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DEATH OF SOVIET COSMONAUT KOMAROV

Date 24 April 1967

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SC No. 04722/67

CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY
Directorate of Intelligence
24 April 1967

INTELLIGENCE MEMORANDUM

Death of Soviet Cosmonaut Komarov

1. Colonel Vladimir Komarov, the single cosmonaut aboard Soyuz-1, died this morning during the landing of his spacecraft, according to Moscow television and radio broadcasts. The announcements state that the spacecraft became fouled in the rigging of the main parachute at an altitude of about 4 miles, causing the capsule to plummet to earth. Komarov presumably died on impact.

2. We have no confirmation of the Soviet announcements [redacted] (b)(1) (b)(3) [redacted] Shortly before Soyuz-1 re-entered the atmosphere, Komarov reported to the ground: "The engine fired for 146 seconds. The ship was oriented correctly. Everything is okay." The Soviet statements that Komarov died during the landing are therefore probably correct.

3. Komarov encountered persistent difficulties throughout his flight with his stabilization system, communications, and power supplies, and there was an unsuccessful attempt to deorbit automatically on revolution 16. Komarov was then instructed to perform a manual deorbit on revolution 18.

4. Soyuz-1 was the first manned flight of a new spacecraft which had been tested twice since last November without a crew. During the two unmanned flights the capsule performed some small maneuvers, indicating that it is intended for rendezvous and docking operations, but no maneuvers were detected during Komarov's flight. Komarov's communications with the ground indicated that Soyuz-1 had three seats--two of them unoccupied for this flight.

5. It is possible that the planned mission of Soyuz-1 called for complex maneuvers and the launching of a second spacecraft, but that these did not take place because of the technical problems encountered.

6. Soyuz-1 was orbited by the standard Soviet space booster and weighed about 15,000 pounds. Contrary to some Western press reports it was not boosted into orbit by the more powerful "Proton" booster which the Soviets have used recently for test flights of what is probably a new space propulsion system.