

## Veteran's Badge in Commemoration of the 40th Anniversary of the 2nd Special Purpose Aviation Division, 1982 issue.

Aluminum, paint; medallion is 35 mm tall (incl. eyelet), 31mm wide. Shows a transport plane flying over the globe, with a ribbon of the Order of the Red Banner underneath. The inscription АКДОН at the bottom is the abbreviated name of the unit: Order of the Red Banner Special Purpose Aviation Division. The reverse of the suspension shows maker mark САЗ ("SAZ") of the Smolensk Aviation Factory (which had a production line for pins and badges.) The badge is in excellent condition.

The main purpose of this division was to safely fly Soviet military high command, political leaders, and visiting foreign dignitaries to their destinations inside the USSR and abroad. It was formed in October 1942, during the Battle of Stalingrad, by expanding a smaller unit used for the same purpose since 1927. Despite the dire need of the front in pilots and airplanes, the division was lavishly equipped: it included as many as three separate transport regiments, a short-range bomber regiment, a fighter regiment, a medical aviation regiment, and an extra Air Force inspection squadron. Apparently, the safety of Soviet leaders was not to be overlooked, come hell or high water! Among the more famous - and at the time, top-secret - missions of this unit was flying Stalin to the Tehran Conference in 1943.

Item# 34492

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