## Soviet Frees 2 U.S. Fliers Despite Camera 'Evidence' of Spying

By Hans Schaefer

WIESBADEN, Germany, March 27 (UPI)-The Russians today released two American fliers captured when their RB-66 reconnaissance jet bomber was shot down in East Germany but said they had photographic evidence on which they could have tried the men as spies.

A Soviet statement distributed by the official Tass press agency said an examination of the wreckage showed that the plane had been used for military reconnaissance and that the fliers confirmed they were in radio contact with U.S. bases until they were shot down.

But the Russians said they had decided to free the two because the United States had expressed regrets and promised no more "transgressions" against Communist territory. The U.S. has denied all the Communist spy charges.

The two fliers were the pilot, Capt. David I. Holland. 35, of Holland, Minn., and Capt. Melvin J. Kessler, 30, a navigator-instructor, of Philadelphia.

## All Three Hospitalized

The navigator, 1st Lt. Harold W. Welch, 24, of Detroit, was freed earlier and brought to the U.S. Air Force hospital here for treatment of a broken arm and leg. Holland and Kessler joined him in the hospital for checkups.

[In Johnson City, Texas, Press Secretary George Reedy said President Johnson was "gratified that the fliers have been released" and "pleased that this matter has been sensibly settled."

[In Washington Secretary of State Dean Rusk said at a news conference that he knew of no deals or conditions made to obtain the release. He

reiterated that the plane was not on a spy mission and said the fliers would be questioned as to why they entered Red territory.]

Release of the fliers had been the subject of negotiations in Washington and Moscow since their aircraft was shot down by a Soviet fighter plane March 10.

The U.S., in demanding s their release, warned the Russians that their continued de-3

tention would jeopardize a matter of U.S. regrets, ADN number of negotiations under way between the two coun-

Holland and Kessler appeared under obvious strain have received strict orders when they descended from the DC-4 transport that flew them to Wiesbaden from Helmstedt, where they crossed into West Germany from the East.

Neither U. S. nor Communist spokesmen in Germany revealed where Holland and Kessler had been held. But

Woman opera singer freed by East Germans charges mistreatment.

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President Johnson visits boyhood home in Texas. Page A2.

diplomatic sources said the U.S. military liaison mission Potsdam, outside East Berlin, had apparently worked

near the town of Magdeburg, have Soviet troops appeared several miles inside East Ger- at the Communist Marienborn many, and Welch was held in checkpoint opposite Helmsa Red Army prison until his tedt. release.

men's release. This was interpreted as an attempt to demonstrate a sovereignty that the

said: "The government of the United States of America has expressed its sorrow over this offense and has given assurances that Americans involved never again in the future to undertake offenses of this nature.'

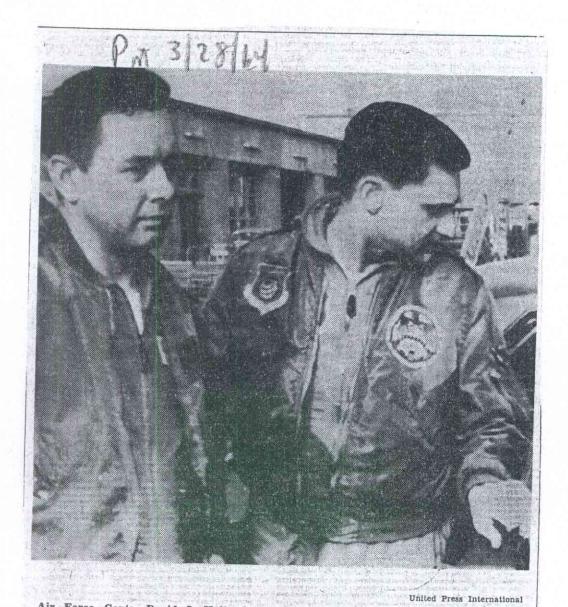
[As is usual in such cases. the East Germans tried to demonstrate their sovereignty by saying the Russians had discussed the entire affair with them.]

Holland and Kessler entered Western territory in a U.S. Army sedan from the comparatively vacant East German autobahn and moved into massive holiday traffic on the Wesern side, A West German police car, its siren open, led the way from Helmstedt toward Hannover and the waiting DC-4.

A Soviet Army officer with a detail of troops saluted the Americans' sedan when it out the details of the release. many and into West Germany. came roaring out of East Ger-The plane was shot down Only rarely in recent years

The fliers' wives were flown [According to the Associated today from their home base Press, East Germany made the at Toul-Rosieres, France, to first announcement of the air- Wiesbaden for a hospital reunion.

The fliers' return had been expected to follow immedi-Western allies do not recog- ately upon the return of Welch. Secretary Rusk an-[The official East German nounced Sunday that their press agency ADN issued a release was imminent, but the statement generally similar to Russians kept the fliers for hat of the Russians On the almost another week.



Air Force Capts. David I. Holland, left, and Melvin J. Kessler after being freed.