

Message Text

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C O N F I D E N T I A L TOKYO 15888

E.O. 11652: XGDS-1

TAGS: MARR, JA, UR, PFOR

SUBJECT: JAPAN-SOVIET RELATIONS: NEGOTIATIONS FOR RETURN OF MIG-25

SUMMARY: THOUGH FINAL DETAILS OF DELIVERY STILL UNCERTAIN, SOVIETS
HAVE AGREED AFTER LENGTHY AND HEATED NEGOTIATIONS TO TAKE DELIVERY OF
MIN-25 AT PORT OF HITACHI AND TRANSPORT IT HOME BY SHIP. THEY
HAVE DROPPED PROPOSALS CONSIDERED UNACCEPTABLE (NOT TO SAY OUTRAGEOUS
)

BY JAPANESE THAT PLANE BE REASSEMBLED, EXAMINED METICULOUSLY
BY SCORE OF SOVIET TECHNICIANS FLOWN IN FOR PURPOSE, THEN TAKEN
APART AGAIN AND RETURNED TO USSR BY SOVIET AIR TRANSPORTS.
NEGOTIATIONS NOW STUCK OVER DEGREE AND LENGTH OF TIME SOVIETS
WILL BE PERMITTED TO EXAMINE CRATES WHEN RECEIVED, WITH
JAPANESE INSISTING THAT PROCESS BE QUICKLY CONCLUDED. END
SUMMARY.

1. FONOFF FIRST EAST EUROPEAN DIVDIR TOGO TOLD
EMBOFF THAT HE FIRST EXPLAINED TO SOVIETS DETAILS OF
JAPANESE POSITION ON RETURN OF MIG-25 AT OCT 2
MEETING WITH SOVIET COUNSELOR DENISOV. ESSENTIAL
POINTS WERE THAT (A) PLANE WOULD BE DELIVERED IN
CRATES AT PORT OF HITACHI; (B) SOVIETS COULD TAKE
DELIVERY ANY TIME AFTER OCT 15 AFTER NOTIFYING
JAPANESE SIDE OF NAME OF SOVIET VESSEL WHICH WOULD
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CARRY MIG HOME; (C) SOVIETS COULD CONDUCT BRIEF

CHECK OF CRATE CONTENTS BUT SECURITY CONSIDERATIONS FORBADE EXHAUSTIVE EXAMINATION; AND (D) JAPANESE WOULD SEND BILL LATER FOR PACKING, SHIPPING, AND CRATING OF MIG AS WELL AS CLAIMS FOR DAMAGE DONE BY AIRCRAFT AT HAKODATE AIRPORT.

2. SOVIETS THOUGHT THESE POINTS OVER FOR A WEEK. ON OCT 9, SOVIET EMBASSY MINISTER TSEKHONYA CALLED ON EUROPEAN AND OCEANIC AFFAIRS BUREAU DIRGEN TACHIBANA TO PROVIDE SOVIET VIEWS ON MEANS BY WHICH MIG MIGHT BEST BE RETURNED. QUICKEST AND MOST ECONOMICAL MEANS OF TRANSPORTING PLANE, TSEKHONYA EXPLAINED, WAS BY AIRCRAFT. HE PROPOSED THAT (A) JAPANESE PERMIT TWO AN-22 TRANSPORTS TO LAND IN JAPAN TO TAKE DELIVERY OF MIG; (B) MIG SHOULD FIRST BE TOTALLY REASSEMBLED AND CHECKED TO DETERMINE IF ALL WAS IN ORDER; (C) 21 (TWENTY-ONE) SOVIET TECHNICIANS BE PERMITTED TO ENTER JAPAN FOR THE PURPOSE OF CONDUCTING SUCH EXAMINATION; AND (D) JAPAN SHOULD EXECUTE AFFIDAVIT AT TIME OF DELIVERY THAT USSR HAD RIGHT OF CLAIM FOR ANY PARTS OF AIRCRAFT FOUND TO BE MISSING.

3. TACHIBANA TOLD TSEKHONYA THAT JAPAN HAD ALREADY INFORMED THE SOVIET SIDE OF THE PLACE AND MEANS BY WHICH THE AIRCRAFT WOULD BE RETURNED. THIS HAD BEEN DONE IN FULL ACCORDANCE WITH INTERNATIONAL PRACTICE AND PRECEDENT WHICH RESERVED FOR THE RETURNING STATE THE RIGHT TO CHOOSE THE MODALITIES AND LOCATION (NORMALLY AT THE BORDER) FOR DELIVERY.

4. TOGO SAID HE HAD SPENT THE WEEKS SINCE TACHIBANA AND TSEKHONYA MET "JUST ARGUING AND ARGUING," SOMETIMES HEATEDLY WITH SOVIETS. THEY TOOK LINE THAT MIG INCIDENT DAMAGED JAPAN-SOVIET RELATIONS, AND ONLY WAY TO REDUCE DAMAGE AND ASSURE LEAST POSSIBLE LONG-TERM EFFECT WAS TO RETURN AIRCRAFT AS SOVIETS WISHED. JAPANESE REFUSED TO BUDGE ON BASICS, INSISTING THAT PLANE BE RETURNED BY SHIP FROM HITACHI WITHOUT HAVING BEEN REASSEMBLED. IN
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EFFORT TO HELP (TOGO KEPT FACE STRAIGHT WHILE SAYING THIS) JAPANESE PROVIDED SOVIETS WITH DIAGRAMS OF CONTENTS OF EACH CRATE. SOVIETS COMPLAINED THAT PICTURES OF WINGS, FUSELAGE, ETC., WERE NO HELP TO THEM. THEY NEEDED TO KNOW WHETHER MACHINERY INSIDE WAS STILL INTACT. "YOU ARE NOT GIVING US PLANE, JUST BOXES," THEY SAID. JAPANESE RESPONDED THAT PLANE MIGHT BE REASSEMBLED IF SOVIETS PROVIDED DETAILED

CONSTRUCTION PLANS AND WERE WILLING TO WAIT ANOTHER THREE OR FOUR MONTHS. SOVIETS TOOK DIM VIEW OF THIS IDEA. JAPANESE THEN GRANTED PERMISSION FOR THREE SOVIET TECHNICIANS TO ENTER JAPAN, TAKE PART IN FINAL NEGOTIATIONS AND CHECK CONTENTS OF CRATES WHEN RECEIVED.

5. LAST WEEK SOVIETS BEGAN TO CAVE. THEY AGREED TO TAKE DELIVERY AT PORT OF HITACHI AND DROPPED DEMAND THAT PLANE BE REASSEMBLED. THEY INSISTED, HOWEVER, THAT CONTENTS OF CRATE BE METICULOUSLY EXAMINED, AND TALKS ON THIS POINT HAVE GONE ON, WITH JAPANESE CONTINUING TO REFUSE ANY LENGTHY OR DETAILED CHECK. MEANWHILE, JAPANESE HAVE MADE IT PLAIN THAT THEIR CLAIM FOR COMPENSATION WILL REMAIN VALID, BUT PAYMENT WILL NOT BE A PRECONDITION FOR DELIVERY.

6. AS YET FINAL DATE AND SCENARIO FOR DELIVERY UNDECIDED, ALTHOUGH TOGO FELT THAT SOVIETS WOULD PROBABLY COME AROUND. AT THEIR MOST RECENT MEETING THREE DAYS AGO, TSEKHONYA TOLD TACHIBANA THAT SOVIET SIDE DID NOT INTEND TO DRAG INCIDENT OUT. THROUGHOUT NEGOTIATIONS, TOGO HAD IMPRESSION THAT SOVIET POSITION ADOPTED BY FOREIGN MINISTRY PRIMARILY AS GESTURE TO SOVIET MILITARY. TOGO STILL WAS UNCERTAIN, HOWEVER, HOW AFFAIR WOULD TURN OUT.
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