



Foreign and Commonwealth Office

London SW1A 2AH

21 April 1982

Dear John,

Activities of Warsaw Pact Airliners over the UK

In his minute of 10 December last year the Secretary of State for Defence recorded an incident on 9 November in which an Aeroflot aircraft overflew RAF Boulmer. In the light of the Prime Minister's views, recorded in your letter of 18 December to David Omand, the JIC duly produced an assessment (JIC(S2)(N)2 of 14 January). Plans were then set in hand for the FCO to call in the Soviet Ambassador in order to make a protest, and for the Ministry of Defence to brief journalists about the incident. But in the light of subsequent developments it was thought best not to protest about or give publicity to the particular incident. You may find it useful to have a short explanation for the record.

Just before the protest was due to be delivered on 28 January the Ministry of Defence told us that they had re-run the data about the incident through a computer, and that this had shown up an anomaly which might put into doubt the reliability of the evidence. They asked therefore that we should not go through with the protest while the point was looked into. Subsequent re-examination of the evidence led the MOD to conclude that the incident had indeed taken place as they had thought. But they suggested that it would be better not to protest or publicise the incident, but to wait until we could gain maximum public advantage if the Russians tried it again. Because of the length of time that had by then elapsed since the incident took place, we acquiesced in this view.

If another such incident occurs, and we get on to it quickly, we shall be able to take the appropriate action more effectively.

I am sending a copy of this letter to David Omand (Ministry of Defence).

Yours ever,

Jic

(B J P Fall)  
Private SecretaryA J Coles Esq  
10 Downing Street

21 April 1982



SECRET

S. Omand

22 April 1982

Activities of Warsaw Pact Airliners over the UK

Thank you for your letter of 21 April.  
The Prime Minister has noted its content.

I am copying this letter to David Omand  
(Ministry of Defence).

JOHN COLES

Brian Fall, Esq.,  
Foreign and Commonwealth Office.

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