

MINISTÈRE DE LA TRANSITION ÉCOLOGIQUE ET SOLIDAIRE

Direction générale de l'Aviation civile

Paris, le 19 JUIN 2020

Le Directeur général

N° 200256 DG

Dear Minister, dear Alexander V. Neradko,

I am sincerely honored by the interest and the attachment you show for the 75th anniversary of the end of the Second World War, celebrating the Allied victory. I am happy in return to pay tribute to the values of brotherhood and freedom that have brought our two nations into a common friendship.

We owe this victory to the exceptional moral strength and resilience of the Russian people, heroically proven during the battles of Moscow and Stalingrad, which contributed to put an end to the supremacy of the army of the Third Reich and to achieve the final victory.

You rightly recall the fundamental role of all these anonymous people who worked in the shadow of the maquis, to form the Resistance and who risked or sacrificed their lives for us to regain our freedom.

I know how much the Russian people continue to honor with fervor and emotion the French pilots of the "Normandie-Niémen" squadron who came to fight and die by their side in November 1942. I salute with you the eminent role that this squadron has played and all that it represents for the French as for the Russians.

In 1942, the Soviet government was able to take into consideration the proposals made for the dispatch of a hunting group to the USSR. Since the first Normandy campaign on March 22, 1943, the French fighter group was integrated into the 1st Soviet Air Force and the fighting carried on.

In August 1943, all French technical personnel were transferred to the Middle East and replaced by Soviet personnel. As a result, "Normandie" lost its first hour companions, but it gained a unique organization which led to build its symbolic dimension: French pilots and Russian mechanics gathered in the same unit.

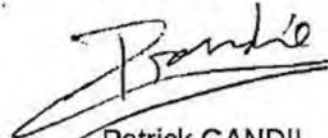
This symbol is the result of real acts of bravery among which I will recall one that had a tremendous impact, during the tragedy of July 15, 1944. Victim of a fuel leak, Lieutenant Maurice de Seynes, blinded by gasoline fumes invading his cockpit, vainly tried to land several times. Despite the Soviet order to jump, De Seynes refused to do so because he did not want to abandon his mechanic Vladimir Bielozoub, who had no parachute, to a certain death ... After several unsuccessful attempts, the Yak 9 crashed and exploded, killing its two occupants. The Parisian aristocrat and the peasant from the Volga were buried next to each other.

**Monsieur Alexander V. Neradko**  
First Deputy Minister of Transport of the Russian Federation  
Director General of the Federal Air Transport Agency

France honors our common memory with a Memorial and an entire hall dedicated to "Normandy-Niemen", in the Air and Space Museum, around the last of the 40 "Yak 3" offered by Marshal Stalin to pilots of the unit to return to France, on June 20, 1945, at Le Bourget.

I am very pleased to recall with you the symbol of the unwavering friendship between France and Russia, the bond of blood shed on Russian soil.

Sincerely yours,



Patrick GANDIL