean War would be conducted.

He then turned to the working group's lengthy discussion on the "Gulag Study" and next steps that might be taken to validate reports of American POWs sighted in the Soviet Gulag system. Accepting the fact that these reports require further examination, the Russian side responded favorably to U.S. efforts aimed at broadening the search for documentary evidence.

The U.S. side received a list of 23 Soviet pilots who were killed in action during the Korean War and accepted a request to identify and locate for possible interviews U.S. veterans who may be able to shed light on the circumstances of loss of these pilots.

In concluding his remarks, Mr. Kass noted the cooperative relationship that characterized the working group's deliberations and expressed the hope that additional progress would ensue in the months ahead.

Russian Co-Chairman, Korean War Working Group

Colonel Orlov reported that, as usual, the working group discussed the results and outstanding issues from the previous year's work. He recalled that, a year ago, the U.S. side received permission to spend eight days per month working at the Podolsk archives. In this time the U.S. side has reviewed more than 14,000 pages of documents for relevant information. Many of the documents contain the names of veterans who are potentially knowledgeable and may be interviewed by Commission staff. The working group has already interviewed more than 600 such witnesses. As a result of the work conducted thus far, Colonel Orlov noted, the circumstances of loss of 139 U.S. servicemen have been clarified. He stated that both archival work and interviews are continuing.

With the help of the U.S. side, the Russian side has successfully identified the circumstances of loss of 57 Soviet Korean War pilots and, in some cases, has located their burial places. Colonel Orlov reported that the U.S. side submitted a report correlating American and Russian data with regard to losses of pilots during the Korean War. Further, during the work of the Commission, the Russian side has received microfilmed documents from the archives of three U.S. Air Force units, videotapes made from gun-camera photography depicting shoot downs of Soviet aircraft, and a list of those Soviet aircraft shot down by the U.S. Navy after 1950.

Colonel Orlov stated that much work has been conducted over the years researching and analyzing reports that U.S. POWs, who never returned from captivity after the Korean War, were sighted in the Soviet Gulag. In that regard, the Russian side of the Commission has checked information from the memoirs of the Soviet émigré mentioned previously; has visited with U.S. representatives Russian regions where prison camps were once located, and has conducted interviews with potentially knowledgeable personnel. However, as in past cases, no information confirming these reports was found. Nevertheless, Colonel Orlov stated that work on this question will continue.

Looking to the year ahead, Colonel Orlov identified a number of priority areas. He stated that American investigators from the Moscow office would continue their work in the archives at Podolsk and Gatchina. According to Colonel Orlov, the focus of the research group has been on interrogation protocols. In the year ahead, he observed, the focus will be on the reports of Soviet search groups, which went to the scene of U.S. aircraft shoot downs. He also noted that the U.S. side had presented him a copy of the "Gulag Study" for review. He described the information in the document as sketchy but pledged to review it nonetheless.

In the year ahead, the Russian side hoped to widen their contacts with American Korean War veterans, Colonel Orlov said. As noted earlier, the U.S. side has interviewed more than 600 Russian Korean War veterans. On the other hand, the Russian side has interviewed only about 6 American veterans of the Korean War. Colonel Orlov mentioned the list of 23 Soviet pilots killed in action in Korea. He reiterated the Russian side's interest in identifying, locating and interviewing American veterans who may have information on these incidents of loss and the burial places of the pilots.

In closing, Colonel Orlov thanked Mr. Kass for chairing the working group during this session and the other American colleagues for their attention and cooperative efforts.

U.S. Co-Chairman, Vietnam War Working Group

General Lajoie said he was pleased to lead the U.S. side of the working group during this plenum. He pointed out that Senator Smith wanted to attend this plenum and meet with General Bezborrowov but was precluded from doing so by a revised Congressional calendar. General Lajoie conveyed Senator Smith's open invitation to General Bezborrowov to visit the United States to discuss the many issues still facing the VWWG. General Lajoie stressed this invitation was not just a polite gesture but was extended sincerely in the hope that Bezborrowov will find a convenient time to accept Senator Smith's invitation.

General Lajoie noted that the sessions of the VWWG permitted an expression of the American perspective on a number of issues. These issues are familiar ones, even if their significance is often the subject of varying interpretations. The VWWG had a lengthy exchange on the Volkogonov memoirs but reached no conclusions on the validity of these memoirs. The American side made clear their position on General Volkogonov's credibility, General Lajoie said.

The VWWG had a long exchange on the Quang documents as well, General Lajoie noted. Limited discussions were held on the issue of direct Soviet participation in the interrogation of American POWs during the Vietnam War. The main point, General Lajoie said, was that, whether Soviet participation in POW interrogations was direct or indirect, reports of these contacts undoubtedly were generated, shared by the North Vietnamese with their Soviet advisors, and forwarded back to Moscow. These reports should be available today for review to see if they mention any Americans who did not return from the war. The American side considers these reports potentially helpful in determining the fate of unaccounted-for American personnel.

General Lajoie said the VWWG also discussed reports generated by Soviet forces on the shoot down of American combat aircraft. Such reports, he noted, might have been from Soviet air defense units early in the war or from Soviet advisors later in the war. In either case these reports must have been forwarded to Moscow and should be available for comparison with other information on American losses.

General Lajoie reflected that although the issues before the working group made clear that major differences exist between the American and Russian sides, the discussions were professional and undertaken in a spirit of openness. The U.S. side fully explained their views on the issues and sensed an understanding of their position on the part of the Russian side, General Lajoie concluded.

Russian Co-Chairman, Vietnam War Working Group

General Bezborodov agreed completely with General Lajoie's assessment of the work of the VWWG during the Seventeenth Plenum. He recognized that today, many questions remain unresolved in this working group. General Bezborodov noted the fact that there is no concrete result on a number of important Vietnam War-related issues does not mean that the Russian side is hiding something or is not doing their work.

On the question of the possible transfer of U.S. citizens to the former USSR, General Bezborodov remarked that, so far, no documents have been produced that would prove that this event took place. Since the issue remains in doubt, however, General Bezborodov pledged the support of the Russian side to continue to do everything possible to either confirm or refute this issue.

General Bezborodov noted that the VWWG had discussed Volkogonov's reference in his memoirs to a purported KGB plan [to "deliver knowledgeable Americans to the USSR for intelligence purposes". Again, there are no documents that confirm Volkogonov's assertion. Since the American side takes this issue so seriously and has raised it repeatedly, General Bezborodov promised that the Russian side would do everything it could to validate or dispel this issue, as well.

General Bezborodov observed that some progress is noted in the VWWG with regard to interviews of former Soviet citizens who participated in the Vietnam War.

There remain 58 names on the list of potential interviewees, and General Bezborodov promised Russian help in accessing these persons. *[U.S. Comment: We do not know where General Bezborodov got the figure of 58 names. Just prior to his remarks at the Closing Session, he was observed to be reading the American draft of the VWWG section of the Joint Report. One section of this draft notes that there remain 63 first-priority interview candidates and 55 second-priority candidates for interview (e.g., a total of 188). The American side is not aware of a list containing the names of 58 former Soviet candidates for interview.]*

General Bezborodov noted that the VWWG faces a "serious problem" with regard to access to archival documents. He said that the work of the group of specialists at the Central Archives [of the Ministry of Defense, Russian Federation, at Podolsk] could not be called satisfactory. So far, 70 files at this archive have been reviewed with no information of interest found there, he said. General Bezborodov noted that it is up to the Russian side to work faster in reviewing these materials. He said the Russian side agrees that the Korean War-era work in the Central Archives is now finished and the archivists there can switch their efforts to the Vietnam War era. He promised that they would continue their work, check all the documents, and ascertain those that contain information pertaining to the Vietnam War.

General Bezborodov characterized the VWWG sessions as "civil" and conducted with mutual understanding. He expressed his understanding of the desire of the U.S. side for "confirming documents" sooner than has so far been the case in the work of the VWWG. The VWWG faces different challenges in the future. Both sides must look for ways to do their work more effectively. General Bezborodov stressed again the sincerity of the Russian side, which wants to assess objectively the facts under consideration as much as possible, he said. The Russian side will make every effort to work effectively on these issues.

As for Senator Smith's invitation for him [General Bezborodov] to visit the United States, General Bezborodov said that he takes this invitation very seriously. He promised to take another look at his schedule and determine if such a visit is possible. He noted that he "does not feel comfortable rejecting Senator Smith's invitation a second time."

RUSSIAN CO-CHAIRMAN REMARKS

General Zolotarev thanked the working group Co-Chairmen and the rest of the Commission and staff for their efforts during the Plenum. He recognized that important work had been done in each of the four working groups and stated that the work of the Vietnam War Working Group presented the toughest challenges. He again welcomed General Bezborodov to the Commission, thanked him for his contributions to the working group and voiced agreement with his remarks. General Zolotarev recounted that he and General Bezborodov had more than once been together in trying situations, specifically in Chechnya. Based on these experiences, General Zolotarev characterized General Bezborodov as not only brave and determined, but also as very fair and just.

At the close of the Seventeenth Plenum, General Zolotarev offered his assessment that the results of the Commission's work were significant. In general terms, he stated, the fate of approximately a half million people has been clarified. Interviews with numerous senior Soviet and Russian officials have been conducted. In this regard, General Zolotarev named: Semichastniy; Kryuchkov; Rakhmanin; Baturin; Kokoshin; Manilov; Korabelnikov; and Katushev. Their testimony has clarified many facts.

General Zolotarev reported that two days prior to the opening of the plenum, he received a letter from Mr. Primakov, former Russian Prime Minister, who wished the Commission well and stated that in a previous meeting he had told Senator Smith all he knew about the POW/MIA issue. He had no documentation and no further information to add. Nonetheless, Mr. Primakov expressed respect for the Commission's work and wished success to all.

In response to earlier American requests for meetings with senior Russian officials, General Zolotarev noted that Russian President Putin was abroad during the time period of the plenum and had thus not been available. Russian Minister of Defense Sergeyev was unable to meet during this time period but sent his heart-felt wishes for success to the Commission as noted during the opening plenary session. General-Colonel Manilov, First Deputy Chief Of the Russian General Staff, was traveling outside the country and also unavailable. Mr. Zarudin, the Chief of Southeast Asia Department, had sent in some written testimony to share with the U.S. side. General Zolotarev said the meetings with Sharapov, Gribkov and Kulikov were possible and could be arranged if the U.S. side wished.

Before turning to the issue of the Joint Report, General Zolotarev wished to make a few remarks on the Volkogonov memoirs. He said that he had known General Volkogonov since the spring of 1988. General Zolotarev expressed his belief that, if Volkogonov were alive today, he would not have permitted the text of his memoirs to be published in its current form. General Zolotarev claimed that Volkogonov had a habit of making notes every day and, as a result, these notes had been published in Volkogonov's memoirs after his death. Our task, General Zolotarev concluded, is to study these notes and to ascertain the truth.

In conclusion, General Zolotarev expressed his sincere respect for General Lajoie and the U.S. side of the Commission and his gratitude for the work that has been done. He noted that the plenum was conducted in a friendly and productive manner and hoped future meetings would be conducted in the same manner. Assessing the Executive Summary of the Commission's joint five-year report, General Zolotarev called it an authoritative and substantive document and indicated he was ready to sign it.

U.S. CO-CHAIRMAN REMARKS

General Lajoie offered his concluding words. He stated that after eight and one half years, the Commission could be accurately appraised as a viable, well-established and highly supported activity of both governments. General Lajoie was pleased to learn of the

recent Russian Presidential directive that reappointed members of the Russian side of the Commission. He assured General Zolotarev that the Commission's Joint Report would be presented and well-received by whichever candidate ultimately won the presidency in the United States.

Describing the status of the U.S. side of the Commission, General Lajoie called it well-organized, adequately manned, and sufficiently funded to do everything necessary. He considered the center of gravity for activities on the U.S. side of the Commission to be the Moscow office. Last night, General Lajoie noted, we heard from U.S. Ambassador to Russia James Collins how well the office is managed by its long-standing and respected chief -- Dr. Jim Connell.

The two major activities of the Moscow office are the interview program and the archival research program, General Lajoie said. He assessed the interview program as working nicely, limited only by the amount of resources and travel time we are prepared to devote to that facet of our mission. The interview program could be even more effective if more leads were developed through the archival research program. Our biggest challenge, General Lajoie stated, was increasing access to the various archives in Russia in order to provide additional information to the interview program and to begin addressing priority questions. General Lajoie reiterated that his chief priority in the future would be to continue to work at increased access to the various archives of the Russian government.

General Lajoie surmised that if this Commission session was a meeting of the Board of Directors of a typical corporation, questions would surely arise on the Commission's specific accomplishments and how much money had been made in contrast to the expenditures of the last five years. But, General Lajoie reminded all, the Commission was not tasked with making a profit. Instead, he concluded, we dealt with human lives and a responsibility to provide families of missing servicemen the information they richly deserve about their loved ones.

At this point, General Lajoie announced that he, too, was ready to sign the Executive Summary of the Joint Report. The two Co-Chairmen signed and exchanged copies of the report, after which the meeting was adjourned.

ATTACHMENT:

"U.S.-Russia POW/MIA Group Renews Commitment" Department of Defense News Release, November 22, 2000.