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China

April 28, 1965

MEMORANDUM

To: G - Mr. Goodyear
CA - Mr. McConaughey
SOA - Mr. Jones

Subject: Intelligence on Crash of Air India
Constellation

Attached hereto is a CIA summary of intelligence on the April 11th crash of the Air India International Constellation "Kashmir Princess".

Our plan is to arrange a meeting the first part of next week to have CIA bring us up-to-date on developments since this summary was prepared, particularly on further results of investigations and interrogations of survivors.

Fisher Howe
Deputy

Att:

As stated. (# 4 Attached)

cc: U/OP - Mr. Higgs (w/att)
SY - Mr. Flinn "
OIR - Mr. Evans "

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April 26, 1955

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 CIA document.

**SUMMARY OF KNOWN CIRCUMSTANCES SURROUNDING CRASH OF AIR INDIA CONSTELLATION
 On April 11, 1955**

The Foreign Office of the People's Republic of China notified the British Charge in Peiping on 10 April at 0130 hours G.M.T. (0930 hours Hong Kong time) that the Chinese Nationalists might make trouble for a party of Chinese Communists scheduled to fly from Hong Kong to Bandung on 11 April. The British authorities in Hong Kong were accordingly notified by the British Charge, and arrangements were made for special security precautions at the Hong Kong airport. It should be noted, in this connection, that in a cable to the British Foreign Office, the Charge indicates that he was alerted to the possibility of demonstrations, not of sabotage.

At the time of the notification, the Chinese Communists did not provide the Charge with any details about estimated times of arrival and departure of the aircraft, the airline to be used, the route to be followed, the names and number of passengers, etc. The British requested this information at that time. They received no further word in Peiping except that the airline would be Indian, and that further details would be provided in Hong Kong.

It is of interest to note that the Chinese supplied no further information until 0320 hours G.M.T. (1120 hours Hong Kong time) on 11 April when the New China News Agency (NCNA) informed the Hong Kong police that 11 Chinese journalists and a Vietnamese delegate would be leaving Hong Kong for Bandung that afternoon. No mention was made by the NCNA to the Hong Kong authorities of any suspicion of trouble.

The plane, the Air India International (AII) Constellation "Kashmir Princess" arrived at Hong Kong at 0415 hours G.M.T. (1215 hours Hong Kong time) 15 minutes behind schedule. It was reported by the "Times of India" on 16 April that the "Kashmir Princess" had had engine trouble inbound from Singapore to Bombay, but that the defect was promptly repaired. The airline admits slight engine trouble developed in Bombay, but denies the story of two witnesses that there was a delay in the take off from Bombay because of an argument between the air and ground crews about the craft's airworthiness. In support of the story about the argument, one witness reported that the ground engineer, A.S. Karnik, volunteered to accompany the flight to disprove the pilot's claim. He did accompany the flight.

Air India International (AII) attributed the delay in Bombay to the loss of engine revolutions on pre-takeoff run-up. This was corrected according to AII officials and Indian civil aviation inspectors. No difficulties were reported enroute to Hong Kong, but an ignition distri-

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but on the number two engine was changed on arrival there. The plane arrived in Hong Kong at 0415 G.M.T. (1215 hours Hong Kong time) where it picked up the passengers and departed at 0526 G.M.T. (1326 hours Hong Kong time). During its stay at the Hong Kong airport the plane was under police guard under the command of an inspector and no unauthorized person was allowed (or attempted) to approach. The officials of the AII were present and supervised every aspect of refueling and servicing. The Hong Kong Engineering Co. (HARCO), which employs Chinese Communist Union members, did the actual maintenance check and refueling. An AII crew member was on the plane at all times. All baggage and luggage was handled by the China Travel Service, a Communist agency, which had made all arrangements for the passengers. The only articles placed on board the aircraft were the luggage and baggage belonging to the party, and normal refreshments. The letter was checked by the steward of the aircraft. The British have variously reported that there were 27 pieces of luggage and 6 boxes and that there were 37 pieces of luggage and 2 boxes.

The passengers were brought to the airport in an airline bus and, contrary to normal practice, were taken to the plane without going through customs or immigration formalities. The luggage was likewise taken to the plane and loaded direct under the supervision of AII. The plane took off without incident at about 0526 hours G.M.T. (1326 hours Hong Kong time).

Information has been received from a British official through an Indonesian Liaison officer in Hong Kong that at the time the plane was en route to, and while it was at, Hong Kong, the Chinese Communists were requesting the good offices of the Indonesian Consulate to secure passage for other newsmen and delegates on Cathay Pacific Airways Ltd. (CPL) and other airlines. A Constellation accommodates approximately 50-70 passengers; there were 11 passengers in this flight.

After the flight cleared Hong Kong en route to Kuching, Sarawak, there was no report of trouble — in fact a normal report was received, according to NCNA, by the Jakarta airport authorities ten minutes before the SOE. At 0953 hours G.M.T. (1753 hours Hong Kong time) on 11 April the British authorities report receipt of the first distress signal, the position of the aircraft was then given as 108 miles north of Kuching.

The British authorities report that the RAF was alerted two minutes later and its first aircraft was airborne one hour and 28 minutes later. A motor launch was dispatched 47 minutes after receipt of the signal. At 0125 hours G.M.T. (0825 hours Hong Kong time) a long range voice broadcast was intercepted from the "Taype" (a small ship of British registry whose master and other officers are European — presumed to be British) reporting

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She had seen an aircraft crash in flames and that one "bag of mail" had been found. At 0240 hours G.M.T. (1040 hours Hong Kong time) the "Baybe" reported the position of the crashed plane as 109° E., 3:53 N. (off Great Natona Island about 250 miles Northeast of Singapore in Indonesian waters). She picked up the survivors and they were transhipped to HMS "Dampier" off Salor Island.

HMS "Dampier" then took the survivors to Singapore, where the ship was immediately boarded by Indians. The British claim that they did not interrogate the survivors en route to Singapore. When the survivors arrived they were reliably reported to have been instructed by a local Indian representative not to talk to anyone -- to claim to be suffering from shock. They were almost immediately taken to the naval hospital, where they were watched over by police.

At 0700 hours G.M.T. (1600 hours Hong Kong time) on 12 April, the first Reuters despatch, quoting Indonesian sources, was broadcast from Djakarta. This was followed by a Reuters pick-up from Singapore at 1137 hours G.M.T. (1937 hours Hong Kong time).

At 1338 hours G.M.T. (2138 hours Hong Kong time) the first Reuters despatch was broadcast. Shortly after 2000 hours G.M.T. on 12 April (0400 hours Hong Kong time, 13 April) the first Chinese Communist news report was broadcast, attributing the crash to U.S.-instigated sabotage. The text of the GPR Foreign Ministry statement charging U.S.-Chiang Kai-shek sabotage was broadcast at 2040 hours G.M.T., 12 April (0440 hours Hong Kong time, 13 April).

Thus the lapsed time between the SOS and the first NONA statement was 37 hours and 7 minutes; the lapsed time between the embarkation of the survivors and the NONA statement was 7 hours and 7 minutes; the lapsed time between the first Reuters broadcast and the NONA statement was 5 hours. No broadcast is known to have been made indicating whether there were any survivors prior to the first Chinese broadcast. The question thus arises whether the Chinese would have risked such explicit and virulent charges of sabotage and intent to murder without foreknowledge that, even if there were survivors, the charge of sabotage could not be proved to be demonstrably false.

The "Dampier" returned to the site of the crash on the 13th, and offered her assistance in diving. This was accepted and diving operations undertaken. Three bodies were recovered, but the British report that no

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evidence was found of the cause of the crash. Two Indonesian boats were also at the site of the crash with divers in action when the "Dampier" returned to the scene, according to a Lockheed official who had obtained the information from a senior AII official. According to the same source, Royal Navy divers from the "Dampier" brought up wreckage samples from the aircraft and turned these over to the Singapore police to hold for the Indonesian authorities. If any papers or mail were recovered by either British or Indonesian divers, we have not been informed by the British.

There is, to date, no information available here concerning the events leading up to the crash beyond a report by Karnik, quoted by AII, that there was a dull thud or muffled explosion in the baggage compartment followed by black smoke in the cabin and cockpit. This information was obtained from both British and Indian sources, and derived from the evidence of the surviving Indian ground engineer.

The prognosis for a reliable final determination of the actual cause appears to be dim. The Indonesians were at first reported to be adamant in their determination to conduct the salvage operations themselves; the British Navy was reported not to believe that the Indonesians have the proper equipment. The British Navy now reports that they may, by Indonesian invitation, participate in the salvage operations. Lockheed experts in India state that unless one of their men is present it will be impossible to determine the exact cause of the crash. The Chinese inspector detailed to work with the British on the Hong Kong investigation stated that the Chinese mechanics have refused to answer questions. As of now, at least one of the Lockheed experts believes that the crash was caused by sabotage. The British Foreign Office appears to be convinced that there is a strong possibility that the instigators were the Chinese Communists.

At the present time any conclusions which might be drawn can at best be regarded as tentative because we have only fragmentary or no information on the following:

- (a) the results of the projected expert investigation of the wrecked plane;
- (b) official reports on the interrogation of the survivors;
- (c) the details of the British investigation at Hong Kong;
- (d) reports on, or copies of, the documents recovered at the scene of the crash;

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(e) Definitive information on who would have had an opportunity to interrogate the survivors as well as when, and under what circumstances;

(f) Biographical information on the individuals of the various governments concerned who are participating in the official investigations.

During the first week following the crash the Chinese Communist radio devoted 15 per cent of Home Service items to the incident and 20 per cent of their International service. This is approximately twice the domestic coverage devoted to the Hainan plane incident of July 1954 and slightly less in the International Service.

The Chinese international propaganda seems designed to achieve at least three ends. First, to embarrass the British authorities, to cause them to suspect the U.S., and make them appear, because of their alleged white wash of the U.S., to be a satellite of the U.S. in the eyes of the Asian and African nations. Second to absolve the Indians, but to make them appear to be unjustly accused by the U.S. Government and the U.S. press.

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