What Happened to Flight 007?

Five years after the downing of Korean Air Lines Flight 007 by the Soviets on September 1, 1983, most of the key questions remain unanswered. A plethora of books and articles have attempted (with little success) to sort out the data and reach convincing conclusions about what actually happened, and why, and how.

The most widely accepted (and seemingly least controversial) aspect of the incident is that the jetliner was indeed blown up by a Soviet rocket, after which it plummeted into the Sea of Japan, killing all on board. Two best-selling books published in 1986 are typical. The first sentence of the dust jacket blurb for *The Target Is Destroyed* by Seymour Hersch claimed: "On September 1, 1983, a Korean Air Lines civilian jet, flying off course over Russia's Sakhalin Island, was shot from the skies by a Russian interceptor — killing all 269 passengers and crew." The initial paragraph from the dust jacket of *Shootdown: Flight 007 and the American Connection* by R. W. Johnson declared: "In the early hours of September 1, 1983, a Soviet fighter plane shot down Korean Airlines flight 007 as it flew without authorization over the Soviet Union's airspace. The Boeing 747 plunged into the Sea of Japan, killing all 269 passengers and crew."

The major media led public opinion to view the "destruction" of KAL 007 as a given by using such terms as: "suddenly falling" (*U.S. News & World Report*, September 12, 1983); "tumbled out of the sky" (*Newsweek*, September 12, 1983); "spun uncontrollably downward" (*Reader's Digest*, January 1984); "cartwheeling toward the sea" (*Time*, September 19, 1983); "plunged into the ocean" (*Maclean's*, September 12, 1983); "spiralled out-of-control" (United Press International dispatch, *Salt Lake Tribune*, August 26, 1984); and "blasted from the skies" (Associated Press dispatch, *Salt Lake Tribune*, September 2, 1984).

In December 1983, the most "authoritative" and oft-cited study of the incident, a report by the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO), concluded: "As a direct result of the missile attack, KE007 crashed and sank into the Sea of Japan southwest of Sakhalin Island. There were no survivors among the passengers, flight crew and cabin attendants." The ICAO report, entitled *Destruction of Korean Air Lines Boeing 747 Over Sea of Japan 31, August 1983*,* reached this determination even though it acknowledged that the "location of the main wreckage was not determined." The failure to find the "main wreckage" should have raised the possibility that no such wreckage existed; yet, that possibility was not seriously considered by the ICAO, a United Nations affiliate.

* The attack on KAL 007 occurred on August 31 Greenwich Mean Time (GMT) and U.S. time, but on September 1st (Japan time) in the area of the assault

The fate of KAL 007 after the attack was settled by consensus, and the file on at least that aspect of the tragedy was closed. Nevertheless, careful scrutiny of the actual evidence does not support the officially accepted "crash" hypothesis. Instead, the evidence indicates that something far different happened to the giant jetliner and those on board.

The "crash" hypothesis was bolstered by reports (which we do not challenge) that pieces of the plane, a couple of bodies presumed to be passengers, and personal effects that unquestionably belonged to passengers (business cards, passports, unique clothes, etc.) had been found. Such debris certainly seemed to be convincing evidence that the Boeing 747 had indeed splattered into the sea. If anything,

however, the amount and the nature of the debris supports the contrary conclusion that the aircraft did not hurtle to a watery grave (as we shall see).

That KAL 007 was cruising at an altitude of about 35,000 feet when it was attacked is confirmed by radio transmissions between the airliner and Tokyo air traffic control. Those transmissions are consistent with the recorded one-way conversations of the Soviet pilots. For instance, the ICAO Report asserts: "At 1815 hours [Greenwich Mean Time, hereafter GMT], KE007 requested FL [flight level] 350 [35,000 feet]. Five minutes later, at 1820 hours, Tokyo Radio transmitted the clearance for the aircraft to climb to this level … KE007 reported reaching FL 350 at 1823 hours."

The transcript of comments by the pilot of the Soviet attack plane (which is included in the ICAO document) shows that he reported at 1822:02 (about 2 minutes after KAL 007 received permission to climb to 35,000 feet, but one minute before it reached that altitude): "The target is reducing speed." Twenty-seven seconds later, at 1822:29, the Soviet pilot again declared: "It is decreasing speed." Since an airliner's speed will usually decrease somewhat during an ascent to a higher altitude (as additional engine power is diverted to "lifting" the plane, rather than simply propelling it forward), the Soviet pilot's comments are consistent with the other data confirming KAL 007's climb to 35,000 feet. It is common for an airliner to increase altitude toward the end of a flight to conserve fuel (having burned off most of its fuel by that time, it is lighter and can more efficiently fly both higher and faster).

1826 GMT

The attack occurred at 1826 GMT (3:26 AM Japan time), when KAL 007 was hit by at least one missile fired from a Soviet Su-15 tactical fighter (which carries two rockets). According to the transcript of comments by the pilot of the Su-15, the rockets were launched at exactly 1826:20 GMT and the pilot (prematurely) reported two seconds later: "The target is destroyed." (ICAO Report, Appendix D, page D-3.) He possibly thought it was, but he was wrong. When he and pilots of the other planes that were chasing KAL 007 tried to locate the wreckage thereafter, they could not find it. According to the transcripts, one states at 1829:13: "I don't see it." At 1829:54, another says of the "target": "No I don't see it." At 1838:37, the first reiterates: "I don't see anything in this area. I just looked." (ICAO Report, Appendix D, pages D-3 and D-4.) Eventually, with fuel running low, they had to return to their base without sighting the remains of the "target" they had supposedly "destroyed."

It is reasonable to assume that KAL 007 was damaged by a heat-seeking missile that zeroed in on the Number Four (outboard) engine on the right wing. At 1823:18, the Soviet pilot reported that his target "is now located 70 [degrees] to the left," meaning that he was himself positioned to the right of the jet liner. The Number Four engine would have been first in line for a heat-seeking missile, due to (1) the swept-back configuration of the wing, placing that engine slightly closer to the Soviet fighter, and (2) a greater temperature differential with its surrounding environment than would be the case with the inboard engine. Confronted with two heat surfaces of equal intensity (in this instance, two jet engines), a heat-seeking missile is attracted to the one surrounded by the coldest environment. The Number Four engine, with its companion engine on one side and frigid space on the other, would have been enveloped by a slightly colder temperature than the Number Three (inboard) engine, which was sandwiched between the plane's fuselage and the outboard engine.

It is important to note that, even with an engine destroyed and the cabin decompressed (as a result of shrapnel from the explosion penetrating the fuselage), the pilot could nevertheless have retained control of the plane, assuming that at least one of the jet's four hydraulic systems remained operational to permit use of the rudder, wing flaps, brakes, etc. Indeed, it is possible for a jet to lose three engines

and still be flown. On May 2, 1988, a United Airlines Boeing 747 with 258 people on board landed safely at New Tokyo International Airport after three of its four engines failed. According to news reports, "the aircraft lost the use of one engine over the Pacific Ocean approximately one hour and 15 minutes before landing, a second engine about 30 minutes later, and a third engine just prior to landing." (AP dispatch, *Deseret News*, May 2, 1988.) There were no deaths or injuries.

The ability of modern aircraft and their highly-trained crews to weather serious malfunctions and damage during flight is remarkable. To cite just one example (others will be noted later), an article entitled "Ten Minutes to Live" in *Reader's Digest* for May 1967 described events surrounding the mid-air collision of an Eastern Airlines propeller-driven Constellation and a TWA Boeing 707 jet. The article said of the Boeing 707: "A full 25 feet of the jet's wing fell off; but, after one horrifying recovery maneuver, the TWA craft was able to fly safely to Kennedy Airport — a remarkable demonstration of pilot skill and the hardihood of the Boeing 707."*

* Most of the story was devoted to the incredible skill and heroism of Eastern pilot Charles J. White, who was able to maneuver his severely damaged aircraft to a crash-landing that resulted in only four deaths among the 54 persons on board — including his own when, having escaped, he returned to help a trapped passenger. Captain White was an active member of The John Birch Society. Eastern Airlines established a scholarship fund in his name and the Shriners of New York installed a plaque in his memory at Eastern's terminal at New York's Kennedy Airport.

The Radio Transmission

There was a brief but garbled radio transmission following the attack on KAL 007, during which the co-pilot referred to the decompression of the plane and mentioned figures apparently related to the jet's descent. The ICAO Report states (page 6): "At 1827 hours, KE007 called Tokyo Radio but the signal was noisy and weak and not readable." Further along (page 21), it asserts: "At 1827 hours, KE007 … called Tokyo Radio. The message, the last recorded transmission of KE007, was unreadable however, the signal being noisy, garbled and weak." Then, the ICAO contradicts those assertions by including a partial transcript of the supposedly "unreadable" transmission (page 43): "Between 1827:10 and 1827:25 hours [GMT] Tokyo Radio received a partly intelligible transmission from KE007. After extensive analysis and filtering of noise, the following words were discernible: Korean Air zero zero seven … (unintelligible) … rapid compressions … (unintelligible) … descending to one zero thousand [10,000 feet]." Remember, the missiles were launched at 1826:20 GMT, with at least one impacting KAL 007 about one second later. The ICAO, in other words, placed the time of the final radio transmission from KAL 007 between 49 seconds and 64 seconds after the explosion.

On August 30, 1984, ABC's *20/20* program broadcast the tape (and supplied a slightly more detailed translation) of the final transmission, which it said began 39 seconds after the attack:

> FLIGHT 007: Tokyo, Korean Air zero zero seven.…
>
> TOKYO TOWER: Korean Air zero zero seven, Tokyo.
>
> FLIGHT 007: fifteen thousand … holding with the rapid decompressions. Descending to one zero thousand [10,000 feet].

No "Mayday" Message

Strangely, there was no discernible "Mayday" emergency transmission. Writing in *The Nation* for August 17/August 24, 1985, David Pearson and John Keppel (who reach conclusions regarding KAL 007

with which this reporter disagrees in most respects) briefly discussed this oddity. They quoted Dr. Malcolm Brenner of Aviation Safety Associates International (described by Pearson and Keppel as "a leading firm in the aviation accident investigation field") as asserting that "there is a saying in aviation that 'one minute's flying is worth two days rowing,' and for aircraft over water it would be critical to get the Mayday message started as soon as possible and lasting as long as possible. The ground station could then use the radio signal to take a fix on the aircraft's location and likely ditching site." Pearson and Keppel continued: "Emergency procedures call for saying 'Mayday' three times, followed by other information about the nature of the emergency, Brenner noted. The cockpit crew should have continued broadcasting until the last possible moment to help lead rescuers to the plane's location. But they did not." There are a number of possible explanations for why they did not. One possibility is that they did not consider the emergency to be of "Mayday" proportions. (The co-pilot's reporting of sundry rates of descent seems highly incongruous for an airliner that is "plummeting" mortally wounded and out of control toward the sea.)

Since the transmission was so garbled, the true context of the few discernible segments cannot be known with certainty.* Some sources reported that the transcript indicated that the jet had lost power in all four engines. For instance, *Time* for September 26, 1983, asserted: "'All engine!' [sic] the Korean pilot said to controllers shortly after being hit, signaling that all four of his engines were gone." And *Reader's Digest* for January 1984, in its editorial introduction to an article on the incident, also claimed that the transmission included the words "All engines." This apocryphal rumor served primarily to bolster the belief that KAL 007 was indeed mortally wounded and uncontrollable.

* It is significant, however, that the transmission apparently began no earlier than 39 seconds (ABC) or 49 seconds (ICAO Report) after the rocket attack, indicating that the cockpit crew was alive and the radio was operational at the time. This clearly conflicts with claims that the plane was "destroyed" by the rocket attack on impact.

Controlling the "Crash" Area

The Soviet Union took control of the alleged "crash" area, refusing to allow the entry of U.S. or Japanese search-and-rescue teams into its territorial waters and seriously harassing such teams even in international waters. *Aviation Week & Space Technology* for September 12, 1983, reported: "Russian naval and air search units … have barred the U.S. and Japanese search forces from the exact area where the 747 is believed to have crashed, even though that spot is beyond the 12-mi. territorial limit from Sakhalin Island."

On September 15, 1983, Federal Aviation Agency (FAA) Administrator J. Lynn Helms stated in an appearance before the ICAO Council: "To date, the U.S.S.R. has refused to permit search and rescue units from other countries to enter Soviet territorial waters to search for the remains of K.A.L. 007. Moreover, the Soviet Union has blocked access to the likely crash site and has refused to cooperate with other interested parties to ensure prompt recovery of all technical equipment, wreckage and other material that may facilitate and expedite completion of an investigation." (For Helms' complete statement, see the Congressional Record, September 20, 1983, daily edition page numbers S12462-S12464.)

Newsweek for September 26, 1983 reported that "the Soviets have barred entry to the waters around Moneron island, near the suspected crash site, where more debris may be." And on October 12, 1983,

U.S. officials revealed (as summarized by the next day's *Washington Post*) that four days earlier "Soviet intelligence ships brandished weapons at a Japanese vessel and held it at bay for 20 minutes in international waters … while the Japanese vessel was participating in a U.S. search for undersea remains of a downed South Korean Airliner."

It has been assumed that concern about United States and Japanese entry into the "crash" area resulted from a Soviet desire to gather and hide (or destroy) evidence from the "crash" and be first to reach the "black boxes" (the in-flight voice and data recorders, which are actually orange). But there is another possibility that would readily account for their behavior: the desire to keep others from discovering that no "crash" had occurred at all.

Twelve-Minute Hurtle?

One of many perplexing details that raise questions about what really happened to KAL 007 after the attack is that the jetliner remained airborne for at least 12 minutes. During a press briefing on the morning of September 1, 1983, Secretary of State George Shultz told reporters: "At 1826 hours the Soviet pilot reported that he fired a missile and the target was destroyed. At 1830 hours the Korean aircraft was reported by radar at 5,000 meters [16,400 feet]. At 1838 hours the Korean plane disappeared from the radar screen." The next day's *New York Times* featured a front-page map that included the same chronology: "3:26 A.M.: Soviet pilot reports firing missile." "3:30 A.M.: Radar shows the Korean plane at altitude of about 16,400 feet." "3:38 A.M.: Jetliner disappears from radar screen." Similarly *Newsweek* for September 12, 1983, reported: "3:30 a.m.: 007 is picked up by radar at 16,000 feet, but at 3:39 a.m. it disappears from … [Japan's] radar screen." And *Aviation Week & Space Technology* for September 5, 1983, informed its readers: "At 1830 GMT (2:30 p.m. EDT), the transport was monitored at 5,000 meters. Eight minutes later the aircraft was no longer registering on radar."

To date, no one has adequately explained how a jetliner supposedly blown-up and hurtling out of control toward the sea would take at least 12 minutes to fall 35,000 feet. For comparison, consider this Associated Press dispatch as printed by *Deseret News* (Salt Lake City) for February 20, 1985: "A China Airlines jumbo jet fell 32,000 feet in less than two minutes Tuesday [February 19] after all four of its engines failed but the pilot restarted them and flew 500 miles with a damaged tail before making an emergency landing here [San Francisco], authorities said.… The Boeing 747 … fell from a cruising altitude of 41,000 feet to 9,000 feet, said … a spokesman at San Francisco International Airport." The plane fell 32,000 feet in something less than two minutes. Let us be conservative (and keep the arithmetic simple) by assuming that it was exactly two minutes, in which case the rate of descent would have been 267 feet per second. Had KAL 007 "plummeted" toward the sea at that rate, its fall would have taken about two minutes and 11 seconds — not 12 minutes.

It is important to note that its disappearance from the radar screen by no means meant that KAL 007 had crashed. It could have remained airborne thereafter until it either landed or ran out of fuel. *Newsweek* for September 12, 1983 reported that the plane went off radar while it was still 5,000 feet in the air. And R. W. Johnson asserts in *Shootdown* that it "went off the Wakkanai radar at 1000 feet."

In any event, KAL 007 remained aloft for at least 12 minutes after the attack, which is near-conclusive evidence that the crew was at least partially in control of the aircraft. Otherwise, the descent would have been far more precipitous.

Even more startling than the time it remained aloft was the jet's distinct change in the rate of descent. As already noted, the attack occurred at 1826, the jet was tracked on radar four minutes later at about

16,000 feet, then disappeared from radar eight minutes after that. Falling from 35,000 feet to 16,000 feet in four minutes is an average descent rate of 4,750 feet per minute. Falling from 16,000 to 1,000 feet (using R. W. Johnson's estimate of where the plane disappeared from radar) in eight minutes is a descent rate of only 1,875 feet per minute. Incredibly, KAL 007 slowed to less than one-half its early descent rate after passing the 16,000-foot level. How can that be explained, unless the crew was in control (and the aircraft was in reasonably good shape) during the descent?

Yet another remarkable aspect of the descent is that it appears to have been carried out according to standard procedure for an aircraft that has suffered an engine loss and decompression, but is still being controlled by the crew. A precipitous initial descent (between 4,000 and 7,000 feet per minute, depending on weather conditions and the structural condition of the aircraft) is intended to quickly reach a level where there is adequate oxygen and a warmer temperature. Thereafter, the rate is reduced as the pilot signals for assistance, seeks a place to land, makes his position known to potential rescuers, etc. The available data indicates that the Captain of KAL 007 followed that procedure.

Commercial airline Captain Joe H. Ferguson (who has collaborated with this reporter on earlier articles on this subject) participated in a 747 flight simulation at Denver's Stapleton International Airport on July 24, 1984. After"taking off" and climbing to 35,000 feet, the instructor simulated a Number Four engine fire and failure, accompanied by a rapid cabin decompression of the sort that could be caused, for example, by shrapnel from an explosion penetrating the fuselage. Emergency descent procedures were initiated with rates and times carefully recorded. The descent from 35,000 to 16,000 feet was accomplished in three minutes, 45 seconds (an average of 5,067 feet per minute), after which it required three minutes and 45 seconds to reach the 5,000-foot level (the point at which *Newsweek* claimed KAL 007 disappeared from radar). The overall simulated descent, with complete operational control of the 747 simulator, paralleled that of KAL 007 to a remarkable degree, further indicating that the Korean jet had sufficient electrical, hydraulic, and engine power to enable the crew to retain control after the attack.

To summarize, KAL 007 remained aloft for 12 minutes-plus after the attack; descended more than twice as fast during the first four minutes on radar as the last eight; and apparently followed standard descent procedure. Each of those factors is completely at odds with the official version of the jetliner's fate.

Minimum Speed for a 747

The point at which KAL 007 supposedly crashed has never been determined. As noted earlier, the ICAO Report asserted (page 28): "The location of the main wreckage was not determined." But the ICAO nevertheless guessed: "The approximate position was 46°35′ N and 141°20′ E, which was in international waters." That is a point about 41 miles from Moneron Island and about 45 miles from the shore of Sakhalin. Since KAL 007 was approximately 12 miles from shore when it was hit, it would have travelled about 33 miles from the point of attack to the point where the ICAO claims it crashed.

On September 2, 1983, the *New York Times* reported: "The airliner was lost … between Sakhalin and Moneron Island, about 30 miles southwest of the southern tip of Sakhalin." In that event, the jet would have travelled only 18 miles from the point of attack.

Let us assume (since an assumption is all we can make, and to keep the arithmetic simple) that the "crash" occurred 36 miles offshore, which would be 24 miles from the point of attack. During 12 minutes, the jet would have averaged only two miles per minute, or 120 miles per hour. Could such a

huge aircraft remain airborne for that length of time at such a low average speed?

We recently had an opportunity to discuss the matter with a flight instructor who trains pilots on the 747 for United Airlines. We asked what the minimum speed would be to keep such a plane in the air, assuming it was empty — no passengers, no cargo, and nearly out of fuel. The minimum, in that event, would be 105 miles per hour with the flaps fully extended, and 165 mph with the flaps retracted. At cruising altitude, KAL 007's flaps would not have been extended, and after the attack they could have been extended only if one or more of its hydraulic systems remained intact.

We then asked what the minimum speed would be for a 747 that had travelled three-fourths of the way from Anchorage to Seoul with 270 passengers and an average cargo load, and were told that at cruise altitude a speed of at least 235 mph would be required to keep the plane aloft, while at low altitude (such as landing with flaps down at the end of such a trip) the "absolute minimum" speed would be 117 mph.

The point is simply that a jumbo jet carrying hundreds of passengers and a load of cargo must maintain a substantial minimum speed to remain aloft, and it is very doubtful that KAL 007 could have flown for 12 minutes-plus while averaging a mere 120 miles per hour (or anything close to it). Especially since it would have been flying much faster at first, and thus would have had to travel much slower at some later point to make the average. (If *Newsweek* was right, and the "crash" site was 30 miles from Sakhalin, the plane's average speed while traversing 18 miles would have been only 90 mph. If the ICAO was correct, the average speed over 33 miles would have been 165 mph — the bare minimum for keeping even an empty 747 aloft unless the flaps are extended.)

At its cruise altitude of 35,000 feet, KAL 007 would have been traveling at about 540 miles per hour, or nine miles per minute. Aviation experts with whom we have discussed the matter (including pilots who fly the 747) speculate that during the plane's rapid descent to 16,000 feet the speed would have been reduced to perhaps 420 miles per hour (seven miles per minute). Thereafter, the aircraft would likely have slowed to perhaps 300 miles per hour (five miles per minute). Let us assume (since a reasonable assumption is all that can be made in the absence of the plane's flight-data recorder) that the average speed of KAL 007 throughout its descent was around 360 miles per hour (six miles per minute). During 12 minutes, unless it changed direction, it would have travelled 72 miles, placing it about 84 miles — not 30, or 36, or 45 miles — from the shore of Sakhalin.

The official "crash" hypothesis is thus inconsistent with the speed necessary to keep KAL 007 airborne for 12 minutes-plus.

Equally puzzling is the amount of debris recovered in the wake of the supposed "crash" of KAL 007. At the time, no 747 jet had previously been destroyed by a mid-air explosion and an out-of-control crash into the sea. So, when the "crash" of what is essentially a flying hotel produced an amount of debris (and a body count) that might result from a Piper Cub crack-up, there was no precise precedent with which to compare it. Now there is.

Only about 1,000 total items of debris (including pieces of the plane, human remains, and personal effects) were recovered. Two badly mutilated bodies were presumed (but not proven) to have been aboard KAL 007 (we shall assume that they were). The number of human remains recovered totalled 13 (including the two bodies), none of which were retrieved by the Soviets. Those found were washed up on the shores of Japan, discovered by fishermen, etc.

According to figures compiled by a South Korean investigative committee, the following had been

recovered by September 20, 1983 (nearly three weeks after the incident):

• Aircraft Debris: 449 pieces by Japan and 54 pieces by the Soviet Union, for a total of 503;

• Articles Belonging To Victims: 323 items by Japan and 22 items by the Soviets, for a total of 345; and

• Human Remains: 13 by Japan and zero by the Soviets, for a total of 13. (ICAO Report, Appendix G, page G-16.)

Six days later, the Soviets turned over another 76 items. (ICAO Report, Page G-20.) And on December 19, 1983, the Soviets surrendered yet another 83 small items, bringing the total of all items recovered to 1,020. (Franz A. Kadell, The KAL 007 Massacre, pages 280-281.)*

* *Life* magazine for January 1984 (page 100) reported: "The Russians picked up 18 articles of clothing and sent them to Japan — but only after having them drycleaned." Fishy indeed!

The largest chunk of aircraft debris was "a piece of metal measuring about 30 inches by 36 inches believed to have come from the jet's vertical tail fin." (Combined AP and UPI dispatches, *Deseret News*, September 9, 1983, page A1.) It had been carried about 100 miles by sea currents to the northeastern shore of Hokkaido, Japan, where it was found. Other reporters described it as being even smaller. In *The KAL 007 Massacre*, for instance, Franz Kadell asserts that what appeared "to be a part of the vertical section of the plane's tail" measured "32 by 28 inches." Whatever its measurements, it was virtually microscopic compared to the huge chunks of wreckage usually associated with an airline disaster. After all, KAL 007 was a monster of a machine standing 63 feet 5 inches high, measuring 231 feet 4 inches from nose to tail, with a wing span of 195 feet 8 inches, and weighing over half a million pounds.

All told, the Soviets (who maintained exclusive control of the alleged "crash" site for days) supplied only 235 small chunks of metal and articles supposedly belonging to victims (no human remains whatsoever). In contrast, some 77 percent (785) of the items were recovered by Japan, including the small piece of tailfin and 13 human remains, including two mutilated bodies (a partially decapitated Asian girl whose legs had been severed and whose body was embedded with fragments of metal and glass, and a woman who had been decapitated).

Comparing Debris

It is now possible to compare the debris recovered in the wake of KAL 007 to that retrieved from a subsequent airline tragedy. On June 23, 1985, Air-India Flight 182, also a Boeing 747, crashed into the Atlantic near the coast of Ireland after suffering what investigators later concluded was a bomb explosion. The big jet literally did hurtle into the ocean (as KAL 007 is supposed to have done) from an altitude of 31,000 feet, killing all 329 persons on board.

On the day of the tragedy, search aircraft and boats recovered 123 bodies. (AP dispatch, *Salt Lake Tribune*, June 24, 1985.) The next day, another eight were retrieved. (UPI dispatch, *Salt Lake Tribune*, June 25, 1985.) Incredibly, four months later (October 25, 1985) another body was found strapped in its seat in a section of the fuselage raised from the ocean floor. (AP dispatch, *Deseret News*, October 26, 1985.) Whereas the two bodies associated with KAL 007 were horribly mutilated, and a few parts of others were also retrieved, "A British Royal Navy doctor, Lt. Richard Cribb, said bodies he saw [from TWA 182] were 'badly shattered and broken but all in one piece.'" (AP dispatch, *Deseret News*, June 24, 1985.) Many huge pieces of the airliner were found (about four tons in all). (UPI dispatch, *Deseret*

News, July 12, 1985.) Nearly three weeks after the incident (July 10, 1985), the in-flight voice recorder was retrieved from the tail section at a depth of about 6,700 feet. (AP dispatch, *Deseret News*, July 11, 1985.) The next day, the underwater robot Scarab I also located and recovered the in-flight data recorder. (Ibid.)

The water depth in the area of the alleged "crash" of KAL 007 ranged from around 650 feet to 2,700 feet. The ICAO reported: "The search area consisted of an underwater ridge with an average depth of 200m [200 meters; 656 feet], and an area west of the ridge, where the depth varies between 500 and 800m [1,640 feet to 2,625 feet.]" The Associated Press reported that a Japanese Maritime Agency official had estimated that "water depth near the island, in Soviet waters, is only 300 feet, but west of the island it is 1,200-1,500 feet deep." (*Salt Lake Tribune*, September 3, 1983.) So the water depth in the area of the KAL 007 incident was at most less than one-half that of the site of the TWA 182 crash. Yet scores of bodies, and tons of wreckage, were recovered from the latter.

So far as we know, the underwater robot was not employed during the KAL 007 search. The Navy did employ sonar, however. The *Washington Post* reported on October 13, 1983: "Recently, a Navy drone was sent down about 2,500 feet to examine an object that had registered on the sonar that turned out to be a skillet, not from the KAL crash." The sonar was able to pinpoint a minuscule item like a skillet, but found not so much as a single tiny chunk of KAL 007 wreckage. Truly amazing — unless there was no wreckage to be found.

Challenger Debris

For another comparison, consider the horrific explosion that engulfed the space shuttle *Challenger* on January 28, 1986, resulting in the deaths of all seven crew members. The disaster occurred at an altitude some three miles higher than that at which KAL 007 was flying when attacked by the Soviets. *Newsweek* for February 10, 1986 noted: "In barely more than a minute, the space-craft was 10 miles [52,800 feet] high." The space shuttle is smaller than the 747. Indeed, the 747 has been used on occasion to transport the shuttle piggyback. Yet, despite an explosive inferno that would make a Soviet rocket detonation (involving perhaps 70 pounds of explosives, the amount that *Anab* missiles of the type fired at KAL 007 contain) seem like a firecracker, searchers soon recovered more than 20 tons of *Challenger* wreckage (many individual pieces weighed more than a ton), the remains of all seven crew members, etc. Eventually, "245,000 pounds of debris was recovered, representing 45 percent of the shuttle and its attached components. Forty-five percent of the orbiter, 90 percent of the crew cabin, 90 percent of the satellite rocket stage, 35 percent of the satellite, 50 percent of the fuel tank and 95 percent of a second satellite were retrieved." (AP dispatch, *Deseret News*, August 28, 1986.)

The *Challenger* search and recovery effort lasted more than seven months. (Recall that the investigation into the crash of TWA 182 was still underway, and a body was found, four months after that tragedy.) In addition, a presidential commission was assigned to investigate the *Challenger* disaster, after which Congress conducted its own inquiry. Yet, in the case of KAL 007 and the 61 Americans on board, there was neither a presidential commission nor a meaningful congressional probe. The United States called off its search on November 7, 1983; Japan terminated its search effort on November 9, 1983; the ICAO completed its investigation and issued its report in December 1983; and the State Department, after co-opting the KAL 007 investigation from the National Transportation Safety Board, refused to conduct an inquiry of its own.

Summarizing the Air-India, Challenger, and KAL 007 tragedies:

• Air-India: 132 bodies recovered, more than four tons of wreckage collected, and both "black boxes" retrieved from a depth of more than a mile.

• Challenger: Some 245,000 pounds of wreckage retrieved, along with the remains of the seven-member crew.

• KAL 007: Thirteen human remains recovered (none in the immediate area of the supposed "crash"), 1,007 other small items of debris collected (the largest piece of the plane could be lifted by a single individual), and no sign of "black boxes" despite the relatively shallow water in the area.

Comparisons to Other Crashes

The worst single-plane accident in aviation history occurred on August 12, 1985, when Japan Air Lines Flight 123 (a 747) suffered massive structural failure, which destroyed its hydraulic systems. After more than 30 minutes, during which the pilot tried to control the aircraft with engine power alone, JAL 123 smashed into a mountain in central Japan, killing 520 of the 524 persons on board. One of the four survivors was Umi Ochiai, an off-duty JAL flight attendant. She discussed her ordeal five days after the crash, telling reporters that, after an initial burst of panic, the "passengers followed the crew's instructions to put on life vests" in preparation for a possible crash landing in water. (Reuters dispatch, *Salt Lake Tribune*, August 17, 1985.)

Is that not exactly what the crew and passengers of KAL 007 would likely have done during their relatively lengthy 12 minutes-plus decent? Yet, neither of the two mutilated bodies discovered was wearing a life vest, indicating that those persons (assuming that they were indeed passengers on KAL 007) may have had no chance to put them on, for reasons we will consider shortly. No vestiges of vests were reported among the debris. There should have been some in the wake of a "crash" into the sea of an airliner that had been aloft for 12 minutes or more.

In yet another incident, a terrorist bomb exploded aboard TWA Flight 840 on April 2, 1986, as the Boeing 727 jetliner was descending for a landing in Athens at an altitude of 15,000 feet. In the wake of the cabin decompression, four persons (including a woman and a child) were, as described by *U.S. News & World Report* for April 14, 1986, "sucked through a 4-foot hole, their bodies found 15,000 feet below." The explosion and decompression did not cause the plane to crash or even to go out of control. The captain maneuvered it to a safe landing in Athens. On April 4, 1986, a dispatch in the *Washington Times* reported that "a Federal Aviation Administration spokesman said the bomb would not have destroyed the aircraft if the plane had been at a higher altitude. 'But it would have made a difference in the air rushing out,' the FAA spokesman said. 'The air would have rushed out faster at 30,000 feet but that does not necessarily mean more people would have been killed.'" In other words, just as only the four passengers nearest the explosion were expelled from the TWA jet, it is reasonable to assume that about that many would have been expelled from KAL 007 during its decompression at a far higher altitude. Does this (rather than a "crash") explain why the bodies of the woman and child eventually recovered were so terribly mutilated? And why they were not wearing life jackets?

On November 28, 1987, a South African Airways 747 with 160 persons on board crashed in the Indian Ocean near the island of Mauritius. Debris was scattered over 150 square miles (UPI dispatch, *Salt Lake Tribune*, November 30, 1987). The next day, UPI reported: "Four badly mutilated bodies were recovered Monday [November 30] … increasing to nine the number of victims recovered." (*Deseret News*, November 30, 1987.) And South Africa's transport minister "told reporters at a crisis command post at Johannesburg's Jan Smuts Airport that passengers in another South African Airways jumbo jet

carrying investigating officials to Mauritius had also spotted wreckage, including suitcases and an empty rubber life raft." (*Washington Post*, November 29, 1987.)

Keep those suitcases in mind.

On March 14, 1988, an engine on a Piedmont Airlines jetliner (a two-engine Fokker F-28) "exploded into jagged pieces … slicing through both sides of the plane and forcing the pilot to make an emergency landing as some passengers screamed and fainted." (AP dispatch, *Salt Lake Tribune*, April 15, 1988.) The explosion ripped a hole two feet wide and six feet tall on the right side (adjacent to the engine that disintegrated) and a hole two feet by one foot on the left side. The plane was cruising at 31,000 feet when the incident occurred. According to the Associated Press, the plane "immediately lost air pressure in the cabin; several passengers later complained of headaches, earaches and elevated blood pressure," but the pilot "landed without incident" after the "plane made a deep descent after the explosion." Two flight attendants were treated for minor injuries. There were no deaths. It was another example of how much damage a modern aircraft can take and still remain operable.

On April 20, 1988, one of the most incredible incidents in aviation history occurred when a structural weakness in an Aloha Airlines Boeing 737 jet resulted in about 20 feet of cabin being ripped off at an altitude of 21,000 feet. Some 60 persons were injured and one flight attendant was hurled to her death (the only fatality) when the top blew off. She was "probably either ejected by the blast or blown out of the plane by the wind," according to an area manager for the Federal Aviation Administration (AP dispatch, *Deseret News*, April 29, 1988). Some of "the passengers hung on to another standing flight attendant so she would not be sucked out of the plane." (Ibid.) With one engine aflame and his plane looking like a convertible, Captain Robert Schornstheimer made a miraculous emergency landing at Kahului Airport, after which one passenger observed, "I've had worse landings in normal aircraft," while another declared, "It was just like riding in a Cadillac." One passenger told reporters that she put on a life jacket, which is what flight attendants ask you to do in such a situation if there is time. It is undoubtedly what flight attendants on KAL 007 had the passengers do as well, but again, there were no signs of such flotation devices after that alleged "crash."

There have been many additional incidents involving aircraft to which KAL 007 can be compared in one way or another. These few should suffice, however, to demonstrate how the official "crash" hypothesis for KAL 007 depends upon incongruous (and in many respects unprecedented) assumptions.

Then there is the nature of the debris. That, too, is important. Based on news reports, television footage showing items recovered, and the testimony of persons who viewed the items on the scene in Japan, it appears that all of the debris from inside the plane came solely from the cabin. Included were such personal effects as clothing, calling cards, passports, books, newspapers, a Boeing 747 technical manual, jogging shoes, a camera case, some blouses, a handbag, dentures, and an application for a course at a university in Japan; and such cabin items as parts of seat cushions, oxygen masks and bottles, insulation, paper cups, vinyl bags, and a piece of venetian blind. So far as we have been able to determine, there were no items (such as large pieces of luggage, shipping crates, sports equipment, etc.) that would usually be transported in the cargo pit. Suitcases were seen at the site of the South African Airways crash described earlier. But in the case of KAL 007, "No suitcases were turned over" by the Soviets. (Franz Kadell, *The KAL 007 Massacre*.) And none were reported as having been washed up on the shore of Japan, or anywhere else. Kadell concludes: "The Soviets obviously had decided not to turn over any substantial items." Another possibility is that they had no choice, because there were no "substantial items" of debris to recover.

If KAL 007 had actually slammed into the sea, killing everyone aboard, it would undoubtedly have broken apart, spilling most of its contents (including the contents of the cargo pit) into the sea, in which case the debris would have been extensive and far more should have been recovered.* An article by *New York Times* writer Steven R. Weisman in the *Salt Lake Tribune* for July 21, 1985 reported that the head of the investigation into the crash of Air-India Flight 182 "was considering flying to Cork, Ireland to help supervise the study of the plane's wreckage, some of which is reportedly still floating in the ocean." That was nearly one month after the crash.

* On the other hand, if the plane did not break apart, or broke into a few large sections, there should have been no difficulty locating the wreckage.

Neither the ICAO, nor U.S. government officials, nor any other advocates of the "crash" hypothesis have to date offered a credible explanation for what appears to be the exclusively cabin-oriented nature of the debris from inside the plane, to say nothing of the minuscule total amount of such debris. But there is a scenario that takes those details fully into account, as well as the other aspects of the case that we have discussed.

First, let us take a look at the early reports that KAL 007 had returned to Sakhalin Island and landed safely. Sakhalin is a major military outpost where there are a number of Soviet air bases and runways. "On Sakhalin Island the Soviets base jet fighters and maintain two large airstrips." (*Newsweek*, September 12, 1985.) Indeed, Sakhalin is "home for at least six Soviet airfields." (ABC's *20/20* program, August 30, 1984.) At least two large airfields were within range of KAL 007, at the Yuzhno-Sakalinsk and Kolinsk-Sokol military bases near the island's southern tip.

On September 1, 1983, the *New York Times* noted: "Early reports said the plane … had been forced down by Soviet Air Force planes and that all 240 passengers and 29 crew members were believed to be safe." *Aviation Week & Space Technology* for September 5, 1983, reported that Korean Air Lines had sent another aircraft "to pick up the passengers and bring them to South Korea." These and other "landed safely" accounts have been discounted and discredited by those determined to defend the "crash" hypothesis at all costs.

The New York Times account revealed that "Korean Foreign Ministry officials cited the United States Central Intelligence Agency as the source for the report that the plane had been forced down on Sakhalin, but American officials in Seoul, Tokyo, and Washington said they could not confirm or deny that report." Needless to say, the report that the CIA was the source of the claim that KAL 007 had landed safely convinced many critics of that clandestine agency that the report was false. Yet, if it is true that KAL 007 was not destroyed by the rocket attack, but instead remained under control of the crew, why would it not have returned to Sakhalin (over which it had flown moments before) for an emergency landing on one of the military runways there?

Return To Sakhalin?

Assuming that the pilot of KAL 007 was indeed able to maneuver the plane, and therefore had some options about where to set it down, wouldn't Sakhalin have been his first choice under the circumstances? The alternatives would have been to (1) try to complete the flight to Seoul, or reach a runway in Japan, both much farther away; or (2) risk a very dangerous nighttime ditching in the sea, where the temperature was approximately 50 degrees and the chance of surviving for as long as three and one-half hours was only fifty-fifty for those who might survive the initial impact.† "The seas in the

area were reported calm, but the temperature was about 50 degrees. According to survival manuals a person can last in such waters for about 50 minutes. Up to 3½ hours there is a 50-50 chance of survival, and after 3½ hours death is 99 percent certain." (Combined UPI and AP dispatch, *Deseret News*, September 1, 1983.)

† The possible political and diplomatic ramifications of an emergency landing on Soviet territory would have taken a back seat to the need to land the damaged plane as quickly and safely as possible.

Again, let us resort to a comparison. Writing about KAL 007 in *Flying* for December 1983, pilot Peter Garrison reminisced: "The whole affair had a special meaning for me, though. I was there — not, fortunately, at the same time. I flew the route — or rather the flight planned route — of the unfortunate Korean airliner in 1976 in my late homebuilt, Melmoth." Garrison recalled: "Melmoth's range was unproven; I estimated it — probably somewhat optimistically — to be nearly 3,000 nm [nautical miles], and therefore felt that we could remain aloft until over Japan. But what if the wind proved worse than anticipated, or Melmoth's range less, or if some mechanical difficulty arose? We would be confronted with a dilemma: ditch in the ocean, or return to Russia and throw ourselves upon the mercies of The Great Enemy. The dilemma wasn't much of a dilemma to me; my contingency plan was, if in doubt, unhesitatingly to hang a right and land in Russia."

All things considered, it is the sensible thing to do. The pilot of KAL 007 would undoubtedly have made the same choice. He would not yet have known exactly what had caused the engine loss and decompression, so would not be certain how precarious his situation might be.‡ But, rather than make a "sharp right," he would have had to make an about-face 180° turn. Is there any evidence that he did so?

‡ A dispatch in the *Washington Times* for April 4, 1986, was headlined: "TWA pilot didn't know what hit him." It reported that the pilot of TWA Flight 840, which we discussed earlier, had said "he didn't realize at first that a bomb had exploded inside the plane.... 'I heard a loud noise, a shattering noise..... There were dust particles in the cockpit and I could not see ... I thought at first it was a window.'" The captain did not immediately report the explosion to the Athens control tower "because I did not know exactly what had happened.... We suspected but we didn't know for sure until we were on the ground that we'd lost some passengers." Apparently, he did not transmit a "Mayday" distress plea. The dispatch quoted the veteran TWA pilot as saying further that the emergency landing was difficult "only because you wonder if you have brakes and our hydraulic system, even though it shows [on the cockpit's instruments]."

Confirmed Landing

Shortly after the attack, the Rome, Georgia, office of U.S. Representative Larry McDonald (D-Ga.), a passenger on the plane, received a number of calls from officials of Korean Air Lines and our Federal Aviation Agency (FAA) claiming that the jet had landed safely on Sakhalin. We have listened to recordings of the actual conversations, and they are fascinating. For instance, one call came from C. K. Suh, Manager of the American Regional Office of Korean Air Lines in Los Angeles. Suh told Congressman McDonald's press aide, Tommy Toles, that he had "just called Korean Air Lines in Seoul" and that "the information I got from them is that [the] U.S. Embassy in Korea informed the Korean Government, Minister of Foreign Affairs ... that the plane has landed in Sakhalin."

But the most important (and pertinent) communication came from a spokesman for the FAA, who told Toles:

> This is Duty Officer Orville Brockman at FAA headquarters in Washington, DC. We have just received information from our FAA representative, Mr. Dennis Wilhelm in Tokyo, as follows: He has been advised by the Japanese Civil Aviation Bureau headquarters, Air Traffic Division, Mr. Takano — T-a-k-a-n-o — who is his counterpart in Japanese aviation, as follows: Japanese self-defense force confirms that the Hokkaido radar followed Air Korea to a landing in Soviet territory on the island of Sakhalinska — S-a-k-h-a-l-i-n-s-k-a — and it is confirmed by the manifest that Congressman McDonald is on board.

Note that this confirmed report came from the Japanese self-defense force (not the CIA) and that radar "followed Air Korea to a landing." To follow it to what appeared to be a landing would mean, beyond any reasonable question, that KAL 007 was at the very least heading toward — rather than away from — Sakhalin. While radar may be fallible in certain other respects, it is highly unlikely that it could have misled air controllers as to the direction that KAL 007 was flying. How could the jet be heading toward Sakhalin unless it had reversed the direction in which it was flying when attacked (which was away from the island)?

Dale Van Atta, an associate of syndicated columnist Jack Anderson, visited Tokyo in early 1984. During the trip, according to Anderson, Van Atta was able to confirm "from Japanese intelligence sources and documents stamped 'secret' in red Japanese characters" a number of key aspects of the KAL 007 episode. One was that, at 3:38 a.m. on September 1, 1983, "The Japanese radar station at Wakkanai, Hokkaido, which had been tracking the unidentified aircraft's progress, saw the blip disappear from the screen less than 50 miles away. The trackers thought it was probably a Soviet plane that had gone down." (Anderson column, *Deseret News*, April 3, 1984.) Since Wakkanai is itself only about 40 miles from Sakhalin's southern tip, KAL 007 would have had to have been very close to the island if it was "less than 50 miles away" from Wakkanai when it disappeared from radar. Since it had been airborne for 12 minutes at that point, there is no way that it could have been tracked that close to the island unless it had changed direction. And if it changed direction, it was under the control of the crew. (That trackers thought it was a Soviet plane also implies that it was heading toward the Soviet military stronghold, as a Soviet plane would be expected to do. Had it been moving away from the island, there would have been less reason to conclude that it was a Soviet aircraft.)

When everything is taken into account, it is likely that the early reports that KAL 007 landed on Sakhalin were accurate, and that subsequent claims that it crashed and virtually disappeared were a fabrication.

Assuming that KAL 007 did not crash, what did happen after the attack? Is there an explanation that takes into account the time the plane remained aloft; its fast-slow descent rate; the considerable distance it likely travelled during its descent; the location, nature, and amount of debris; the small number and condition of the bodies that were found; and the early reports that the jet had landed in Sakhalin?

We cannot be certain that it happened as we will now speculate, but we do believe that something very similar occurred: The rocket attack destroyed the Number Four engine, generating shrapnel that punctured the fuselage and ripped some chunks of metal from the plane (including that small chip from the tail section, which was the largest piece of the plane ever found). The decompression hurled at least two (and possibly more) passengers from the plane, along with the sundry personal effects and the other cabin items that were eventually found. (Additional debris could have fallen at various points during the next few minutes.) The jetliner, according to standard procedure, descended quickly to a

point where the temperature and amount of oxygen could support life, then slowed as the pilot decided how best to land the plane safely with minimal additional injury and loss of life. He decided to return to Sakhalin and touch down on one of the existing military runways. By the time the jet began making its turn, it was perhaps 40 miles from Sakhalin. For the next five or six minutes it headed for the island and, as it prepared for the landing, it dropped off the Wakkanai radar 50 miles away.

Continuing with our scenario, once on the ground, the passengers and crew (except for those expelled from the plane during the decompression) were taken captive, the plane was sequestered (there would be adequate facilities for doing so at a military air base), and the small amount of debris that resulted from the engine explosion and decompression was soon discovered by the Soviets* and thereafter cited as "proof that KAL 007 had crashed into the Sea of Japan with no survivors.

* "In four minutes the plane was down to around 16,000 feet, and at 2:38 p.m. EDT it vanished from radar screens.... An hour later, Soviet vessels and aircraft searched the area...." (Combined UPI and AP dispatch, *Deseret News*, September 1, 1983.)

Expensive But Futile Search

The truth about KAL 007 has been obfuscated, in large part, by the tendency even of conservatives and anti-Communists to remain blind to evidence that conflicts with the official line. Consider, for example, the following extract from a May 6, 1985 response by a respected conservative senator to a constituent who had expressed concern about the possibility of KAL 007 survivors: "We are all familiar with the sequence of events surrounding the shooting down of the civilian Korean airliner, KAL 007, and many questions still remain. However, no known reports show any evidence to support the possibility of survivors. Upon the conclusion of a two-month search in the Sea of Japan the Department of Defense reported that there were no findings or signs of wreckage. The search totaled over 3,000 square miles,† 3,000 hours of flight time, and more than 320 ship-days at the cost of over $22 million dollars. The evidence simply does not support the probability of survivors regardless of the speed of descent."

† This is obviously a transcription error. The major search area at the start covered some 350 square miles (an area larger than New York City). Toward the end of September, the search area was reduced to around 15 square miles. See: Kadell, *The KAL 007 Massacre*, Page 279.

Surely the expenditure of all that time and money, covering such a broad expanse of the sea, with nothing whatsoever to show for it, might — just might — raise the possibility that a crash had not even occurred. If no crash occurred, the probability of survivors, and a lot of them, would be evident. Make no mistake about it, the completely negative result of the exhaustive and expensive U.S. search for remnants of KAL 007, as summarized in the senator's letter, is exactly what the result would have been if no crash had occurred. It is definitely not the result one would expect if a huge airliner had crashed.

The official conclusions about KAL 007 reek of whitewash, applied on the U.S. side, perhaps, to prevent the American people from rising in their wrath to veto further appeasement of Communism. Were the full truth to come out, for instance, programs of aid and trade with Communist countries, summit meetings, arms-controls treaties, and the many other aspects of our government's (and especially our State Department's) questionable agenda for dealing with the Marxist world, would undoubtedly become far more difficult to implement. On September 1, 1984, the Associated Press reported: "Secretary of State George Shultz says the Soviet Union's shooting down of a South Korean airliner one

year ago … should not preclude improvement of relations." (*Salt Lake Tribune*, September 1, 1984.) The same dispatch noted that Assistant Secretary of State Richard Burt had affirmed that (in AP's words) "the U.S. investigation into the incident is over, even though the plane's 'black box,' or flight recorder, has never been found."

While our primary objective has been to demonstrate the absurdity of the "crash" hypothesis, let us briefly note the steps that our State Department and other U.S. agencies took to muddy the waters about this important issue:

(a) The Department co-opted the KAL 007 case from the National Transportation Safety Board, then refused to conduct an investigation of its own. As summarized by David Corn in *The Nation* magazine for August 17/August 24,1985: "Normally when an airliner crashes, responsibility for the inquiry falls to the National Transportation Safety Board, which has the technical expertise to assess what happened. Although the downing of Flight 007 cannot be classified as a routine aviation disaster, the N.T.S.B. office in Anchorage was notified that the plane was missing just three hours after it had plunged into the Sea of Japan and immediately began to look into the matter. Shortly after that, it was told to forward to its headquarters in Washington all the material — originals and copies — it had gathered. From there, the information was sent to the State Department. James Michelangelo, chief of the N.T.S.B.'s Anchorage office, was told by headquarters that the board was off the case and that the State Department would handle the investigation. Eighteen months after the airliner was shot down, when asked if the State Department had ever conducted such an inquiry, a high-level State Department official replied, 'How is the State Department going to investigate?'"

(b) U.S. officialdom assumed at the outset that the jet crashed in Soviet territorial waters. *Newsweek* for September 12, 1983, observed: "The Americans assumed that the 747 went down in Soviet territorial waters. They assured Moscow that U.S. ships and planes had no intention of violating Soviet sea or airspace. And they asked for Soviet cooperation." It was a false (and irrational) assumption that helped to promote the impression that the Soviets had every right to exercise exclusive control of the alleged "crash" area.

(c) Administration sources claimed shortly after the attack that Soviet searchers had recovered some bodies. (AP dispatch, *Salt Lake Tribune*, September 3, 1983.) It was another false contention, which mainly served to bolster the Soviet-instigated claim that the plane had indeed "crashed."

(d) On the day after the tragedy, but before the matter could possibly have been properly and thoroughly evaluated, the State Department cabled Seoul to stress that it did not believe that the Soviets had shot down the plane due to the presence on board of Congressman Larry McDonald (D-Ga.). McDonald, an outspoken anti-Communist activist, was a vigorously pro-defense member of the House Armed Services Committee (with access to classified information); was renowned for the reams of educational anti-Communist articles, speeches, and reports that he regularly entered into the Congressional Record; was Chairman of the fervently anti-Communist John Birch Society; and was becoming an increasingly popular and influential political figure within the conservative movement. The CIA, according to columnist Jack Anderson (who, by the way, was one of Congressman McDonald's most bitter critics on the Left), had "reported that the Soviets could easily have intercepted telex communications indicating that [McDonald and] other tempting targets might have been on the KAL flight, including Sen. Jesse Helms, R-N.C." But the State Department cable discredited the implications of that report by asserting: "We have no repeat no evidence that the presence of Rep. McDonald aboard KAL 007 (or the planned travel of Sen. Helms and others aboard that flight) was a factor in the Soviet

attack on the aircraft." (Anderson column, *Deseret News*, September 20, 1983.)

(e) Jack Anderson, in the same column, noted that "President Reagan insisted from the beginning that the Soviets knew they were firing at a civilian airliner," but that "the State Department doubted this at first." Anderson quoted excerpts from a "highly confidential memo" dated September 2, 1983, which asserted that the State Department's special task force was "convinced the Soviets were sure they were firing on an American military plane." Such "mistaken identity" nonsense was one of the two major Soviet disinformation ploys for which the State Department was an early cheerleader.

(f) The main Soviet disinformation effort attempted to convince the world that KAL 007 was a spy plane. Here again, State Department officials did their part to promote that deception. An August 29, 1984, UPI dispatch revealed: "American officials are convinced the Soviet military ordered a Korean airliner with 269 people aboard shot down in the mistaken belief it was on a spy mission." The dispatch attributed the claim to a "State Department official who deals in Soviet affairs" who spoke only "on the basis he not be identified." We can understand his desire for anonymity! As Charles Lichtenstein, who was deputy to United Nations Ambassador Jeane Kirkpatrick at the time, wrote in the foreword to Franz Kadell's book *The KAL 007 Massacre*: "This ['spy mission'] scenario began to appear as speculation in the Western press almost from Day One; it created an opportunity for the Soviets to use Western sources as the 'authority' for their attempts to pin ultimate responsibility for the shootdown on us — a recurring Soviet disinformation tactic in the U.N. and beyond."

(g) The United States pulled its punches during the ICAO investigation. As reported by *Aviation Week & Space Technology* for September 19, 1983: "A U.S. official said the U.S. response was being toned down at the ICAO session so other nations with grievances could make the case for an investigation."

(h) In February 1985, a Justice Department attorney acknowledged in federal district court that the U.S. Air Force Regional Operations Command Center at Anchorage had destroyed key tape recordings "of radar tracks from Cape Newenham and Cape Roanzof, in Alaska, which might have told much about the path of the aircraft.... The U.S. government claimed that Air Force radar tapes are normally recycled about thirty hours after recording an aircraft's passage. The fate of Flight 007 was known well within thirty hours after the recordings were made. Still, the Air Force did not save the tapes, even though it customarily impounds information related to aviation disasters." (Article by David Corn in *The Nation*, August 17/August 24, 1985; also see R.W. Johnson, *Shootdown*, pages 289-290.) The destruction of the tapes could indeed have been part of a coverup. On the other hand, the tapes may not have been saved because there had been no "disaster," the jet having landed on Sakhalin.

Whatever the motives of those involved, the time has come to retrieve the KAL 007 file from the memory hole into which it was prematurely pitched. And the first questions that need to be answered are those we have raised here. If KAL 007 did not crash, but instead landed on Sakhalin Island, where its crew and passengers were taken captive, entirely new possibilities arise regarding why the plane was so far off course and why the Soviets shot it down. For instance, if the plane landed, why didn't the Soviets mitigate the situation by simply releasing the passengers and crew? Why would they capture and keep them all, including the many children who were on the plane? One possibility is that there was someone on the plane whom they wished to have either dead or incarcerated. In that event, it would indeed be necessary to hold onto everyone, since, if even a baby were returned alive, it would be necessary to account for all of the others.

If KAL 007 landed instead of crashed, it means that the Soviets have pulled off yet another incredibly audacious and typically malign deception, with the cooperation of elements within our own government,

the United Nations, and possibly Japan, in camouflaging the capture of the plane and the disappearance of those on board.

The key questions that must be answered include:

(1) How could KAL 007 remain airborne for 12 minutes without the crew being in at least partial control of the aircraft?

(2) How could the plane descend so fast during the early stage of its decent, then slow down to less than one-half the initial rate, without the crew being in substantial control? And how could the jet be "out of control," yet follow a descent pattern so parallel to standard procedure?

(3) Why were there no "Mayday" signals from KAL 007 during the minute or more that it was in radio contact with Tokyo after the attack?

(4) How could the supposed "crash" site (and locations of debris) be so close to the point of attack, when the plane had to be going so fast to remain airborne during those 12 minutes-plus?

(5) Why was so little debris (and so few bodies) found, considering what has been recovered in the wake of other disasters involving large aircraft?

(6) Why was the debris that was recovered apparently devoid of the sort of items one would expect to come from the plane's cargo pit?

(7) How does one explain the radar trackings that followed KAL 007 toward Sakhalin Island after the attack, when the jumbo jet was moving away from the island at the time of the attack?

(8) How does one explain the confirmed report from the FAA (based on information from the Japanese self-defense force) that the jet was tracked by the Hokkaido radar to a landing on the island?

(9) If the airliner was indeed under sufficient control of the pilot to make a 180 degree turn and head back toward Sakhalin, why would the captain choose to ditch it in the sea rather than land it on a runway?

We urge readers to raise these (and any other pertinent questions that may come to mind) with senators and congressmen, the president, the State Department, local newspapers, friends and acquaintances, radio talk shows and other media. Reject evasive, weasel-worded replies from the legislators and officials contacted. Insist on clear-cut answers and explanations.

It is also important that a special congressional committee be established and armed with sufficient resources and authority (including the subpoena power) to carry out its assignment comprehensively and credibly, to at long last thoroughly investigate the entire KAL 007 episode. Its membership must be comprised of senators and representatives who can be trusted to get at the truth, not simply to apply additional whitewash.

The shameful alternative to digging out the real truth about KAL 007 is to continue to abandon the 269 innocent persons who were on board, including 61 Americans, some of whom may still be alive, and all of whom deserve to be listed along with other American POWs/MIAs who have fallen victim to Communism and for whom there has as yet been no proper accounting.