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PRC RELEASES SOVIET HELICOPTER CREW HELD SINCE MARCH 1974

OW271207 PEKING NCNA IN ENGLISH 1200 GMT 27 DEC 75 OW

(TEXT) PEKING, DECEMBER 27, 1975 (HSINHUA) -- ON DECEMBER 27, CHINESE VICE-FOREIGN MINISTER YU CHAN INFORMED SOVIET AMBASSADOR TO CHINA V. S. TOLSTIKOV OF THE FOLLOWING: ON MARCH 14, 1974, A SOVIET MI-4 ARMED RECONNAISSANCE HELICOPTER ENTERED THE SINKIANG UIGHUR AUTONOMOUS REGION, CHINA, TO A DEPTH OF OVER 70 KILOMETRES AND FLEW MORE THAN 400 KILOMETRES OVER CHINA'S TERRITORY. AT THAT TIME THE CHINESE PUBLIC SECURITY ORGANS HELD THE CREW MEMBERS AND THE HELICOPTER FOR INVESTIGATION; THIS WAS NECESSARY. NOW THINGS ARE CLEAR AFTER INVESTIGATION BY THE CHINESE PUBLIC SECURITY ORGANS, AND THEY CONSIDER CREDIBLE THE SOVIET CREW MEMBERS' STATEMENT ABOUT THE UNINTENTIONAL FLIGHT INTO CHINA, AND HAVE DECIDED TO RELEASE THE THREE CREW MEMBERS, CAPTAIN A. S. KURBATOV, LIEUTENANT A. F. USKOV AND JUNIOR LIEUTENANT V. G. BUCHELNIKOV AND TO RETURN TO THE SOVIET SIDE THE HELICOPTER WITH ALL THE EQUIPMENT AND DOCUMENTS ABOARD.

ON THE SAME DAY, REPRESENTATIVE OF THE FOREIGN MINISTRY YU HUNG-LIANG, DEPUTY DIRECTOR OF THE DEPARTMENT OF SOVIET UNION AND EAST EUROPEAN AFFAIRS, GAVE A DINNER TO CAPTAIN KURBATOV AND THE OTHER TWO CREW MEMBERS BEFORE THEIR DEPARTURE FOR HOME.

27 DEC 1240Z MJL/MC*****