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DAILY ENTERPRISE

(U) HISTORY TODAY - November 6, 2015

FROM: CCH

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(U) U.S. Air Force and U.S. Navy SIGINT reconnaissance and Soviet air defense in the Cold War



(U) The U.S. Air Force and Navy both undertook long-range aerial reconnaissance to collect signals from the USSR, starting in the late 1940s. Their long-range recce programs continued virtually to the end of the Cold War.

(U) Soviet air defense began reacting to these flights almost from the very beginning. On April 8, 1950, a Soviet MiG fighter shot down a U.S. Navy PB4Y2 "Privateer" aircraft in the Baltic Sea. Read more about the U.S. Air Force and U.S. Navy's "ferret" flight missions in [this History Today from April 8, 2013](#).

(U) The second shutdown also was a Navy aircraft.

(U) In 1950 the U.S. Navy began using the PV2 "Neptune" aircraft for SIGINT reconnaissance. The Neptune had set nonstop distance records and was used by the Navy also for land-based patrols.

(U) On November 6, 1951, a Neptune with a crew of ten was conducting reconnaissance in the Sea of Japan, in the general area of Vladivostok. The exact circumstances are not clear, but another U.S. collection site learned that the U.S. airplane had encountered a Soviet reconnaissance plane accompanied by two fighters.

(U) Intercept from the Soviet recce plane came through: "An aircraft of the Neptune type was detected. It was shot down. It is burning on the surface [of the sea]." The Vladivostok air traffic controller instructed all aircraft to return to base "under radio silence."

(U) All aboard the Neptune perished.

(U) To discuss historical topics with interesting folks, visit the Center for Cryptologic History's blog, [History Rocks](#) ("go history rocks").

(U) Have a question or comment on History Today? Contact us at [DL cch](#) or



(U) Historical photo: PB4Y2 PRIVATEER aircraft.

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