

इन शब्दों के साथ मैं अपनी बात खत्म करता हूँ।

Mr. Chairman. Resolution moved

"This House is of opinion that the export of monkeys be banned"

17.35 hrs

STATEMENT RE SHOOTING DOWN OF IAF AIRCRAFT IN PAKISTAN

The Minister of Defence (Shri Krishna Menon) Government deeply regret to report to the House the loss of one Indian Air Force Canberra aircraft on the morning of the 10th April 1959

In view of the circumstances in which this event occurred and in view of the various reports that have appeared in the press and the concern of the House itself, Government would like to place all the available facts before the House

In the normal flying programme of the day, one Canberra aircraft equipped for survey photography and not for bombing or hostile purposes took off from an IAF airfield on the morning of the 10th April at 6 A.M. It however, failed to return within the expected time

The mission of this aircraft was to take aerial photographs for the Survey of India of the territory of the Union in the areas of Himachal Pradesh, Punjab and Jammu and Kashmir. The lost aircraft was scheduled to complete its task within a period of four or five hours and should therefore have returned to its base not later than 11 O'Clock on the morning of the 10th of April

The aircraft, however, failed to return and was awaited until mid-day. Thereafter, the Air Force authorities, in accordance with the usual practice, ordered a search in the area

which was to be surveyed by the missing plane

News reached Air Headquarters, and I believe the public generally, after mid-day that Pakistan Radio had announced that "an unidentified" aircraft had been intercepted by Sabre Jet Fighters of the Pakistan Air Force and had been shot down. Similar reports, later in the day, stated that the aircrew of the plane that had been shot down had been picked up and taken to Rawalpindi

Later some time in the evening of the 10th similar reports, and the papers printed in the evening, mentioned the incident and that an IAF Canberra was the aircraft shot down. About this time, a Press Trust of India report also stated that two Indian Air Force men who were the crew of the shot-down aircraft, mentioned by them also as an IAF Canberra were taken to Rawalpindi. The House should be informed that no communication had reached either the Government through diplomatic channels or Air Headquarters through Pakistan Air Force channels, at the time of the incident or later in the day at any time

This morning Air Headquarters as is customary in such contexts, communicated with Pakistan Air Headquarters, and were informed that the lost aircraft was a Canberra of the Indian Air Force. They were also informed that the pilot and the navigator who were the sole crew of the aircraft had been injured and were in Rawalpindi. Air Headquarters were also informed by the Pakistan Air authorities that these two men would be returned to India. They are now on their way home in a Pakistan Air Force freighter aircraft. Government regret to say that both the airmen have been injured but fortunately not grievously. The House should be informed that this type of Canberra carries no arms or weapons. From the fact that the aeroplane was shot down in

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Pakistan territory, it is obvious that owing to operational and navigational difficulties, the plane must have gone off course into Pakistan air space.

The crew had been briefed to fly at a height of between 47 and 48 thousand feet

The House will understand that at the speed at which a Canberra operates, and the short distance between our frontier and Rawalpindi, which is about three minutes in flying time, it would be nothing unusual for such an aircraft to go off course into foreign air space. Government have seen reports in the press that it was said in Pakistan that their Air Force had repeatedly radioed the Canberra and ordered it to land and that such instruction was disobeyed by the crew and in consequence the plane was shot at

It is most unlikely and Government cannot believe that such a warning, if it had been given, would have been ignored by our airmen. The crew had knowledge that they were unarmed. They also knew full well that the consequences of ignoring any such warning would be grievous

The cases of violation of our air space across the cease-fire line in Kashmir, over the international frontier with Pakistan, and in other places in Bombay near Goa on the borders of our territory, are by no means uncommon. Indeed their frequency can be judged from the fact that, to give one instance, there were 17 violations of our air space across the cease-fire line in Jammu and Kashmir alone in three months, from October 1958 to January 1959. The custom that has been followed in such cases is to record a protest to the United Nations Observer Group, who thereafter make an inquiry. In no case has our Air Force

sought to initiate hostile action against Pakistan Aircraft which have periodically and wantonly violated our air space even after repeated protests.

The House may also be informed at this stage that even during the hostilities in Jammu and Kashmir, one Pakistan Air Force Aircraft which crossed into our territory and was intercepted by our Fighter Aircraft was only warned. But it was allowed to proceed to its base even though the pilot had refused to obey the warning to him and the order to land in Indian territory.

The shooting of our plane yesterday, as announced by Pakistan Radio, and confirmed to Air Headquarters this morning by the Pakistan Air Force is both unwarranted and contrary to international law and custom. The House will note that the Pakistan authorities have repeatedly referred to an "unidentified plane". It is inconceivable that an attacking plane able to shoot and hit could not and did not see the clear markings on its target or what type of plane it was. This action of Pakistan furthermore reflects no reciprocity of treatment on the part of the Pakistan Government.

Government, however, regret that in the course of a routine flight, even though probably due to defective navigational aids, our Aircraft strayed into Pakistan air space. Government desire to make it clear to the world that the straying of our plane from our air space was not and could not, therefore, be part of any hostile design or policy.

Government are taking all such steps as are appropriate in the circumstances through normal diplomatic channels.

Shri Vajpayee (Balrampur): On a point of information.....

Shri Hem Barua (Gauhati): Supposing the Canberra Aircraft violated their air space—because of the location, it might be said like that—it is not usual for a friendly country to shoot down an Aircraft like that, because on previous occasions we have never done that. Also in international relations this is never done. Now Pakistan has shot it down and that shows her hostile intentions towards this country. Instead of launching any protest in the normal way, may I ask Government to lodge a very strong protest on this particular aspect of the thing and point out to them that this only establishes the hostile intention of Pakistan, and that too has increased because of the arms and ammunition they are getting from a foreign country? Because they are getting arms and ammunition, they cannot allow them to rot and rust so they are using them whenever an opportunity comes.

Mr Chairman: Let him ask for information and not make any observations.

Shri Nath Pai (Rajapur): May I seek information? As the Defence Minister has pointed out, the country has learnt both with indignation and with great anxiety of the shooting down of our plane and the injuring of two of our brave pilots. But there is one thing on which we would like to be assured by the Defence Minister. Is the fact that the plane was going at a height of 48,000 ft and above and at supersonic speed almost, and that the Pakistan Air Force could overtake it and shoot it, an indication that as a result of the new accretion of superior air strength from the United States, Pakistan has reached air superiority of a level where it can make short shrift of our Air Force? We would very much like to be assured that it is not so, and it was blackmailing and waylaying of a plane which had innocently crossed our border, because this is exactly what is causing us grave anxiety.

Shri Krishna Menon: The answer to the first part of the question is that it does not mean anything of the kind.

Shri Khadilkar (Ahmednagar): While our Aircraft was in the air, was there no air contact maintained with the base during that period? I ask this because we got first news from Pakistan Radio. How was it that we did not have contact with the plane?

Coming to another point, as my hon friend just said, and as the statement of the hon Defence Minister also suggests, the Pakistan communique is a whitewash and our pilot was never warned. They wanted perhaps to test the newly-acquired Sabre jets, whether they could handle them properly or not. That is obvious. This uncivilised conduct on the part of our neighbour must be most strongly protested against. We must also ascertain another thing by whatever means possible. The statement shows that they were acting quite innocently. Whether after repeated warnings they have fired on our aircraft or not must be thoroughly ascertained and brought before the International Court.

Mr Chairman: What is the specific question?

Shri Khadilkar: The first question is specific, whether

Shri U. C Patnaik (Ganjam): May I also put a specific question, Sir?

Mr. Chairman: Let this be answered.

Shri Krishna Menon: So far as the first question is concerned, it is quite a normal question for a layman to ask and I would have asked that myself. But when a fighter aircraft or military aircraft is in the air if it keeps contact with the ground, that message will be intercepted by another country. Therefore, it never gets in touch with the base. It may communicate with sister plane, on

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special frequencies; but, if it communicates from that plane to the base, that message will be picked up by somebody else and, therefore, there is no means of communication

Shri Braj Raj Singh (Ferozabad): In addition to the protest we have made to Pakistan, are we doing something with the U.S.A.? Are we making some protests or informing them of this because this aircraft must have been fired, it is quite clear, with U.S.A. equipment?

Shri Vajpayee: May I know what will be the policy of the Government in future as regards planes of Pakistan that may violate our air space? May I know if the policy will be reviewed?

Shri Krishna Menon: I should answer the question. Our policy will not be changed by an act of provocation. We shall warn those planes, repeatedly warn them and force them to land on the territory where they can land as 'our territory'. We shall not shoot at the planes. Whether our planes should be armed hereafter, that is a matter for deep consideration by Government. But, there will be no action of this kind taken by the Indian Air Force or orders given by the Government of India.

Shri S. M. Banerjee (Kanpur): The hon. Minister said that Pakistan have said that the crew was warned and was asked to land. Since they are already sending our pilot, may I know if a statement will be recorded from him here—he should give a statement here because it is a reflection on his integrity—and then protests will be made taking into account the facts of this incident?

Shri U. C. Patnaik: May I know what was the last message that we received over the radio from that plane?

An Hon. Member: No; he said, 'No'.

Shri U. C. Patnaik: He did not say. There must have been some radio message even some time earlier. May I know when was the last message received?

Mr. Chairman: I think this morning we got the last message.

Shri Krishna Menon: May I know what the reference is to? If it is to a message from the plane, I said no military aircraft sends messages to the ground except when she is in distress due to non-enemy action. So far as we know, when the plane was shot there was no distress and, therefore, they could not have sent a message.

Regarding the other question of Mr. Banerjee, if the plane had been repeatedly warned, that communication itself takes a minute and a half or two minutes and, by that time, they could have gone out of Pakistani territory. So, there was no warning.

Shri Joachim Alva (Kanara): The information given by the Defence Minister that there were 17 violations is indeed revealing and interesting. I should like to recall what I said in the Defence debate in this House that a Pakistan plane landed in Bombay in an unscheduled and improper manner and we showed the utmost tolerance and restraint on that occasion. Thrice is our case armed when it is just and patient. We are happy that our boys are returning home. There is a unanimity in the House that we should have the utmost restraint and silence when things like this happen. But, unfortunately, it also happened on the 16 day and it is a kind of 16 precedent, presented to us on the 16 day. But I do hope the Americans who have presented this aircraft to Pakistan will know how quickly events have marched on.

Mr. Chairman: I think this need not be answered.

We come to the next business now
Shri Braj Raj Singh.