

World and Nation

Pentagon accusing Czechs

U.S. Army helicopter attacked

WASHINGTON — A U.S. Army helicopter flying a routine surveillance mission along the West German border was attacked without provocation over the weekend by a Czechoslovakian jet fighter, the Pentagon disclosed Tuesday.

The jet, described as a high-performance L-39 fighter, fired two to four rockets at the helicopter but failed to hit it and then flew back across the border to Czechoslovakia, said Pentagon spokesman Robert B. Sims. The American helicopter was carrying two crewmen, neither of whom was injured.

The United States filed a strong

protest over the incident on Monday, Sims said. He declined to answer questions about whether the Czech government had responded to the protest or offered an explanation for the attack.

The State Department also refused to discuss the protest.

The incident occurred Saturday at 1 p.m. local time, or 7 a.m. EDT, north of the German city of Freyung, near the village of Finsterau, in airspace about one mile inside West Germany.

"The attack, which took place inside Federal Republic of Germany airspace in clear weather, was observed and confirmed by two separate groups of German civilians,"

Sims added.

He said the helicopter was an Army AH-1S Cobra gunship, assigned to the 2nd Armored Cavalry Regiment at the Feucht Army Airfield outside Nuremberg. Helicopters from that regiment routinely fly daily surveillance missions along the border and there was no reason for the attack, the spokesman said.

"It's routine border reconnaissance to see if there is a change in fortifications along the border or an increase in troop concentrations and so forth," Sims said, adding American pilots were under strict rules not to move any closer than 100 meters — or 330 feet — of the border.

Although the spokesman said he

knew of "no unusual tension in the region," he added that Czech or other Warsaw Pact aircraft routinely violate German airspace in the region, which lies in southeast Germany near the borders with Austria and Czechoslovakia.

The incident on Saturday was the 17th such incursion since April, but the first in which an American aircraft was fired upon, he said.

The Cobra is an older type of helicopter gunship that saw extensive service in Vietnam.

The Pentagon declined to say whether the copter involved in the weekend incident was carrying any missiles.

History Today

Associated Press

Today is Wednesday, Oct. 2, the 275th day of 1985. There are 90 days left in the year.

Today's highlight in history: On Oct. 2, 1835, the first battle of the Texas Revolution took place as American settlers defeated a Mexican cavalry near the Guadalupe River.

On this date: In 1780, British spy John Andre was hanged in Tappan, N.Y.

In 1869, Indian political and spiritual leader Mohandas K. Gandhi was born.

In 1919, President Woodrow Wilson suffered a stroke that left him partially paralyzed.

In 1941, German armies began Operation Typhoon, an all-out drive against Moscow.

In 1950, the comic strip "Peanuts," created by Charles Schulz, was first published.

In 1962, the television program "The Twilight Zone" made its debut on CBS.

In 1967, Thurgood Marshall was sworn in as a member of the U.S. Supreme Court, the first black to be appointed to the court.

Ten years ago: President Gerald R. Ford welcomed Japan's Emperor Hirohito to the United States. The Japanese leader indicated regret over his country's role in World War II and said he hoped his visit would contribute to friendship between the two countries.

Five years ago: The U.S. House of Representatives voted to expel Rep. Michael J. Myers, D-Pa., who was convicted of bribery and conspiracy in connection with the FBI's Abscam probe.

One year ago: President Reagan said that as commander-in-chief he was fully responsible for the Sept. 20 bombing of the U.S. Embassy annex in suburban Beirut.

Soviet kidnapping victims' fate in Beirut still unclear

Associated Press

BEIRUT, Lebanon — A telephone caller said Tuesday that two of four kidnapped Soviet Embassy employees had been killed, but intelligence sources said they were alive and the purported abductors produced photographs of them.

The instant photos, in color, showed all four Soviets with guns at their heads. An accompanying message said they would be killed unless a Syrian-backed offensive against fundamentalist Moslems in the northern port of Tripoli was called off.

The photos were delivered to a Western news agency in Beirut with the statement which said: "We will start carrying out the death sentence on the first hostage at 9 p.m. (2 p.m. EDT) sharp unless the atheistic campaign against Islamic Tripoli stops."

But as the deadline passed, there was no indication whether any action

had been taken.

Leftist militias backed by Syria, the Soviet Union's main ally in the Middle East, have cornered fighters of the fundamentalist militia Islamic Unification in Tripoli, the port city 50 miles north of Beirut.

Two of the men in the pictures were identifiable as the kidnap victims from pictures in their residence permits, photocopies of which were circulated by the kidnapers earlier in the day, Lebanese authorities verified that the permits were authentic.

The telephone caller, claiming to speak for the fundamentalist organization Islamic Holy War, said earlier Tuesday that two of the Soviets had been killed, but Lebanese intelligence sources said they were alive and had been held in west Beirut since they were seized there Monday in two separate abductions.

The intelligence sources told The Associated Press all the Soviets were

alive and that intelligence knew where they were in west Beirut, the Moslem sector of the capital.

They said two were being held by the Hezbollah, or Party of God, and the others by Islamic Holy War, or Jihad Islami. Both are fundamentalist Shiite Moslem groups.

The anonymous caller said the two Soviets killed were the commercial attaché and the embassy doctor. When they were kidnapped Monday, police identified the commercial attaché as Oleg Spirin and the physician as Nikolai Versky.

A representative of the news agency said the same man had called several times during the day with statements.

The intelligence sources said they could not do anything about the abductions because west Beirut is controlled by militias.

Experimental drug helps prevent AIDS virus from multiplying in tests

Associated Press

MINNEAPOLIS — An experimental drug stops the AIDS virus from reproducing and attacking blood cells in the laboratory, and initial tests show it can be given safely to AIDS victims, researchers said Tuesday.

"I think this is very promising," said Dr. Hiroaki Mitsuya of the National Cancer Institute. "This is one of the most potent drugs" against the AIDS virus, he said. "The advantage of this agent is that it is less toxic in vitro," or in the test tube, than other experimental AIDS medicines.

The new drug, known chemically as azidothymidine, has been code-

named compound S by its developer.

The effort to treat AIDS has been stymied by the difficulty of attacking viruses in general and the virus that causes this lethal disease in particular. The new drug works by short-circuiting the chemical process that the virus uses to make copies of itself inside human white blood cells.

Reports on experiments with the drug by Mitsuya and others were presented at a meeting of the American Society for Microbiology.

Currently there is no effective treatment for acquired immune deficiency syndrome, and victims often die of so-called opportunistic infec-

tions, attacks by germs that healthy people easily ward off. More than 13,000 Americans have gotten the disease, and the U.S. Centers for Disease Control estimates that the number will double over the next 13 months.

Experts caution that more work will be necessary before they can say whether compound S will play any role in the treatment of AIDS.

"No therapeutic claim has been made," said Dr. Samuel Broder of the cancer institute. "I am cautiously optimistic that the virus can be defeated. And I am cautiously optimistic that this drug can be developed," he added.

Airliners still safest way to travel, official says

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — While acknowledging problems in air safety, the chairman of the National Transportation Safety Board said Tuesday that airliners are still "the safest way to travel" and the public should not be unduly alarmed by the rash of aviation accidents this year.

But NTSB Chairman Jim Burnett told the Senate Commerce aviation subcommittee that the Federal Aviation Administration has failed to respond to changes brought on by airline deregulation, including the rapid increase in the number of small airlines and increased air traffic.

He said FAA inspectors are too few in number and often have "a very gentlemanly" relationship with the airlines they are supposed to monitor. Breakdowns in communications and coordination among

FAA Administrator Donald Engen disputed suggestions that the rash of accidents reflect a less safe aviation system. "We're keeping the system safe. I will not allow the system to become unsafe."

air traffic controllers, especially in towers of busy airports, also remain "very disturbing," he said.

The hearing was called to examine a variety of air safety issues against a backdrop of an unprecedented string of airline accidents worldwide that has claimed more than 1,600 lives this year.

FAA Administrator Donald Engen also disputed suggestions that the rash of accidents reflect a less safe aviation system.

"We're keeping the system safe, I will not allow the system to become

unsafe," Engen told the subcommittee, promising to "bear down" on airlines to assure that they follow federal air safety regulations.

But Engen rejected a suggestion that the FAA might have to restrict the number of planes allowed into the air, saying he has "found no reason to constrain" traffic and preferred "to let air commerce flow freely."

The FAA plans to hire another 1,000 controllers over the next two years, but several witnesses agreed Tuesday that the problem stems not

only from the number of controllers, but their lack of seasoning.


"Taking care of peak traffic (loads) takes seasoned controllers... and it's certainly not a yet a seasoned force," said Larry Jones, who headed a detailed examination of the FAA's air traffic control system after more than 10,000 controllers were fired for staging an illegal strike in 1981.

"I don't see why the (air traffic control) system shouldn't be under more stress today," Jones said, noting that airlines still focus many of their flights into congested airports during peak travel hours.

Meanwhile, a General Accounting Office survey of 5,000 working controllers concluded that most believe they are handling too many airplanes during peak hours and that the heavy workload is "adversely affecting the safety of the system."

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