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CEREMONY TO DEDICATE NATIONAL VIGILANCE PARK

On 2 September 1997 at 1000 hours, Lt Gen Kenneth A. Minihan, Director, NSA/Chief, CSS, will dedicate the National Vigilance Park and the Aerial Reconnaissance Memorial located adjacent to the National Cryptologic Museum. This memorial has been established to honor the many aerial reconnaissance crews who lost their lives in the performance of their duties. The centerpiece of the memorial is a C-130 aircraft, refurbished to resemble the reconnaissance-configured C-130A which was downed by Soviet fighters over Soviet Armenia on 2 September 1958. The backdrop for the aircraft is a semi-circle of 18 trees, each representing the various types of aircraft downed during US aerial reconnaissance missions. On the day of the ceremony, the National Cryptologic Museum will unveil a companion exhibit examining Cold War Reconnaissance and remembering some of the lost aircrews.

The ceremony will be simulcast to NSA locations and field sites on NEWSMAGAZINE and GIGSTER (channel information will be provided before the broadcast). Agency employees are encouraged to view the ceremony on one of the many Agency broadcast outlets on the date of the event. Limited standing space at the site will be available to employees on a first come, first served basis.

The Commuter Transportation Center (CTC) has taken action to minimize potential parking and traffic problems on the day of the ceremony. In an effort to alleviate as many of these transportation issues as possible, please use the N-9 and N-8 lots instead of the N-10 lot adjacent to National Vigilance Park. The CTC also plans to operate shuttle busses from the Bravo lot (across from the Sea Land and Air Center) to the Headquarters area. (For parking/traffic guidance regarding the event, contact the CTC at 963-6452.) The OPS 2A Cafeteria will be closed on 2 September; food service will be available in the OPS 1 Cafeteria. For additional information, please call the NSA Public Affairs Office on 963-5825s.

Cold War Reconnaissance and the Shootdown of Flight 60528

The United States emerged from World War II victorious, with its enemies completely vanquished. Although American leaders at the time expected an extended period of peace and reconstruction based on

cooperation with wartime Allies, it soon became apparent that the Soviet Union and its newly expanded bloc of satellites were acting with increasing hostility toward the nations of the West, in particular the United States. Confronted with a new conflict, a "cold" rather than a shooting war, policymakers in Washington undertook new actions to protect the security of the United States, among them national-level intelligence activities. Most decision makers remembered the trauma of the Japanese sneak attack on Pearl Harbor in 1941, which caused heavy loss of life, great damage to the US Navy, and brought the United States into the Second World War. These officials were determined to prevent "another Pearl Harbor."

The USSR was a "denied" area--travel within its territory for foreigners (and even its own citizenry) was severely restricted. Obtaining reliable information about the country or its military capabilities was difficult, if not impossible, through conventional intelligence methods. In response to this need, defense policymakers established a national program of reconnaissance, carried out by the US Air Force and the US Navy. The US Army also engaged in aerial reconnaissance, but usually in support of tactical objectives, as it did during the Vietnam War. The existence of the program was kept classified for decades. Although it became obvious that the Soviets knew about some aspects of the program, many key features remained secret from them. However, the decision to keep the program secret had unfortunate implications: it prevented public recognition of the veterans of the program as well as public honors for those who lost their lives while conducting aerial reconnaissance.

During the Cold War period of 1945-1977, more than 40 reconnaissance aircraft were shot down. The secrecy of the reconnaissance programs prevented recognition of the slain military personnel at the time of the incidents. Their loss was mourned by their fellow soldiers, sailors, airmen, and marines in similar programs, but the fallen could not be accorded public honors. The end of the Cold War has allowed the United States to lift some of its security restrictions concerning the reconnaissance programs, permitting us at last to accord due recognition of the achievements and sacrifices of these intrepid military personnel, and to tell their stories.

On the 2nd of September 1958, Soviet MiG-17 pilots shot down a US Air Force reconnaissance-configured C-130 aircraft, with 17 crewman aboard, over Soviet Armenia. The MiG-17 attacked the unarmed aircraft after it inadvertently penetrated denied airspace. It crashed near the village of Sasnashen, 34 miles northwest of Yerevan, the Armenian capital.

The C-130 reconnaissance aircraft was readily recognizable as non-lethal. One MiG pilot identified it as a "four-engined transport." The C-130 (tail number 60528) crew members were based at Rhein-Main Air Base in Germany, but were on temporary duty at Incirlik Air Base, Adana, Turkey. The aircraft carried 6 flight crew members from the 7406th Support Squadron and 11 USAF "back-enders" from Detachment One of the 6911th Radio Group Mobile.

The C-130 departed Incirlik on 2 September 1958 on a reconnaissance mission along the Turkish-Armenian border. It was to fly from Adana to Trabzon, Turkey, on the Mediterranean coast, turn right and fly to Van, Turkey. From Van, the pilot was to reverse course and "orbit" (i.e., fly a race-track pattern) between Van and Trabzon. This course would parallel the Soviet frontier, but the aircraft was not to approach the

border closer than 100 miles. The aircraft's crew reported passing over Trabzon at an altitude of 25,500 feet. The crew acknowledged a weather report from Trabzon--the last word heard from the flight. What happened next is unclear. The C-130 crew may have become disoriented by Soviet navigational beacons in Armenia and Soviet Georgia, which were on frequencies similar to those at Trabzon and Van--one signal in Soviet Georgia was stronger than that in Trabzon.

At that time, the Soviets denied downing the aircraft, claiming that the C-130 "fell" on their territory. On 24 September 1958, the Soviets returned 6 sets of remains, but, when queried, stated they had no information regarding the 11 missing crewmen. On 6 February 1959, seeking to get the Soviets to reveal more details, the United States in a session at the United Nations made public a tape recording of the Russian fighter pilots' conversations as they attacked the C-130. The Soviets continued to deny responsibility for the shootdown, and the fate of the missing crew members remained unknown during the Cold War.

A Memorial for Aerial Reconnaissance

Active-duty and former military service members have sought to honor the sacrifices of aerial reconnaissance crews for some time. With changes in world politics and national security concerns, it became possible to declassify the existence of the program. This declassification provided the opportunity to recognize publicly the sacrifices made by servicemen performing aerial reconnaissance missions. The C-130, 18 memorial trees, engraved plaques and a walkway for contemplation have been established on the NSA grounds to serve as a reminder to our personnel and the entire Nation that the Cold War victory did not come without a price.

In the 1940's and 1950's, Soviet propaganda boasted of its strong defense capabilities, and its record of achievement in World War II added credibility to these claims. The USSR detonated its first atomic weapon in 1949, years ahead of American estimates. In the 1950's, Soviet advances in rocket science increased the possibility that the continental United States could become a nuclear battleground. Washington's incorrect assumption that the Soviets had prompted the Korean War led policymakers to the conclusion that the Soviets were ready for a "hot" war, even though little was known with any certainty about the post-World War II Soviet military--its strength, its armament, its deployment, or its intentions. This lack of knowledge was in itself dangerous: it both hampered coherent planning by American policymakers and increased the uncertainties of officials and the public alike, thus heightening the possibility that an ideological or political struggle could quickly escalate into armed conflict. As a consequence, various intelligence programs were created to acquire the information needed for effective military planning; among them were the aerial reconnaissance programs used to collect both Photographic Intelligence and Signals Intelligence.

The United States Air Force Brings the C-130 to Fort Meade

The 50th Anniversary Year of the United States Air Force provided a unique opportunity for the 694th Intelligence Group to work with other commands to acquire an aircraft to use as the centerpiece of an aerial reconnaissance memorial and to bring it to the site at Fort Meade.

After some research, interested assignees at NSA discovered C-130 airframes still in existence that might be used for a static display. Contact was made with key personnel in the Air Force, who helped identify candidate "mothballed" airframes at the Aircraft Maintenance and Regeneration Center, known as "The Boneyard," located at Davis-Monthan AFB in Arizona. The aircraft selected was built in 1957 and used for cargo transport over six years ago. It was restored to flying status and left Davis-Monthan on 15 May 1997 for Greenville, Texas, with a four-man flight crew from the 40th Flight Test Squadron, Eglin AFB, Florida. Aboard the aircraft, which was minimally equipped to fly, were only a single VHF radio, a hand-held global positioning system unit and three Rand McNally road maps. In Greenville, a team stripped the aircraft of old paint, primed and repainted it in the same configuration and paint scheme of the lost aircraft, including the same tail number: 60528.

Another pilot and crew from the 40th Flight Test Squadron flew the aircraft to Tipton Airfield from Texas on 22 July 1997. The aircraft was refitted at Tipton by the 175th Maintenance Squadron of the Maryland Air National Guard, with help from the 653rd Combat Logistics Support Squadron from Moody AFB, Georgia. These personnel removed the tail and parts of the wings and engines from the airframe so that it could be moved to its final destination at National Vigilance Park. On Sunday, 3 August 1997, the aircraft was towed through Fort Meade and past Agency buildings with assistance from Fort Meade military police, the Maryland Department of Transportation, and numerous NSA volunteers.

The National Security Agency wishes to thank [redacted] and the 694th Intelligence Group, Fort George G. Meade, for their hard work and invaluable contributions to the successful completion of the Aerial Reconnaissance Memorial and the National Vigilance Park.

Note: An official US Postal Service pictorial cancellation has been created for the dedication of the National Vigilance Park on 2 September. A representative from the Fort Meade Post Office will be collecting mail and applying the cancellation inside the National Cryptologic Museum from 1130 to 1600 hours. Only mail submitted at this location will receive the special cancellation. For additional information, please contact [redacted] or via e-mail at [redacted]

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