

NY TIMES

Plane Straying Questioned

Official Explanation of Mistake in Crossing Boundary Examined

TO THE EDITOR:

Another American plane has "strayed" across the international boundary into Communist air space and been shot down, and the State Department has piped up with the same old refrain (which by this time sounds like a tired record with a stuck needle): "All a mistake—no spying—just a training mission."

If no spying was intended, why do we have to "train" in a reconnaissance plane, and a bomber at that, capable of carrying atomic bombs? If these flights are only training missions, why can they not be carried out far from critical boundary lines? And why is it that Communist planes never seem to "stray" across these boundaries into Western air space?

Are we to suppose that our aviators are so inept and bungling that they cannot keep within proper limits, whereas Communist aviators are so competent that they never make mistakes? Why, too, do these mistakes so frequently occur at times when international tensions have become somewhat relaxed? And why do those who guide our foreign policy raise their hands in horror whenever anyone on either side of the Iron Curtain suggests disengagement in Central Europe?

Could it be that our "gamesmen" in the Pentagon, the RAND Corporation, and elsewhere are so bemused with their occupation and so appalled at the prospect of being denied the privilege of spending the rest of their lives at their engrossing war games that they cannot bear the thought of peace breaking out? In other words, has an important and influential segment in the higher echelons of our Government developed a vested interest in keeping the cold war going at any cost?

These "mistakes" have occurred so frequently under similar circumstances during the years of the cold war that one cannot but wonder.

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