

‘Cold War’ Veterans

Heroes Remembered

Killed in Action

Shot Down

Over Soviet Territories

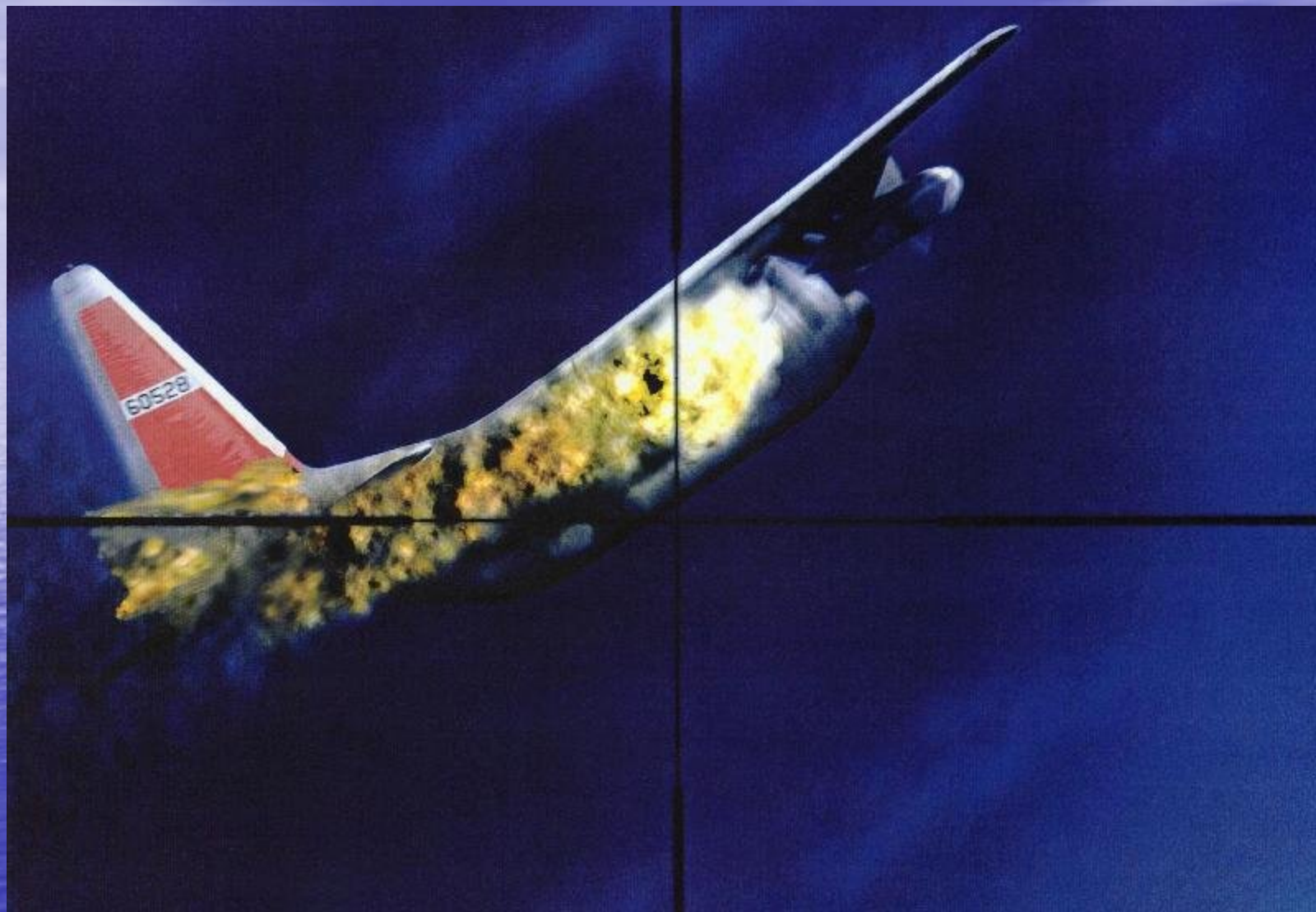
CAPT PAUL E. DUNCAN
MSGT GEORGE P. PETROCHILOS
A1C ROBERT J. OSHINSKIE
A2C GERALD C. MAGGIACOMO
A2C ARCHIE T. BOURG, JR.
A2C JAMES E. FERGUSON, JR.

CAPT RUDY J. SWIESTRA
1LT RICARDO M. VILLARREAL
SSGT LAROY PRICE
A2C CLEMENT O. MANKINS
A2C HAROLD T. KAMPS
A2C GERALD H. MEDEIROS

CAPT EDWARD J. JERUSS
1LT JOHN E. SIMPSON
TSGT ARTHUR L. MELLO
A2C ROBERT H. MOORE
A2C JOEL H. FIELDS



**IN MEMORIAM
OF
THESE SEVENTEEN USAF AIRMEN WHO WERE KILLED ON SEPTEMBER 2, 1958
WHEN RUSSIAN MIGS SHOT DOWN THIS C-130 NEAR THE ARMENIAN BORDER.**



The Shootdown of Flight 60528

A Tragic Shootdown – September 2, 1958

On the 2nd of September 1958, Soviet MiG-17 pilots shot down a U.S. Air Force reconnaissance-configured C-130 aircraft over Soviet Armenia; 17 crewman were aboard. The MiGs 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 six flight crew members from the 7406th Support Squadron and 11 USAF "back-enders" from Detachment One of the 6911th Radio Group Mobile.

On this day, the C-130 departed Incirlik on a reconnaissance mission along the Turkish-Armenian border. It was to fly from Adana on the Mediterranean coast to Trabzon on the Black Sea 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 September 24, 1958, the Soviets returned six sets of remains, but, when queried, stated they had no information regarding the eleven missing crewmen. On February 6, 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 remaining crew members remained unknown during the Cold War.

60528's CREW NEVER STOOD A CHANCE!

(C-130 Memorial Dedication -- Sep 2, 1997)

They died honorably while engaged in the Silent War. Now -- the Air Force 694th Intelligence Group (IG) in coordination with the National Security Agency (NSA) is creating a memorial honoring them. While on a routine mission along the Turkish-Armenian border on September 2, 1958, a U.S. Air Force C-130 crew inadvertently entered denied airspace over Armenia. Four Soviet MiG-17 pilots intercepted the C-130 tail number 60528 and shot it down, killing the seventeen Americans aboard. The crew consisted of six USAFE flight crew members and eleven United States Air Force Security Service (USAFSS) reconnaissance crew members.

Several individual efforts to honor those seventeen lost airmen have paid off with the 694th IG's authorization to create a memorial adjacent to the NSA, Fort George G. Meade, Maryland. The memorial will consist of a C-130 aircraft bearing tail #60528 -- on display in an air park setting and a memorial display in the co-located National Cryptologic Museum. The C-130 exterior is being refinished in 60528's original C-130A-II fit and form so that it will look identical to 60528 on the date that it was shot down. A supporting display in the Museum will contain related artifacts.

A memorial dedication with full military honors and in the presence of family members of the lost crew will occur on September 2, 1997 -- the 39th anniversary of the shoot down. The 694th IG and NSA have responsibility for creating the memorial, inviting guests and conducting the dedication. As a volunteer, I am assisting the memorial committee wherever assistance is needed.

So, what do we know about the shoot down? Of all Cold War air incidents involving the Soviets, the shoot down of 60528 is one of the most controversial. Four Soviet MiG pilots took turns firing on the unarmed transport. Unlike other incidents where American aircraft were lost over water, 60528 crashed on Soviet soil. Not wanting to reveal the nature of 60528's mission, the U.S. Government did not confront the Soviets until September 6 when the Soviets denied all knowledge of the incident. They stated on September 12 that they had found a destroyed airplane, and based on discovered remains, "it may be assumed that six crewmen perished." In response to a U.S. demand for information about eleven missing crew members, the Soviets stated on 19 September that "no other information on crew members is at the disposal of the Soviet side." A status quo ensued and the Soviets provided no additional information on the eleven missing airmen for over 30 years. Finally in 1991, Russian President Boris Yeltsin began releasing "available" information on the shoot down.

The main source of new data is a joint American/Russian commission on MIA/POW issues formed in 1992. Through that commission the Russians have released from Soviet Air Defense Command (PVO) archives several declassified reports on the 60528 shoot down. In a detailed investigative report dated Sept. 4, 1958 from Armenia to the Kremlin, the Soviet commanding general in Armenia told the Soviet leadership how MiGs intercepted and shot down the C-130. The Soviet report identified the crashed aircraft as a C-130, tail number 60528. A plate on the aircraft indicated that it was assigned to the 7406th Support Squadron.

The field report described the air engagement and named the four participating MiG pilots. The report also included MiG gun-camera activated photos showing 60528 in the MiGs' gunsights, with smoke streaming from its engines immediately before the crash. A forensic report verified the number of human remains (six) and noted that other remains may have been present but that intensity of the ensuing fire prevented identification of additional remains. No one was seen parachuting from the C-130. The report concludes that wreckage photos suggest that no one on board could have survived. I recently interviewed an Armenian witness who reached the same conclusion. In all probability all seventeen airmen aboard the C-130 died immediately upon impact. In 1993, local villagers created an Armenian memorial at the crash site honoring the seventeen Americans who perished in the crash.

The Soviets recovered a set of TDY orders for the 7406th flight crew, a .45 caliber pistol, some ID cards, ID tags and money (German, Dutch, Turkish and American currencies). In 1993, a U.S. Army graves excavation team recovered at the crash site an ID "dog" tag that belonged to A2C Archie Bourg, an USAFSS airborne maintenance technician aboard 60528 when it crashed.

The Soviets returned the bodies of six U. S. airmen in September 1958. Four of the bodies were identified and turned over to their families for burial according to the wishes of their next of kin. The bodies of the two unidentified airmen were buried at Arlington National Cemetery with full military honors in February 1959. Having exhumed the two unidentified bodies to perform DNA testing, the Air Force recently determined that one of the bodies was A2C Bourg. On 2 April 1997 in the presence of his family, A2C Archie Bourg was re-interred at Arlington Cemetery following a solemn, emotional funeral. I attended the ceremonies and met with Archie's family.

Research on the shoot down continues. I'll see you at the memorial dedication at Fort Meade, Maryland on September 2, 1997.