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THE AMBASSADOR

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SECRET

LA C-26 Stalin Harriman
Molotov Conversation re ^{FRANTIC} bombing (2)
June 26, 1944

Present: The American Ambassador, Mr. Harriman
Mr. Edward Page, Second Secretary of
Embassy

Marshal Stalin

Mr. V. M. Molotov, People's Commissar
for Foreign Affairs
Mr. Pavlov, Soviet interpreter

Subject: Bombing of FRANTIC bases.

I then mentioned that the incident at Poltava had brought our airmen closer together. Marshal Stalin stated it was possible that the reason for the German success in finding the American air bases in the Soviet Union was that the Germans had been able to include a German plane in the formations of American planes returning to the bases. A German-manned plane of the same type as the American planes could have joined the American formation for the purpose of finding out where the bases were located. In 1942 the Germans had resorted to the same tactics and after study it had been decided that the best way to combat this practice was for the Russian bombers to return in groups of three or nine, and not en masse, and to keep a sharp lookout for any planes which might join these smaller groups. After the Russians had adopted this strategy, the German-manned planes which attempted to join the Russian groups had been shot down and the Germans had terminated this practice. The American planes returning to the Russian bases had come in in great masses and they might not have observed whether any German planes were following them.

I remarked that the Germans had indulged in the same practice with respect to our planes returning to England and that we had some experience in dealing with this problem. The Marshal said that the Germans had evidently done the same thing here, otherwise it would be difficult to explain the suddenness of the attack. I said that German reconnaissance planes had come over the bases one hour after the American planes had returned. I stated that the matter must be studied from all angles and that we were proposing for Soviet consideration that one unit of American night fighters come to the Soviet Union for the purpose of giving protection to the bases. I said that I thought that the Soviet air authorities would be

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interested in this proposal for two reasons: (1) the protection of the bases, and (2) the fact that the presence here of American night fighters would give the Soviet air people an opportunity to study their equipment and tactics. Marshal Stalin appeared to approve and indicated that this might well be arranged.

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Copy for General Deane.