

Certificate for the Marshal Star and the Rank of Supreme Marshal of Air Force, with original case of issue Awarded in 1984 to Aleksandr Koldunov, the eighth highest scoring Soviet fighter ace of WW2, twice Hero of the Soviet Union, and supreme commander of the Soviet Air Defense in the late 70s through late 80s.

Although a highly skilled and illustrious fighter pilot, Koldunov's claims to fame in the West centered around friendly fire incidents and failure to prevent Mathias Rust, a West German, from landing a Cessna airplane on Moscow's Red Square. This humiliation to the entire Soviet armed forces led to Koldunov's immediate dismissal.

Koldunov's fortunes rose during WW2 as a Yak pilot when he became a specialist in the hit-and-run diving attack, aggressively firing at close quarters and breaking away to attack again. Many of his air victories were scored against Luftwaffe fighter craft in the Southern sector. Koldunov's WW2 service included one of aviation history's most unlikely dogfights-- against USAAF Lightnings of the 15th AF in a case of mistaken identity. Koldunov who reportedly shot down 3 American aircraft in the melee put an end to the friendly fire incident by bravely closing alongside the Lightnings to establish his flight's identity as "friendly" Soviets.

While his postwar career began with great promise, the spectre of friendly fire seemed to plague Koldunov, and his career ultimately ended in a humiliation of historic proportions.

In 1968 Koldunov was Deputy Commander of the Baku Air Defense District. One year later he was moved to the Ministry of Defense for a brief tour of duty, and in 1970 he succeeded Colonel-General Vasilii V. Okunev as CINC of the ultra important Moscow Air Defense District.

Koldunov's career continued to rise. In 1978 he was promoted to Marshal of the Air Force in charge of PVO (Anti Air) defenses for the Motherland. It was at this post that his career began to unravel. In 1978, a missile was fired at a commercial airliner with the loss of 2 people. On 1 September 1983, a commercial 747 airliner, Korean Air Flight 007 strayed off course and was shot down with the needless death of 269 civilians. But it wasn't until 1987 that his career came to an end at the hands of 19 year old student Mathias Rust who penetrated air defenses under Koldunov's authority, to land his Cessna in Red Square.

The event hit the Soviet Union like a bombshell, as it became evident that the much-touted "impenetrable" air defense system was a hollow shell created by the Communist propaganda machine, like so much else that was the Soviet Union. Koldunov was forced to retire from his post, a humiliation that perhaps contributed to his death in 1992. Although Koldunov was made a scapegoat for this failure, the truth was fast becoming clear to the Soviet population. Events like the the Rust's flight and the Chernobyl nuclear accident a year earlier created a very real sense that the Communist Regime was teetering on the brink of collapse.

This historic document is bound in padded deep red/brown leather with embossed State Seal and gold leaf inscription. The interior is elegantly lined in white satin. The internal document is printed on heavy parchment and crisply inscribed in black and gold. Open document measures 18" x 12.5".

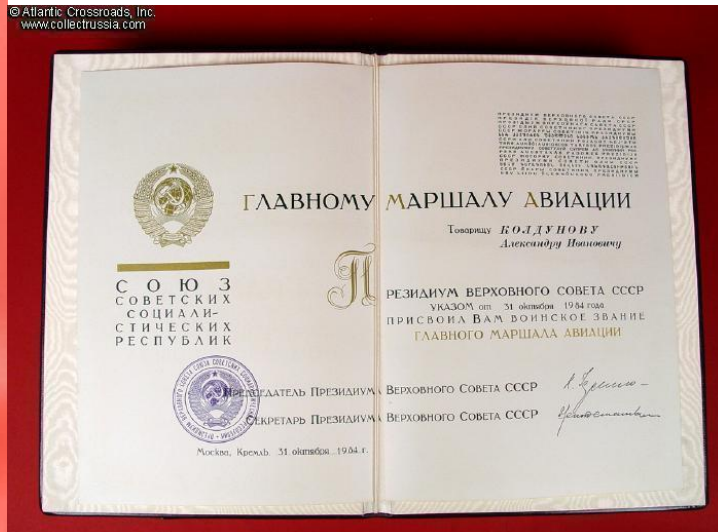
Issued on 31 October 1984. Hand-signed by Konstantin Chernenko, Soviet Premier at the time, and Menteshashvili, Secretary of the Presidium. The condition is excellent, with only light traces of wear.

The case is bound in matching leather. The liner, of highest quality padded red satin, to match the importance of the document contained therein. Case measures 13" x 9.5" x 2". Condition is excellent, clean, with very light shelf wear only.

Rare & significant memento of a historic figure who embodied the Soviet Union's heroic struggle and ironic tribulations.

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МАРШАЛУ АВИАЦИИ

Товарищу КОЛДУНОВУ
Александру Ивановичу

ПРЕЗИДИУМ ВЕРХОВНОГО СОВЕТА СССР
УКАЗОМ от 31 октября 1984 года
ПРИСВОИЛ ВАМ ВОЙНСКОЕ ЗВАНИЕ
ГЛАВНОГО МАРШАЛА АВИАЦИИ

