THE SHOOTDOWN OF KAL 007

Moscow's Charges—and the Record
Map depicts international air route R-20 assigned to Korean Airlines Flight 007—and the airliner's actual route. Flight path of the RC-135 reconnaissance plane is shown as well. Times are Greenwich Mean Time (GMT), which is 12 hours behind the local time in the Sakhalin Island area. The KAL pilot reported crossing the established checkpoints along route R-20—Nabie, Neeva and Nippi—at the times indicated, even though the plane actually was far off course. KAL 007 was due to report in at checkpoint Nokka when it was shot down leaving Soviet airspace over Sakhalin Island.

Illustration by Terry Graves.
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The tragic and unnecessary incident in which South Korean Airlines Flight 007 was shot down by a Soviet air-defense interceptor shocked the world community. Soviet public statements afforded fresh evidence of the USSR’s extreme obsession with security, overriding even universally accepted human values.

This publication recapitulates the Soviet reaction—Moscow’s assertions, charges and insinuations—and offers the facts of the case for the record.

The Incident: How and Why

In the early hours of September 1, 1983, over Sakhalin Island, Soviet interceptor planes stalked and ultimately shot down a straying Korean Airlines jetliner with 269 people aboard. It is a much reported incident and needs no detailed retelling here.

To cover up its culpability, the Soviet Union first stonewalled, then massively lied about the causes of this tragedy, and finally tried to establish the United States as the ultimate culprit. Most objective observers have not accepted the Soviet fabrications and insinuations. Nevertheless, the Soviet pattern is to repeat even very bad propaganda lines and disinformation. So in the months ahead, the world can expect Moscow’s spokesmen and propagandists to try continually to maintain that “everyone,” or “the whole world,” knows that their allegations concerning KAL 007 are true, and that their charges against the United States have been proven beyond doubt.

In the following summary, Moscow’s main charges are arrayed alongside the facts of the case.

Assertion: “Washington’s all-seeing ability could only be envied if the version [of the incident] it proposes contained even a grain of truth. However [The New York Times says] this type of aircraft is controlled by electronic apparatus which has never let down the pilots.” (Izvestiya, September 8, 1983)

Fact: The New York Times also reported the possibility that incorrect data programmed into the plane’s computers would account for the pilot being unaware of his deviation from the correct route.

Assertion: “The foreign aircraft deviated by hundreds of kilometers from the established flight path...and grossly violated the international civil aviation flight rules.... With turned-off air navigation lights and collision-avoidance lights, the crew failed to react to all our fighter-interceptor’s actions.... The pilot of our interceptor fired warning...tracer shells...parallel to the violating aircraft’s course.” (Description by Colonel-General Semën Romanov, Soviet Air Defense Chief, in Pravda, September 5, 1983)

Fact: The audiotapes recorded as the incident unfolded show that the Soviet interceptor pilot three times reported observing the plane’s strobe light and navigational lights. The tapes show nothing to indicate that the cannon rounds fired by the interceptor contained tracer ammunition.

Assertion (Marshal Nikolai Ogarkov, Soviet Chief of Staff. All citations are from his September 9, 1983, news conference in Moscow.): “All the events...were taking place in the dead of night and under conditions of a cloud cover along the upper edge of which the intruder was flying. Its flight was stopped...at 6:24 local time, whereas the dawn of that day broke at 7:11 (sunrise at 7:49).”

Fact: The Soviet interceptor pilots reported visual sightings of the KAL plane up to at least five nautical miles (9.3 kms), and one approached to within some 1.2 nautical miles (2.2 kms) of the Boeing 747. The moonlit conditions would have facilitated visual identification.

Assertion: “Ground flight control services on this international flight did nothing to warn the Boeing 747 aircraft that it had gone off course.” (Romanov in Pravda, September 5, 1983)

Fact: The KAL plane was in a zone beyond the reach of either U.S. or Japanese ground-control radar. Knowledge of what happened is from delayed translation of the radio intercepts.
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Assertion: 1. Why did the authorities of the United States and Japan, whose air-traffic control services supervise along this route, fail to take appropriate action to stop the blatant violation of the Soviet Union’s sovereignty? (Moscow Radio, 2010 GMT, September 3, 1983)

2. (Ogarkov, on question of whether “U.S. ground services” could have known the KAL flight was off course and ordered it to adjust course) “Unarguably they could have…. We completely rule out the fact that the ground services did not observe such a deviation from the route…. Not to observe such a deviation, I repeat again, that is impossible.”

Fact: 1. At no time during the incident were U.S. or Japanese air controllers aware that the KAL plane was off course or in jeopardy. After the fact, a painstaking U.S. and Japanese re-examination of the electronic data succeeded in reconstructing what had happened.

2. U.S. and Japanese air controllers have radar coverage only for about 165 to 200 nautical miles (305 to 370 kms) at each end of the air route between Anchorage and Tokyo. They were relying, as normally, on radioed reports of KAL 007’s position. These reports were routine and contained no suggestion that the KAL pilots were aware of their course deviation.

3. Japanese authorities monitoring air-defense radar on Hokkaido saw the blip of a plane crossing Sakhalin, but could not know it was a straying civilian airliner or anything other than a Soviet aircraft flying in its own airspace.

4. U.S. military facilities in the Aleutians have no responsibility for radar coverage of civil aircraft. Civilian flights passing the Aleutians may be passively observed, but not monitored for adherence to standard air routes.

5. U.S. and Japanese facilities monitoring the international distress frequency heard no indication of the incident and no Soviet attempts to contact KAL 007 on this frequency.

6. There are no civilian radio or navigational aids along air route R-20 between Alaska and Japan because the Soviets refuse to cooperate in providing such services.

Fact: 1. The U.S. Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) expended great effort to produce useful and fully comprehensible audiotapes of all Anchorage FAA communications relating to this KAL flight. These were released not long after the shootdown. Those tapes and similar recordings from Tokyo indicate that neither the KAL pilot, the FAA nor Japanese ground controllers were aware that KAL 007 was straying from its assigned international route, R-20, until the Soviet missiles hit the Boeing 747 jumbo jet. Because this was evident from the earliest communications with and among the air controllers after the incident, no urgency was attached to getting the tapes out speedily.

Fact: 1. The Korean plane had no U.S. intelligence mission. The United States does not involve commercial airliners in intelligence activities. The flimsiness of Moscow’s case is very plain in Ogarkov’s inability to offer anything but inference and flat assertion as “proof.”

1. The crew of the RC-135 aircraft had no contact whatsoever with KAL 007. The U.S. plane was on an arms-control compliance monitoring mission. For the final hour leading up to the shootdown of the 747 passenger plane, the RC-135 was on the ground in Alaska. At no time did the two planes “interact” or “coordinate.” Maps reconstructing their respective flight paths and positions show that they never “flew together” as the Soviets have claimed. They were never closer to each other than 75 nautical miles (139 kms).

3. There is reason to believe that the plane’s identity was not a major concern of the Soviet air-defense officers. In 1978, even after they had identified the KAL flight that strayed into the Murmansk area as a civilian airliner, they still ordered their interceptor pilot to shoot it down.

Fact: 1. There is a gap of some 900 nautical miles (1,667 kms) in the northwest Pacific routes which U.S. and Japanese ground-control radar cannot cover. The Soviets know this; the claim is another attempt to deceive.

2. Moreover, the KAL plane was routinely reporting its position, apparently from prescribed checkpoints. It was not until the shootdown, when the KAL radio messages abruptly changed and then ceased, that Japanese ground controllers had any indication of something unusual. Japanese air-defense radar caught the plane’s radar blip crossing the Sakhalin Island just before the shootdown, but had no way of knowing what aircraft it was.

Assertion: 1. (Ogarkov, responding to American Broadcasting Company (ABC) correspondent Pamela Taylor’s query about “hard evidence” that the 747 was a reconnaissance plane) “All the analyses of the behavior of this aircraft, the route…and the nature of its flights, and analysis of the interaction between this aircraft and other aircraft in the Kamchatka zone, plus the choice of directing the flight to avoid zones of antiaircraft missile complexes, in the direction of very important Soviet defense installations, and finally behavior quite incomprehensible for a normal aircraft, such as completely ignoring all warnings…."

2. (Ogarkov, responding to a newsmans’s request for hard Soviet evidence proving some connection between the RC-135 and the 747) “What proof is required when the aircraft deviated 500 kilometers off the established route, flying over the Soviet Union’s territory for two hours…. It is documented by our radio-technical means…. All the commands that were given have also been registered and documented…. We see no need to provide any proof for what is completely obvious.”

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**Assertion (Ogarkov):** "The South Korean plane entered the zone covered by Soviet radar systems precisely in the area which is constantly patrolled by American reconnaissance aircraft.... We detected an intelligence plane RC-135 in the area this time at 2:45 hours local time on September 1...on a somewhat strange patrol. At 4:51 hours another plane with a radar blip analogous to that of the RC-135 was detected in the same region and at the same height—8,000 meters. The planes approached each other (up to a total convergence of the blips on the screen) and flew together for some time (about 10 minutes). Then one of them...headed for Alaska, while the second one headed for [Kamchatka]. Naturally, the conclusion was...[that] an intelligence plane is approaching the USSR’s airspace.... "Both planes acted concertedly. Their flights were performed so as to complicate the air situation and to confuse our air-defense systems. In addition, the RC-135 must have been controlling the initial stage of the flight of the Boeing 747 and keeping track of the actions of our air-defense system at that time."

**Fact:** 1. The U.S. RC-135 was on a routine reconnaissance mission in international airspace off Kamchatka, monitoring Soviet compliance with the SALT treaties. Soviet air defenses have monitored such flights long and often enough that, if their radar and radio monitors were on their toes, they would recognize that the KAL plane was operating in a very different manner from any U.S. reconnaissance aircraft. One can also presume that these monitors pick up the 40 to 50 commercial airliners transiting the northwest Pacific routes each day and so are familiar with their behavior and radio signals.

2. There was no connection between the RC-135 and the KAL flight. The closest approach of the two aircraft to each other was 75 nautical miles (139 kms), and the RC-135 crossed the airliner’s flight path only after the KAL plane was 300 nautical miles (556 kms) farther along its route. Hence, there should have been no Soviet confusion about which plane was which.

3. The suggestion that the RC-135 was there to control or monitor the KAL flight is absurd. The statement that the planes flew together for 10 minutes is flatly wrong; and a minimum separation of 75 nautical miles (139 kms) would not make the radar images merge. This part of the Soviet story was totally fabricated to support their false allegation that KAL 007 had a U.S. spy mission.

**Assertion (Ogarkov):** "[Over Kamchatka, the intruder plane] did not respond to any inquiries by Soviet ground control and air-defense planes. At the same time, radio monitoring stations detected periodically transmitted brief coded signals...usually used for transmitting intelligence data."

**Fact:** 1. The pilot’s reports to air controllers gave no indication of any calls to him on the international distress channel, and no such call was heard by either Japanese air controllers or any aircraft in the general area.

2. There is no evidence that the Korean pilot ever saw any Soviet visual signals.

3. Careful review of all available evidence on the incident has concluded that the “coded signals” could only have been the beeper-like signal from the KAL plane’s “Selcal” (“selective call-up”) device—which is used routinely to alert ground controllers that a voice message is coming. It is incomprehensible that Soviet monitors so close to heavily travelled air routes would be unfamiliar with such signals. Hence, one must conclude that this is another flimsy Soviet fabrication to support the “spy plane” charge.

**Assertion (Ogarkov):** "In the area of Sakhalin Island, the actions of the intruder plane became outrageous.... It had not responded to the warning shots of Soviet interceptor planes. Moreover, it began to change simultaneously its direction, altitude and speed of flight, obviously trying to evade the air-defense planes.... There remained no doubt that a reconnaissance plane was in the air.... [Over] the southwestern part of Sakhalin Island, the last attempt was made to force it to land on an airfield, for which purpose four bursts of warning shots were fired from guns with a total of 120 tracer shells.... An interceptor plane was given the order to stop the flight of the intruder with missiles; the order was fulfilled."

**Fact:** 1. The taped voice of one Soviet pilot mentions firing his cannon. Whether or not tracer rounds were used, the KAL pilot gave no indication of seeing or hearing any Soviet warning actions.

2. The KAL pilot had radioed that his position was southeast of Hokkaido. He had asked for and received Japanese ground control permission to climb from 32,000 to 35,000 feet (9,750 to 10,670 meters)-a normal practice to help conserve fuel. The climb would naturally cause the 747 to lose some speed.

3. The pilot evidently was unaware even then of his course deviation or of the Soviet interceptors in the area, so that he would have had no reason to engage in evasive maneuvers. The only message from the taped voices of the Soviet pilots that bears on this is the Su-15 pilot’s report that “The target is decreasing speed. I am going around it; I’m already moving in front of the target.” This occurred as the airliner was climbing to the higher elevation.

**Assertion:** "It was as if the aircraft were stealing over our territory under cover of night. There is no doubt that this was a deliberate act and a gross anti-Soviet provocation.... The Soviet pilot did not know precisely that [this was a civil aircraft].... Its outlines are very similar to those of the American RC-135 reconnaissance aircraft. The pilot was unable to determine what function was being carried out by the violating aircraft...."

**Fact:** 1. This is too obviously a very strained effort to construct a plausible excuse for their inexcusable failure to identify the KAL plane correctly.

2. If indeed the pilot had not confirmed the identity and “function” of the aircraft, all the more reason not to fire upon it.

3. The Soviets had tracked the plane for some two-and-a-half hours, and a Soviet interceptor came within two kilometers of the 747 in clear moonlight. A few days after the shootdown, the plane was described on Moscow’s domestic TV service as “gigantic," suggesting that that Boeing 747 characteristic had been detected.

4. Even if the plane’s outlines did not enable the Soviet pilots to distinguish the 747 from an RC-135, the plane’s flashing strobe and navigation lights, and its radio messages, should have led them to recognize it as a straying commercial airliner.

5. Clear-thinking analysts of the incident, therefore, have concluded that the Soviet approach was quite simply, “Shoot first, ask questions later.”
At U.N. Security Council session September 6, 1983, television screen displays, in Russian and English, the words from the audiotape of the Soviet pilot following his launch of two air-to-air missiles: “The target is destroyed.” At left, his back to the screen, is Soviet U.N. Ambassador Oleg Troyanovsky. United Kingdom Ambassador John Thomson is at center, and U.S. Ambassador to the U.N. Jeane Kirkpatrick at far right.

Photograph by United Press International.
The target is destroyed.

& 13959999.

UNITED KINGDOM

UNITED STATES
During the first week after the KAL airliner was shot down, statements from the Soviet Union developed the basic themes to be used in defense of the Soviet action: 1) The United States had assigned an intelligence mission to KAL Flight 007, and 2) in the event of a shootdown, the U.S. would use the incident to exacerbate East-West relations for a wide range of alleged Washington motives. The stridency with which these charges have been pushed strongly suggests Moscow’s discomfort with worldwide censure, and its hope of gaining converts to the idea that it was the United States which provoked the entire affair.

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**Assertion** (Ogarkov): “It has been proved irrefutably that the intrusion of the...[KAL] plane into Soviet airspace was a deliberately, thoroughly planned intelligence operation...directed from certain centers in the territory of the United States and Japan.”

**Fact:** False. The Soviet Union has offered only its questions, allegations and suspicions as proof of this charge. The United States does not involve commercial airliners in intelligence activities.

**Assertion:** “The scenario, in all its details, for this [KAL] occurrence was drafted on the other side of the ocean [where] they placed the lives of a large number of people at stake.... They are yet further victims of ‘the cold war,’ of which the White House is an apologist and champion. History will hold it responsible.” (Romanov, in Pravda, September 5, 1983)

**Fact:** There was no scenario. This construction of the incident may prove to be a mirror image of the kind of actions which Moscow itself has ordered in the past. For example, there are strong indications that Aeroflot airliners have performed intelligence missions deviating from prescribed courses to overfly important Western military installations.

**Assertion:** “[U.S. sources]...cynically, almost smugly divulge information on a huge scale regarding the espionage activity being conducted by the U.S. on our motherland’s eastern outskirts. All these facts cannot but confirm...that [the KAL passengers]...fell victim to a monstrous provocation of unprecedented perfidy.” (Izvestiya, September 7, 1983)

**Fact:** Moscow and the rest of the world know that, under bilateral arms control arrangements, the USSR and the United States normally and regularly monitor each other’s compliance with those agreements using “national technical means.” Such a description of this accepted reality of our world today is simply bad propaganda.
Assertion: 1. "The CIA's hands, the Pentagon's hands, and...the hands of the U.S. military-industrial complex programmed the tragic loss of the South Korean airliner, sacrificing its passengers on the altar of the selfish interests of the U.S. ruling circles." (Izvestiya, September 7, 1983)

2. "The main question is why, after all, the South Korean plane found itself in Soviet airspace.... Reagan did say that no one will ever know who had fed such a route to the aircraft's computer. But it was fed in Washington...by those who had access to the plane, to its flight program." (TASS, September 10, 1983)

Fact: 1. Moscow's charge that the KAL plane was on an intelligence mission is built entirely of Soviet suspicions, fears and blatantly fabricated claims.

2. The U.S. has been quite open in making available the known facts of the case. It is the USSR which has dissembled, lied and otherwise sought to evade legitimate questions about its mid-air massacre of 269 people aboard a civilian airliner.

3. The actual cause of the KAL plane's course deviation will remain unknown unless the data on the plane's flight recorder is recovered and analyzed. Pilots with experience flying Boeing 747's have hypothesized possible on-board actions or equipment problems that would have taken KAL 007 off course. and they note that course deviations of this kind are not rare for the world's airlines, including Aeroflot.

4. Soviet assertions that the plane entered Soviet airspace on a U.S. "spy mission" are total fabrications. Intelligence experts have pointed out that the "spy plane" charge is absurd on its face. U.S. "national technical means" for monitoring arms control agreements with the Soviets are quite adequate for accomplishing the job.

5. Soviet propagandists apparently are under orders to divert world attention from the fact that the USSR employs its own "national technical means" just as extensively, and for the same purpose, as the United States. Further, the Soviet Union's widespread and flagrant espionage and subversive activity has led to the expulsion of some 200 Soviet agents from countries around the world during the past several years.

Assertion: 1. "Why has this universal outcry gone up? It is because Washington believes that the worse the atmosphere in the world, the better the situation for the implementation of the imperialist plans of the United States and NATO, and the easier it is for them to evade agreements to halt the arms race and rid mankind of the nuclear threat." (Moscow domestic television, 1300 GMT, September 4, 1983)

2. "The U.S. Administration is...unleashing a crude anti-Soviet campaign...[whose] instigators...are deliberately, literally enflaming passions, piling one deception on another.... The provocateurs will not escape responsibility for this criminal action towards the USSR, its sovereign rights and its security interests." (TASS, 1628 GMT, September 4, 1983)

Fact: 1. Most free world commentary derides the Soviet claim that the U.S. would use a civilian airliner for intelligence gathering.

2. The "universal outcry" is against the shootdown. Moscow's cynical lying and the ludicrous cover story it invented. The evidence is sobering: Moscow apparently was so obsessed about security that it callously massacred 269 men, women and children on a civilian airliner.

3. The entire Soviet response demonstrates the weakness of their case: They have no defense but the big lie.

Assertion: 1. (Ogarkov) "[The Soviet air-defense forces] actions were carried out in strict conformity with the Constitution and law...of the USSR and with existing international regulations. It is the sovereign right of every state to defend its borders, including its airspace."

2. "The United States is trying to...exploit the Security Council to encroach on the sovereign right of states to protect their security and on the very U.N. Charter which guarantees this right." (TASS, 0938 GMT, September 4, 1983)

Fact: 1. At the meeting of the U.N. Security Council, the representative from Singapore spoke for most of the world community when he said: “We must...demand that the Soviet Union bring its domestic rules and instructions into conformity with international law.”

2. At the United Nations, the meetings of the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO), the New Delhi session of the World Tourism Organization and other international fora, a majority of the world's nations reiterated their strong disagreement with Moscow's claim that a nation's concerns about sovereignty, security and "sacred borders" can override the need to protect innocent human lives and international transport.

3. No international regulations allow another nation's aircraft to be shot down in peace time. International law does not countenance shooting down a civilian airliner, whatever may be suspected about its function.

4. Soviet aircraft have committed innumerable violations of other nations' airspace, some of them clearly deliberate. Moscow again is trying to employ a clear double standard. In essence, the Soviets claim that any action may be justified by their own extreme sense of insecurity.

Assertion: “Reagan has expounded the U.S. version of the incident, a version worked out by the CIA, reporting slanderous fabrications against the Soviet Union.... [He threatened] us with sanctions and...said that the Soviet Union had allegedly no legal or moral right, no justification to take steps concerning the plane.... But only someone ill versed in matters of international law can make a statement like [this].... What would the U.S. President say if, for example, tomorrow...a Soviet aircraft appeared over secret parts of the United States?” (Moscow domestic television, September 6, 1983)

Fact: 1. The U.S. and other free world responses to this incident have been carefully factual and reflect general understanding of the relevant international law and moral issues.

2. Soviet aircraft have, in fact, appeared repeatedly over the airspace of many nations where they had no right to be. They have been challenged and escorted away. No other nation has ever assumed the right to shoot them down.
Montage of headlines from newspapers around the world illustrates the shock and anger of the international community over the destruction of the Korean airliner and the deaths of 269 men, women and children.
Assertion: (Leonid Zamyatin, Deputy Chief of the Soviet Communist Party’s International Department, on Aeroflot overflights of New England in 1981) “On checking it turned out that in this case, too, the Aeroflot aircraft had strictly observed the flight schedules approved by the [FAA] of the United States. Aeroflot presented evidence proving this, and the U.S. [Civil Aeronautics Board] was prepared to revoke its previous decision. However, the U.S. State Department sent this board a letter which said...that, regardless of whether Aeroflot’s evidence was correct or incorrect, it must be punished.”

Fact: This is a self-serving misrepresentation. On November 8, 1981, both the inbound and the outbound Moscow-Washington Aeroflot flights deviated markedly from their prescribed routes in U.S. airspace over New England, and followed a course that cut across Pease Air Force Base in New Hampshire and the nuclear submarine facility at Groton, Connecticut. The U.S. response was to impose a two-flight suspension against Aeroflot.

Assertion: “They were dreaming in Washington of a major action that might change the propaganda and political situation and distract people’s attention from the Soviet peace initiatives, and help Washington get out of solving major international problems. The notorious incident with the South Korean plane was just such an action. Immediately after the incident, to a script worked out in advance, a broad propaganda campaign was mounted in the United States, whose tone is being set by President Reagan himself…. They have been saying that allegedly no agreements with the Soviet Union are possible, that it only understands, allegedly, the language of force, and for that it is necessary to arm oneself. But this is an obviously adventurist policy.” (Moscow Radio, September 7, 1983)

Fact: 1. That Washington knew nothing of the incident until after the fact wipes out this entire, fabricated argument by Moscow Radio’s writers.
2. Reading between the lines about the “script” of the U.S. reaction, one may note admiration and envy for the speed and quality of the U.S. government’s response. The democrat need not necessarily function less efficiently than the authoritarian.

Assertion: 1. “The Reagan Administration…is aiming to heat the international atmosphere to the utmost to enable carrying out a policy of unrestrained militarization of the United States, of open preparation for thermonuclear war, …[and] to bring to naught all the efforts of peace-loving forces…. One can only describe Washington’s escapade…as deliberate murder.” (TASS International Service in Russian, September 7, 1983)
2. “The incident…took place at a ‘convenient’ time for Washington… on the eve of… a new round in the Geneva [INF] talks……on the eve of the final stage of the Madrid conference, and on the eve of…[the U.S. Congress taking up] the approval of a new, still more impressive budget for the arms race…. Those who programmed the South Korean aircraft’s computers understand very well that in… an atmosphere of hysteria, it is easier to heat up the arms race, easier to keep in check their recalcitrant allies in military blocs, and easier to avoid solving the problems of war and peace…. History knows many examples of aggressors and conquerors driving unarmed women, old men and children in front of their hordes…. No, Washington rulers’ hearts and souls do not go out to the innocent victims of the programmed act of provocation. Their hearts and souls…are reaching out for world rule.” (Izvestiya, September 7, 1983)
3. “The plan evidently was that the plane, posing as a civilian airliner, would...complete its reconnaissance mission, or that if Soviet air-defense forces terminate its flight, a rabid anti-Soviet campaign would be unleashed at once. Now it is clear that the second option was used.” (TASS, September 10, 1983)

Fact: 1. Moscow clearly has tried to obscure what emerged from the September 6, 1983, U.N. Security Council hearing: that almost no one credits the “spy plane” story or the wild charges Moscow has made against the U.S.
2. The Soviet Union has thus been caught spouting propaganda while the rest of the world demands contrition and reparations.
3. For nations and people with human values undistorted by ideology and a paranoid sense of insecurity, a major tragedy like this is never “convenient.”
4. Since the U.S. in no way “used” the KAL plane, all allegations of a conspiratorial U.S. political plot or “planned provocation” are whole-cloth fantasies.
5. The callousness of the Soviet shootdown and the cynicism of Moscow’s subsequent massive effort to foist blame onto the United States accounts for the free world outrage. The U.S. government response can only be called restrained, given the circumstances of the case. The hysteria, if any, was in the frantic Soviet efforts to deflect the world’s justified censure of their behavior.