

Note to Soviet on 'Buzzing'

WASHINGTON, July 21 (UPI)—Following is the text of a United States note to the Soviet Union today on the buzzing of Soviet ships:

The Embassy of the United States of America presents its compliments to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and has the honor to refer to the Ministry's memorandum of July 13 in which certain allegations were made regarding the buzzing of Soviet vessels by United States aircraft.

According to the Ministry's statement, the alleged flights in question have created danger to life and represent a violation of "freedom of passage" on the high seas and of "generally accepted rules of international law."

The embassy, on instructions of its Government, rejects these Soviet allegations as without foundation. An investigation of the incidents cited in the Ministry's memorandum has established that at no time has a United States plane flown over Soviet vessels in any way which would constitute a hazard to the vessel or endanger the safety of its crew.

It is, of course, common practice for ships and aircraft to establish mutual identification in international waters. In accordance with this practice, the United States patrol planes often seek to identify ships encountered whose position and identity are not otherwise known, particularly in the ocean approaches to the United States. The pilots of these planes are under the strictest instructions, however, not to approach closer than is necessary for this purpose. That the Soviet Government alone should find it necessary to object to such iden-

tification gives rise to the question as to just what are the activities of Soviet vessels that require the Soviet Government to protest such routine identification.

In this connection, the Soviet vessel Vega, although ostensibly a fishing trawler, was in fact discovered to be equipped with extensive electronic equipment and to be conducting an intelligence mission along the east coast of the United States for five days in April of this year. In such circumstances there is every reason for establishing the identity of such a vessel and the nature of its activity.

The United States Government has noted with interest the several references which the Ministry has made to the well-established principle of freedom of the seas. The United States Government would like to hope that the Soviet Government might now begin to respect this freedom on the part of other nations, whether for ships or aircraft.

The United States Government has also noted the statement of the Soviet Government that it will be obliged "to take other measures which will be necessary to insure the safety of navigation of Soviet vessels in the open seas." This cannot be interpreted other than as a reckless threat of aggressive action against United States aircraft proceeding on legitimate flights over international waters. This threat resembles other recent Soviet statements and actions. The United States Government cannot accept this threat. It will continue to exercise all the rights on and over international waters to which it is entitled under international law and practice.