

VISIT TO MOSCOW, RUSSIAN FEDERATION
by
HONORABLE JERRY D. JENNINGS
American Chairman
U.S.-Russia Joint Commission on POW/MIAs
September 19-23, 2004

The Honorable Jerry D. Jennings, American Chairman of the U.S.-Russia Joint Commission on POW/MIAs (USRJC), and Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for Prisoners of War/Missing Personnel Affairs led a delegation to Moscow, Russian Federation, from September 19-23, 2004.¹ He had a number of key objectives during this visit.

In his capacity as the Director of the Defense Prisoner of War/Missing Personnel Office (DPMO), he accomplished a command visit to DPMO's only overseas element, the office of the Joint Commission Support Directorate at the American Embassy Moscow.

In his capacity as the American Chairman, USRJC, he had several objectives in meeting with senior Russian officials from a range of government agencies and non-governmental organizations. These included:

- To introduce himself to key Russian officials as the newly-appointed American chairman of the USRJC.²
- To reinvigorate the Russian Side of the Commission. Of particular concern were indications of waning support by the Russian Government for the USRJC, suggested by:
 - the elimination of the Russian staff supporting the Russian Side of the Joint Commission following a reorganization of the Presidential Administration after the re-election of President Putin in March;
 - failure of the Russian Side so far to authorize the dispatch of a Russian delegation to the Commission's 19th Plenum, scheduled for November 9-10, 2004, in Washington, D.C.;

¹ Primary members of the delegation (DASDEL) were: Mr. Jennings; Mr. Mel Richmond, Chief of Staff, DPMO; Mr. Roger Schumacher, Director, Joint Commission Support Directorate, DPMO, and Mr. Larry Greer, Public Affairs Officer, DPMO.

² President Bush appointed Mr. Jennings as American Chairman of the USRJC in June 2004. This trip was Mr. Jennings's first to Russia in this capacity.

- indications that the line-up of Russian commissioners serving on the Joint Commission is changing without any formal notification so far to the American Side of the Commission; and
 - declining participation in the USRJC by Russian commissioners from a number of agencies.
- To plan for the 19th Plenary Session of the Joint Commission.
 - To lay the foundation for the visit to Moscow by the national commander of the Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW), scheduled for October 18-21, 2004.
 - To open doors for U.S. analysts to key Russian veterans groups by seeking support for the Commission's work in Russia and the former Soviet Union (FSU).
 - To broaden contacts among key Russian Government officials to increase their support of, and direct involvement in, the Commission's work.
 - To publicize DPMO's world-wide mission and the important role the USRJC occupies in this effort among key Russian interest groups and American and Russian mass media outlets.

Day One, Monday, September 20, 2004

Meeting with DPMO's Field Element in Moscow

Mr. Jennings met with the American and Russian staff of DPMO's field element in Moscow, the Joint Commission Support Directorate-Moscow (JCSD-M).³ This staff supports the American Side of the U.S.-Russia Joint Commission on POW/MIAs. Mr. Yuri Boguslavsky, Office Chief, and his staff provided a detailed briefing on Commission operations in Russia. They discussed the following:

- Mr. Boguslavsky described the challenge represented by the office's requirement to function in three main roles: as DPMO's Moscow-based staff supporting the U.S. Side of the USRJC and subject to Defense Department regulations; as a member of the country team at the American Embassy Moscow, working primarily with Department of State personnel and bound by Department of State regulations, and as an element of the U.S. Government, functioning in a foreign country and required to observe Russian laws and procedures.

³ Besides Mr. Boguslavsky, the Moscow staff comprises the following individuals, who were all present at this meeting: Mr. David Poirier, Deputy Chief; Mr. Vladislav Sorokin, Senior Researcher; Ms. Irina Koryakina, Administrative Assistant, and Ms. Yelena Statikova, Junior Researcher.

- Mr. Boguslavsky reviewed the key projects that are currently ongoing in JCSD-Moscow. These include:
 - Follow-up from the Far East expedition in August, 2004;
 - Determining whether Korean War-era files exist in the archive of the former Far East Military District in Khabarovsk, Russia, during a trip there by the Chief of Archival Services, General Staff of the Russian Ministry of Defense, Colonel Sergei Ivanov, starting on September 22, 2004;
 - Follow-up from Mr. Jennings's visit, September 19-23, 2004;
 - Sponsoring the visit of a team from the Institute for Defense Analyses from September 25-October 2, 2004, that is studying the work of the Joint Commission and its DPMO staff;
 - Preparation for the visit to Moscow of the Veterans of Foreign Wars' national commander, Mr. John Furgess, October 18-21, 2004, and
 - Preparation for the 19th Plenum in Washington, D.C., from November 6-12, 2004.
- JCSD-M Deputy Chief David Poirier and Senior Researcher Slava Sorokin briefed Mr. Jennings on JCSD's expedition to the Russian Far East (Kamchatka Peninsula) in August 2004, which resulted in the discovery of the crash site of a World War II-era U.S. Army Air Force's B-24 bomber at Vestnik Bay.
- Mr. Boguslavsky elaborated on JCSD-M's personnel manning, and the discussion led to a suggestion that we should pursue more vigorously than in the past augmentation of the Moscow office by internees from the Marshall Center, Garmisch, Germany.
- Mr. Jennings informed the staff about his interview at Brown University on September 13, 2004, with Sergei Khrushchev, the son of the late Soviet Premier Nikita Khrushchev. Professor Khrushchev provided a number of leads that require follow-up by the Moscow staff.

Meeting with the American Ambassador

Mr. Jennings met with the U.S. Ambassador to the Russian Federation, Alexander Vershbow.⁴ The Ambassador said that the embassy would continue to pursue the issue of Commission staff elimination with Russian authorities. He agreed that, for it to be

⁴ Present besides the Ambassador and Mr. Jennings were: Mr. Richmond and Mr. Schumacher.

effective, the Russian staff needs to be positioned in a Russian Government agency that exercises authority over the entire government structure, such as the Presidential Administration. He said that Russian officials are planning major celebrations next year commemorating the 60th anniversary of victory in World War II, and he suggested that the Commission has an important role to play in these events.

Meeting with the Russian Side of the USRJC

At a working lunch with the Commission's Russian Chairman, General-Major Vladimir Zolotarev,⁵ Mr. Jennings presented the American case for restoration of the Russian staff, its retention at the presidential level, and the need to reinvigorate both sides of the Commission. Zolotarev admitted that organizational challenges exist on his side, but he insisted that the Commission's four working groups will press on with their work. He noted that, of the original 47 Commissioners on the Russian Side, only 34 remain today. Fifteen of the original Commissioners lost their bids for re-election as Deputies in the Russian State Duma. Only three Duma Deputies, including General-Major Nikolai Bezborodov, retained their seats in the legislature and remain as Commissioners on the USRJC. The main problem is the elimination of the "apparatus" (the Russian staff) in the Presidential Administration, which supported the Russian Side, Zolotarev said. He understands the need to solve this problem urgently, and he expressed the hope that the week's activities would help to resolve this problem.

Mr. Jennings expressed his sorrow for the losses of the Russian people during the recent terrorist attacks—on the school at Beslan in North Ossetia, the downing of two airliners, and the bombing of a Moscow subway station. He emphasized that Russia and the United States need to work together to bring to justice the individuals responsible for these attacks and to fight the war on terrorism. Like our work together on the Joint Commission, these are noble goals that two civilized nations need to pursue, he said.

Jennings told Zolotarev that it is their duty, as the Commission's Co-Chairmen, to remind their senior leaders about the importance of the Commission's work and the support this work has among their publics. He urged Zolotarev to do more to restore the "apparatus" on the Russian Side. He also expressed U.S. concern that a restored Russian staff might be subordinated to the Russian Defense Ministry. The U.S. Side believes this would be a mistake, and it urges the Russian Government to retain the staff in an executive agency above the ministries, where it can wield greater authority and be more effective.

⁵ Also present on the Russian Side were: Colonel Aleksandr Orlov, Co-Chairman, Korean War Working Group, and Mr. Andrey Shagov, Expert of the Joint Commission and Deputy Chief of Section, Institute of Military History, Ministry of Defense of the Russian Federation. On the U.S. Side: the entire DASDEL, Mr. Boguslavsky, Mr. Poirier, Ms. Koryakina, Mr. Sorokin, and Ms. Yelena Watson (interpreter).

Mr. Jennings urged General Zolotarev to reinvigorate the Russian Side of the USRJC. He told Zolotarev about measures now under consideration to breathe new life into the U.S. Side, including the recruitment of new Commissioners from a broader spectrum of American Government and society. He informed Zolotarev that the U.S. Side is conducting a formal study, which is designed to improve the effectiveness of the U.S. Side, and he urged General Zolotarev to meet with the study group when it comes to Moscow, September 25 to October 2, 2004.⁶

Mr. Jennings asked General Zolotarev to obtain the necessary permissions soon for a Russian delegation to participate in the 19th Plenum of the USRJC in Washington, D.C., November 9-10, 2004. He reminded Zolotarev that the Commission has not met in plenary session for nearly two years, and it is important that the 19th Plenum go forward. He called for the Russian Side to provide topics for discussion at the plenary session, and he handed over another list of topics from the U.S. Side.

Jennings noted that the newly-elected national commander of the Veterans of Foreign Wars, Mr. John Furgess, will come to Moscow October 18-21, 2004. He asked Zolotarev to meet with Furgess, to which Zolotarev agreed. A discussion ensued about Russian plans next year to celebrate the 60th anniversary of victory in World War II.

Meeting with the Veterans Organization, "Combat Brotherhood"

Mr. Jennings met with the leadership of a large Russian veterans group, the "Combat Brotherhood."⁷ He asked for their help in locating and interviewing Russian veterans of military conflicts since the beginning of World War II. He offered to submit an article on the work of the Commission for publication in the organization's magazine, and he sought opportunities for representatives of the U.S. Side to address meetings of the group's veterans. Mr. Jennings asked the group to meet with the team from the Institute for Defense Analyses during the following week, and he offered them the opportunity to meet with Mr. John Furgess, the national commander of the VFW, when he visits Moscow in October.

⁶ DPMO has contracted with the Institute for Defense Analyses (IDA) to conduct a one-year study of the Commission, which began in June 2004. IDA is reviewing the work of the Commission (particularly that of the American Side) and will recommend steps for improving its effectiveness.

⁷ This organization is headed by Hero of the Soviet Union General-Colonel Boris V. Gromov, former Commander of the Soviet 40th Army, which invaded Afghanistan and prosecuted that war from 1979 to 1989. General Gromov, who also is the Governor of the Moscow Region, was scheduled to be present for this meeting, but he was unable to attend. Present on the Russian Side were: Mr. Dmitriy Sablin, Vice President of the "Combat Brotherhood" and elected Deputy of the Russian State Duma; Mr. Gennadiy Shorokhov, Executive Secretary of the "Combat Brotherhood"; Mr. Tigran Karakhov, Minister for Foreign Economic Relations of the Moscow Region, and Mr. Boris Zhigonov, Minister and Staff Director, Government of the Moscow Region. Present on the U.S. Side were: the DASDEL; Mr. Boguslavsky, and Ms. Watson.

On behalf of General-Colonel Boris Gromov, Mr. Dmitriy Sablin⁸ explained the work of the “Brotherhood,” describing it as one of the largest Russian veterans organizations with a membership of 2.5 million veterans from local conflicts of the 20th century. He agreed to help the U.S. Side of the Joint Commission locate and interview Russian military veterans. He responded enthusiastically to Mr. Jennings’s suggestion of an October meeting with the VFW’s national commander, expressing the desire that the Joint Commission facilitate contact between the “Combat Brotherhood” and other American veterans organizations, to which Mr. Jennings agreed, especially in the lead-up to the 60th anniversary celebrations next year marking victory in World War II. Mr. Jennings suggested a meeting between Russian and American veterans groups in the United States in the future.

Mr. Jennings described the adverse effect that the reorganization of the Russian Presidential Administration was having on the work of the Joint Commission. He asked the “Brotherhood” to use its excellent contacts in the Russian Government to seek restoration of the Russian staff and its retention in an office of the Russian President. Mr. Jennings’s assertion that elimination of the staff suggested waning support for the Commission by the Russian Government was met with protest from the leaders of the “Brotherhood.” They insisted that support for the work of the Commission in Russia remained strong, and they agreed to do what they could to seek restoration of the Russian staff as quickly as possible. Mr. Sablin said that he and other Deputies in the Russian State Duma who are members of the “Brotherhood,” including General-Major Nikolai Bezborodov,⁹ could be quite helpful to the Joint Commission.

Mr. Jennings handed over copies of DPMO’s 2003 Annual Report, copies of the Commission brochure prepared to demonstrate the benefits accrued to both sides from the work of the Joint Commission, and a copy of the four documents seized in Afghanistan by U.S. Armed Forces that contain references to Soviet POWs in Afghanistan. The “Brotherhood” formally presented to Mr. Jennings an award for “Combat Valor” for his work to clarify the fates of American and Russian missing-in-action servicemen. Mr. Tigran Kharakanov, Minister for Foreign Economic Relations in the Government of the Moscow Region, praised the work of the USRJC in accounting for Russian POWs in Afghanistan, saying that, “It is difficult to exaggerate how important this work has been.” He noted that the “Combat Brotherhood” also operates a group entitled, “Combat Brotherhood Without Borders,” incorporating veterans groups from former republics of the FSU, and he suggested that this group might be helpful to the USRJC beyond the borders of the Russian Federation.

⁸ Mr. Sablin is also an elected Deputy in the Russian State Duma.

⁹ General Bezborodov is Co-Chairman of the Commission’s Vietnam War Working Group. He met with Mr. Jennings later in the week, and notes from that meeting appear on page 11.

Mr. Sablin concluded the meeting by saying that he would report to General Gromov, who will speak with President Putin about the results of this meeting.

Day Two, Tuesday, September 21, 2004

Lunch with Stalin's Granddaughter

Mr. Jennings hosted the granddaughter of Soviet Premier Joseph Stalin, Galina Yakovlevna Dzhugashvili, at a lunch in the Ararat Park Hotel. They discussed the documents about the fate of her father, who died in a German POW camp, which Mr. Jennings handed over to Ms. Dzhugashvili in September 2003 during his last visit to Moscow. She was very grateful for these materials. Mr. Jennings agreed to direct a second search of U.S. archives for more materials on the death of Lieutenant Dzhugashvili.

Meeting at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs

Mr. Jennings met with the Director of the North America Department, Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA), Mr. Igor Neverov.¹⁰ Mr. Neverov acknowledged the “enormously important work” of the Commission, he praised its important accomplishments, and he noted its humanitarian interest. He said the Commission’s statistics were impressive, and it enjoys bipartisan support in the U.S. Neverov said that in Russia, the political importance of the Commission “is no less than in the past.” Since the end of the Cold War, the two sides (the U.S. and Russia) have been slowly building their relationship, and he acknowledged that, with the current change of administration in Russia, there has been a tendency to forget what has been done previously. He called the Commission’s work a unique dimension—“one of the bricks”—in the bilateral U.S.-Russian relationship. It is especially important because it is an example of cooperation in the military arena, he said. The Russian public is very positive about the Commission, a “success story” that has continued over the years despite changing administrations on both sides. He promised that the Russian MFA will give whatever support is required.

Mr. Neverov expressed MFA concern about the negative effect that major reform now underway in the Russian Government is having on the Joint Commission. He called the reductions “pretty drastic,” saying that he is aware of U.S. alarm that the Russian staff supporting the Russian Side had disappeared from the Presidential Administration. When Mr. Jennings suggested that the staff of the Russian Side should remain in the Presidential Administration rather than being subsumed within the Defense Ministry, Mr. Neverov said that this is, unfortunately, “the least likely option.” He said it was more likely that the staff would be re-formed and probably land “in the Defense Ministry but

¹⁰ Present on the Russian Side besides Mr. Neverov were: Mr. Vasilii Istratov, Deputy Director, North America Department, and Mr. Aleksandr Zakharov, Head of the Russia-U.S. Bilateral Relations Desk. Present on the U.S. Side were: Mr. Jennings; Mr. Richmond, Mr. Schumacher, Mr. Boguslavsky, Captain Lazich, and Ms. Watson.

with some political clout” or in the Security Council. Mr. Jennings handed over copies of the three letters that he, along with Ambassador Vershbow and Congressman Sam Johnson,¹¹ had sent to senior Russian officials expressing concern about the demise of the Russian staff. Mr. Jennings noted that no response had been received to any of these letters, and Mr. Neverov indicated he was aware that the U.S. Side expects a response.

Mr. Jennings raised the need to hold the 19th Plenum soon, as two years have passed since the last time the Commission met in formal plenary session. Mr. Jennings handed over a list of 20 Russian officials whom the U.S. Side has invited to the 19th Plenum, and he pressed for MFA support for going ahead with the plenum in November. Neverov said that the MFA would be the Commission’s “lobbyist,” and “surely before the end of the year we could clarify the situation” on the Russian Side and go ahead with the plenum. He brought up the 60th anniversary next year celebrating victory in World War II, and he suggested that the Commission ought to play a role in these celebrations.

Mr. Jennings asked Mr. Neverov to designate an MFA official who might hold the POW/MIA portfolio and act as an MFA point-of-contact on this issue. Neverov indicated that he would consider this request. He acknowledged that the MFA had not been involved enough in the Commission’s work for the past 12 years. The MFA needs to refine its work and make sure that the Commission continues to function, he said, and he promised more action and involvement by the MFA in the future.

Mr. Neverov suggested that the Commission seek support from the Russian State Duma and the Federation Council,¹² and he added that parliamentary involvement might be encouraged through an inter-parliamentary working group that now exists between the Russian Federation and the United States. He named Senator Trent Lott and Congressman Kurt Weldon as the working group’s leaders on the U.S. Side. The group is looking for substantive issues for their dialogue, and Mr. Neverov suggested that the work of the Commission and its issues might provide, in part, some of this substance. MFA might deliver “some push” in this direction, he said.

Mr. Jennings invited Mr. Neverov to the 19th Plenum, noting that Neverov’s counterpart in the U.S. Government (Mr. John Tefft, Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for Russia/Eurasia) planned to attend the plenum. Mr. Jennings also invited the MFA to provide an official or two to attend the POW/MIA accounting course, recently established at the Asia Pacific Center for Security Studies in Honolulu, Hawaii. Mr. Neverov responded with interest. Mr. Jennings also offered to facilitate a meeting between Neverov and Mr. John Furgess, the national commander of the Veterans of Foreign Wars, in October. Mr. Neverov said he would be delighted to meet Mr. Furgess.

¹¹ Congressman Johnson is the Co-Chairman of the Commission’s Korean War Working Group and an active Commissioner on the U.S. Side.

¹² These two bodies make up the federal parliament. The Federation Council is the upper house of the legislature, and the State Duma is the lower house.

Security Council

Mr. Jennings met at the Russian Security Council with General-Major Aleksandr Grebenkin, Head of the Department of State Security.¹³ General Grebenkin apologized for the inability of the Secretary of the Security Council, Mr. Igor Ivanov, to meet with Mr. Jennings due to his current preoccupation dealing with Russia's terrorist threat. The Security Council knows of U.S. concern about the elimination of the Commission's Russian staff and the fate of the Commission on the Russian Side. He said that post-election staff reductions in the Russian Government are not yet complete, and a review of the functions of different bodies within the Presidential Administration is ongoing. Grebenkin said that this current reform was so huge that the Russian staff supporting the Commission had simply been forgotten. He acknowledged that this was a mistake, noting that "together with the water, a baby was thrown out." Grebenkin said that the head of the Presidential Administration, Dmitriy Medvedev, has confirmed that this staff will be restored, and the question now is in which part of the Russian Government it will reside. He mentioned two alternatives—either in the Presidential Administration or in one of the "executive branches." Mr. Jennings made the case that, in order for it to be effective, this staff needs the type of influence and authority available only at a supra-ministerial level, and he urged the Russian Side to avoid assigning the new staff to the Defense Ministry.

Mr. Jennings also asked for an early decision on participation by the Russian Side in the 19th Plenum in November, which is now only six weeks away. He pointed out the complexity of staging a plenum, and he provided Grebenkin with the list of 20 Russian officials who have been invited (since early July) to Washington for the plenum.

Mr. Jennings provided a copy of the new brochure prepared by the U.S. Side that demonstrates the benefits accrued to both sides from the Commission's work. He read selected passages from this brochure, detailing U.S. support to Russian efforts to account for their missing-in-action military service members. Mr. Jennings also provided a copy of DPMO's Annual Report for 2003. After reviewing these materials, General Grebenkin highly evaluated the Commission's work, noting its important humanitarian mission, bringing Russia and the U.S. closer together and promoting cooperation. He termed the Commission's work "extraordinarily important," and he promised to bring the concerns of the U.S. Side to senior Russian officials as soon as possible.

General Grebenkin openly reproached the Russian Side of the Commission for failing to publicize its work more vigorously, and he said that if senior Russian leaders

¹³ Attending on the Russian Side besides General Grebenkin were: General-Major Vladimir Zolotarev, Russian Chairman of the USRJC; Colonel Aleksandr Orlov, Co-Chairman, Korean War Working Group, USRJC; Mr. Andrey Shagov, Expert of the Joint Commission, and a Mr. Aleksandrov, an historian from St. Petersburg. Attending on the U.S. Side were: Mr. Jennings; Mr. Richmond; Mr. Schumacher; Mr. Boguslavsky; Captain Lazich, and Ms. Watson.

and the Russian public had been more aware of the Commission's important work, then the issue of its fate, as well as the need for an early decision on the 19th Plenum, would have been resolved earlier. Mr. Jennings noted that, while Grebenkin's reproach was directed at the Russian Side, both sides of the Commission need to work harder to publicize their work. Mr. Jennings informed Grebenkin that he would be meeting the following day with journalists from the *New York Times*, the *Wall Street Journal*, the *Associated Press*, and *Izvestiya* to report on the results of his Moscow visit and to publicize the Commission's work. General Grebenkin promised that the Presidential Administration would consider as early as possible the participation of a Russian delegation in the 19th Plenum.

General Zolotarev presented Mr. Jennings with the "Mechnikov Award" from the Russian Academy of Natural Sciences for his work "in support of the health of the nation." He also provided an award to General Grebenkin and distributed volumes of recently-published historical materials.

Meeting with the Committee of Warrior-Internationalists

Mr. Jennings met with Colonel Mikhail Zheltakov, the Deputy Chairman of a second influential Russian veterans group, the Committee of Warrior-Internationalists.¹⁴ Colonel Zheltakov said that the Committee had found and brought home 27 Russian servicemen from Afghanistan so far. Thirty more former POWs have been repatriated alive from Afghanistan by other individuals, committees, and organizations. A general amnesty, issued in 1989 by President Gorbachev, made it easier to convince Russian POWs to return home. Nevertheless, the Russians still count 273 servicemen as missing-in-action from the Afghanistan War. In April 2004, the Committee found the remains of a former POW—a Ukrainian—and identification of those remains is underway. In the past 12 months, the Committee has found 12 burial sites of former POWs and exhumed these remains. They have the support of the Afghan MFA in Kabul for this work. The Russians have erected a memorial to Soviet missing-in-action soldiers on the grounds of the Russian Embassy in Kabul.

Zheltakov requested assistance in identifying human remains recovered from the crash site of an Il-76, which was lost on December 27, 1979. The aircraft was carrying airborne commandos and was flying under total radio silence when it crashed into the side of a mountain. The crew and passengers of this aircraft are the first Soviet casualties from the Afghanistan War. Laboratory #124, which is responsible for identifying the

¹⁴ The Chairman of this group, General-Lieutenant Ruslan Aushev, was scheduled to meet with Mr. Jennings. Aushev played a key role in freeing 25 hostages from the school in Beslan. The DASDEL was advised just before this meeting that President Putin had dispatched General Aushev to the Caucasus, and Aushev would be unable to attend the meeting. Present on the U.S. Side were: Mr. Jennings; Mr. Richmond; Mr. Schumacher; Mr. Boguslavsky; Captain Lazich, and Ms. Watson.

remains recovered from the crash site, has undergone reorganization and is now almost completely closed, Zheltakov said. By way of demonstrating the difficulty the Russians have in identifying recovered remains, Zheltakov said that 1,000 sets of remains have been buried at Naginsk, remains which the Russian Armed Forces could not identify. The Russians value the U.S. experience in this area, and Zheltakov noted that the chief forensic expert of the Defense Ministry could not be present at the current meeting because he is working on identifying remains from the terrorist attack in Beslan. He noted that all of Russia's "power ministries" have their own forensic laboratories, and the Russians consequently do not have a general, shared database. Zheltakov said the Russians need help in this area, as well. He closed by offering assistance to the U.S. side in establishing contacts in Afghanistan.

Mr. Jennings requested the Committee's help in the Commission's interview program. He also asked for General Aushev's assistance in convincing the Russian Government to restore the Commission's Russian staff. In response, Zheltakov said that the coordinating council for the Committee will meet in October in Baku, Azerbaijan, and he promised to raise support to the Commission's effort to locate and to interview veterans of the FSU. Zheltakov said that he would inform the U.S. Side of the outcome. On the second issue, Zheltakov noted that government reorganizations are difficult and, sometimes, entire ministries are overlooked. He said he would ask General Aushev to address the Russian leadership directly on this issue.

Mr. Jennings asked whether the Committee publishes a magazine and whether the U.S. Side of the Commission might submit an article for publication. Zheltakov responded that the Committee publishes four large magazines, as do other veterans organizations in Ukraine, Belarus, and other FSU states, which also are members of the Committee. He said that he would raise this issue, as well, at the meeting of the coordinating council in Baku.

Mr. Jennings asked whether a representative of the U.S. Side could address a gathering of the Committee's veterans, and he volunteered Mr. Boguslavsky for this purpose. Zheltakov said he would talk to General Aushev and try to arrange something for the Baku meeting in October.

Mr. Jennings responded to Zheltakov's request for help in identifying remains recovered in Afghanistan by proposing an exchange program between Russian and American laboratories on a scale that would be acceptable to both sides. He said that the U.S. Side wanted to help its Russian friends achieve a high standard of scientific identification.

Mr. Jennings invited General Aushev to identify a candidate to attend the Asia Pacific Center for Security Studies' POW/MIA accounting course next August. Mr. Jennings also asked for a list of addresses of the major veterans organizations in the Committee, and Zheltakov agreed to provide it.

Meeting with the Co-Chairman, Vietnam War Working Group

Mr. Jennings met with the Co-Chairman of the Vietnam War Working Group, General-Major Nikolai Bezborodov, who began the meeting by stating that no matter the state of U.S.-Russian bilateral relations, the search for our MIAs is a sacred duty that we should never stop doing. He said that the archivists at the Central Archives of the Ministry of Defense (at Podolsk) had completed their search of classified Vietnam War-era documents, having examined since the year 2000 over 700 files from the Air Defense Forces (PVO), the Air Force, and the 10th Directorate of the General Staff. What they found in these files has been passed to the American Side in three documents. He said that he realizes the American Side is not totally satisfied, since there was very little information available about the crews of the downed aircraft referred to in these lists. The Russian Side has tried to answer a series of questions put to it by the American Side, but this work is now finished, he said. This in no way means, however, that the Vietnam War Working Group will cease its work, and the Russian Side will continue to study the cases highlighted by the American Side. He noted that the 700 files referred to above remain classified.

Mr. Jennings stated the position of the U.S. Side on the negative effects of the recent reorganization of the Presidential Administration that eliminated the staff on the Russian Side. General Bezborodov enthusiastically endorsed the U.S. position, stating that he thinks exactly the same about this question. The “apparatus” on the Russian side needs to be restored and positioned at the presidential level. “Either officials value [the Commission], or not,” he stated. Even positioned, as it was, in the Presidential Administration, the Russian staff found it quite difficult to accomplish the Commission’s objectives, he said, and he could not imagine how tough it would be at a level below the Administration. Bezborodov stated that a group of representatives in the State Duma wrote a letter to President Putin questioning the fate of the Russian staff. Now that the summer vacation in the Duma is over (the Duma opened its first session of the season just hours before this meeting), Bezborodov will work with General Zolotarev to resolve this problem, he said. He is angry when officials try to economize by slicing personnel and downgrading commissions like ours, he said. He praised Mr. Jennings’s meetings this week with senior officials at different agencies of the Russian Government, noting that, in his own approach to the government, he will strongly support the positions of the U.S. Side on these questions. General Bezborodov asserted that it was entirely appropriate for the U.S. Side to make clear to the Russian Government its stance on these issues. General Bezborodov also suggested that officials at a level in the U.S. Government equivalent to the level of the Russian Presidential Administration also should make known the views of the U.S. Government on this question.

When Mr. Jennings gave General Bezborodov copies of the Jennings/Johnson letter to President Putin and Mr. Jennings's letters to Dmitriy Medvedev¹⁵ and Igor Ivanov,¹⁶ Bezborodov again endorsed these actions. "We, too, are interested in this....We should work on it very hard," he stated. Mr. Jennings urged the General to do what he can, and Bezborodov noted that Stalin stated in 1938, "The goals are clear, the objectives are determined. Now....to work!"

On the issue of receiving Russian Government permission to dispatch a Russian delegation to the 19th Plenum, General Bezborodov also insisted that such permission should be forthcoming quickly. He did not commit to attending the plenum himself, however, even though Mr. Jennings specifically invited such a response by indicating his desire that Bezborodov be in attendance.

Bezborodov raised the 60th anniversary observance of victory in World War II next year. He honored the Soviet/Russian and American soldiers, whose exertions in World War II have, for 60 years, prevented a third world war. "Since we are allies again, especially in the war against terrorism, we should set aside our distrust," he said.

Mr. Jennings offered General Bezborodov an opportunity to meet next month with the national commander of the VFW. Bezborodov said he would be happy to meet him if he (Bezborodov) is in Moscow then. He noted that he will spend some of the month of October in The Hague for talks on chemical weapons destruction. Mr. Jennings offered any kind of support Bezborodov might think necessary, including U.S. participation in the 60th anniversary observance next year, articles for publication, or speakers for events.

In response to Mr. Jennings's question, General Bezborodov stated that Colonel Phillipov's position in the Vietnam War Working Group probably would be occupied by Phillipov's superior in the Memorial Directorate of the General Staff, General-Major Aleksandr Kirilin.¹⁷ Phillipov stated, however, that he would like to continue working with the Commission, even though he will be retired.

Press Interviews

Mr. Jennings held separate interviews with four representatives of the mass media. These included: Mr. Alan Cullison, *Wall Street Journal*; Mr. Steve Myers, *New York Times*; Mr. Viktor Nekhamkin, *Izvestiya*, and Mr. Vladimir Izachenkov, *Associated Press*. The U.S. press representatives seemed interested in current operations in the Russian Federation, such as ongoing research at the Central Archives of the Russian

¹⁵ Head of the Presidential Administration.

¹⁶ Secretary of the Security Council.

¹⁷ Colonel Phillipov has worked as General Bezborodov's assistant in the Vietnam War Working Group for a number of years. He retires this year from active service.

Defense Ministry at Podolsk and the expedition last month to the Russian Far East. The Russian press representatives seemed more interested in American progress in its investigation of the issue of the alleged transfer of American POWs to the former USSR, the Volkogonov memoirs, and actions the U.S. Side of the Commission has taken to help the Russian Side account for its missing servicemen, especially those who were lost in Afghanistan.

In all four interviews, Mr. Jennings described DPMO's worldwide mission and the important role the Joint Commission plays in this work. He stressed the support of the Commission by the U.S. President, his administration, the American Congress, veterans, the families of the missing, and the American public. Each reporter was given a copy of DPMO's Annual Report (2003) and the recently-published brochure detailing the support both sides of the Commission have rendered in their efforts to account for missing-in-action American and Russian service members.