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Soviet Union: Talks Begin on MiG-25 Return

Japanese and Soviet officials October 12 began talks in Tokyo on the return of a MiG-25 interceptor that had been flown to Japan September 6 by a defecting Soviet pilot. [See 1976 [Soviet Union: MiG-25 Pilot Defects](#)]

Japan had informed the Soviet government October 2 that it was prepared to return the plane after October 15, adding that it expected the U.S.S.R. to pay for transporting the aircraft from the military base to which it had been moved September 25.

Japan September 20 had formally rejected a September 9 Soviet charge that it had coerced Viktor Belenko, the pilot, into defecting to the U.S. Belenko's wife and mother, at a September 28 news conference in Moscow, appealed for his return. They denied that he had defected and said that they had received official assurances that he would not be punished.

In response to their plea, the State Department September 28 arranged a meeting between Belenko and Soviet diplomats in Washington. During the 50-minute session, Belenko repeated his refusal to return to the Soviet Union.

As a result of its part in the affair, Japan became the target of harassment by Moscow. Japanese-Soviet business negotiations were delayed, visits by Japanese officials and organizations to the U.S.S.R. were canceled and eight Japanese fishing boats were reported to have been seized off the Soviet coast as of October 5.

U.S. experts who had helped to dismantle the MiG-25 said that the plane was not as sophisticated as intelligence reports had indicated, according to the October 7 New York Times. Pentagon officials reported that the interceptor was heavier than had been expected, its electronic system was behind advanced U.S. technology and it was ineffective against low-flying U.S. bombers.

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