KAL 007 Remembered: The Questions Remain Unanswered | Print |

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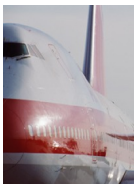

Eight years after the downing of Korean Air Lines Flight 007 by the Soviets on September 1, 1983, the most important questions about the incident remain unanswered. The most widely accepted view is that the airliner was indeed blown up, after which it plummeted into the Sea of Japan, killing all 269 persons (including 61 Americans) on board. But the main wreckage was not found, and no bodies positively identified as having been aboard Flight 007 were ever recovered.

In January and February of this year, a widely-publicized series of articles in the Soviet newspaper *Izvestia*(published by the presidium of the Supreme Soviet legislature), disclosed that the Soviets had lied about KAL 007 in 1983. According to this series, the Soviets did not mistake the passenger airliner for a spy plane as they had claimed, and the pilot did not fire warning tracer bullets before shooting it down. But the most explosive *Izvestia* claim was that the Soviets had within a few weeks located the wreckage and retrieved debris, which, if true, would "confirm" that the plane did indeed smash into the Sea of Japan with no survivors.

Rumors that Soviet military "hardliners" were attempting to suppress or censor the *Izvestia* exposé served mainly to enhance the credibility of the account, especially within the United States. One respected conservative newsletter declared in a headline: "Izvestia Shoots Down Soviet Lies." But others wondered why an official organ of a Soviet-controlled press that lied to the world about most aspects of the KAL 007 tragedy in 1983 should be believed today.

And why these disclosures so many years after the fact? To put the matter to rest, perhaps to cover up even bigger lies?

Izvestia's Inconsistencies

Although the major media treated the *Izvestia* account as gospel, it is replete with internal contradictions and inconsistencies. At one point, *Izvestia* claims that Soviet navy divers "'climbed all over' the KAL plane from top to bottom." At another, the leader of a team of divers states that the plane "was blown to pieces." This source is quoted in one article as saying: "Only at the end of September [1983] did they ... officially tell us our task -- to find the aircraft .... And exactly on the third day [i.e., no later than October 3rd] we found the aircraft." But in a subsequent article this same source asserts that "we discovered the plane 17 or 18 October."

One *Izvestia* source claims that the jetliner slammed into the sea so hard that it was "literally ripped to shreds," and that divers found "scraps no greater than a meter or two in size." The bodies of the passengers and crew are alleged to have "disintegrated" when the plane hit the sea because of the force of the impact. But the captain of an ocean fishing base alleges that a drilling ship was "anchored right over the fuselage of the Boeing." Moreover, we are told that divers found many items largely intact, some of which (including children's toys) they pilfered as souvenirs.

According to the chief of a diving service, "on one occasion the military men forgot a large piece of [the plane's] skin on deck. This was thick metal. By next morning, the crew had sawed it apart and snatched it up. In the rooming, they missed it, but it was not there. They said: 'Where did we leave this hunk of metal?', and all of us went: 'We have no idea ....'" Are we really to believe that a large (and presumably important) piece of wreckage would be left completely unguarded throughout the night? That pilferers could saw it into pieces without drawing attention? That they would risk the dire consequences of such a theft simply to secure souvenirs? That the ship and its crew would not be thoroughly searched for the missing item?

The same source allegedly "kept a diary and wrote everything down." But "they confiscated the diary from me when the search was over," so its existence and contents cannot be verified. A documentary film was supposedly made of the recovery effort. But it, too, was confiscated by Soviet authorities and classified "top secret," so it cannot be verified. Photographs of debris were allegeally taken by an anonymous "worker." But, "then we had to destroy this material evidence .... They destroyed everything that was turned in." Thus, the authenticity of the photographs, and the items they were said to portray, cannot be verified.

In short, actual documentation for the key aspects of *Izvestia*'s account is flimsier than cotton candy. Yet, the major media failed to note these contradictions. And the Washington Post-Los Angeles Times News Service even reported the part about the bodies having disintegrated matter-of-factly, without so much as questioning the possibility of such a phenomenon.

Soviet Pilot's Account

The pilot of the fighter that shot down KAL 007, Lt. Col. Gennadiy Nikolayevich Osipovich, contends that he fired two rockets, both of which hit the "target," one "near the tail," while the other "took off half the left wing." Yet Osipovich recalls: "The plane I shot down turned out to be tenacious. They later told me that it was a chance occurrence that the Boeing had been destroyed by the two missiles. At least seven missiles of the kind I had on the SU-15 were needed to bring it down."

In contrast to the Osipovich account, *Izvestia* reporter Andrey Illesh subsequently asserted: "An engine and a wing were destroyed by the missile [singular] from our fighter, but not the fuselage." Needless to say, there are no engines "near the tail" of a 747. (As we shall see, the most credible data does indeed indicate that only one missile hit KAL 007, destroying the outboard engine on the *right* wing.)

Both Osipovich and Soviet Marshal of Aviation Petr Semenovich Kirsanov (who first told *Izvestia* that wreckage from KAL 007 had been located) are quoted as saying that Soviet radar lost track of KAL 007 ten minutes after the attack while the jetliner's altitude was still above 16,000 feet. But reporter Illesh states that the aircraft "dove into the water at approximately the speed of sound" at the end of a ten-minute fall.

Pilot Osipovich was also quoted as saying that he did not know KAL 007 was a civilian airliner, claiming "we do not study civilian aircraft belonging to foreign companies. I knew all the military aircraft, all the reconnaissance aircraft .... But this was not like any of them." But if he knew all of the military and reconnaissance aircraft, then he should have reasoned that KAL 007 had to be civilian because he did not recognize it. In any event, his claim that "we do not study civilian aircraft" is questionable, since, as Dr. Albert Weeks (emeritus professor of international relations at New York University) has noted, the 1983 edition of the *Soviet Military Encyclopedia-Dictionary* (page 652, under "airplanes") contains line-drawings of only two aircraft: a Sukhoi of the type flown by Osipovich, and a 747. It is reasonable to assume, Weeks contends, that Soviet Air Defense officers and crews had ready access to this reference (some 150,000 copies were printed), so "knew exactly what a 747 looked like." (On April 28, 1991 South Korean television reported that Osipovich had finally admitted that he knew he was firing missiles at a commercial plane.)

Some Western media not only ignored *Izvestia*'s glaring inconsistencies, but added to the confusion with their own apocryphal or misleading reports. For instance, the January 14, 1991 issue of *U.S. News & World Report*relied on a "Russian-speaking U.S. source recently returned from the Soviet Union" in order to predict that the *Izvestia* series would reveal that Moscow had "ordered the bodies of the 269 victims destroyed in a local crematorium." But *Izvestia* specifically disavowed that contention.

We have cited these few examples from (and about) the *Izvestia* series simply to emphasize that the Soviets who lied about KAL 007 in the beginning appear to be doing so again. Even flit is assumed that Soviet divers did indeed locate some "wreckage" and "debris," as *Izvestia* claims, it does not mean that it came from a "crash." It could easily have been planted at the site as part of a contrived hunt intended to convince skeptics once and for all that KAL 007 actually "crashed," exactly as the world has been led to believe. But as we shall see, the evidence remains overwhelming that the Korean jetliner did not crash, but instead made an emergency landing in Soviet territory as was reported during the first few hours following the shoot-down. Only later, after the Soviets claimed that the plane had crashed, was the "crash" hypothesis widely proclaimed and set in concrete as historical "truth."

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." Entitled *Destruction of Korean Air Lines Boeing 747 Over Sea of Japan 31, August 1983*, (The attack occured on August 31st U.S. time, but on September 1st Japan time.) the ICAO report 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, but that possibility was not seriously considered by the ICAO, a United Nations affiliate.

The "crash" hypothesis was also bolstered by reports (which we do not challenge) that pieces of the plane, a couple of bodies presumed to be passengers, and personal effects which unquestionably belonged to passengers (business cards, passports, unique clothing, etc.) had been found. Such debris certainly seemed to be convincing evidence that the Boeing 747 had indeed crashed into the sea, If anything, however, the amount and nature of the debris supports the contrary conclusion that the aircraft did not hurtle to a watery grave.

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. It was leaving (or had just left) the 12-mile air space around Sakhalin claimed by the Soviets.

The radio transmissions from KAL 007 after the attack were consistent with the recorded one-way conversations of the Soviet lighter 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 Soviet fighter pilots is included in the ICAO document. It shows that Osipovich reported at 1822:02 (about two 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, he 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 007s 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).

It is notable that Osipovich merely indicated that the plane was "reducing speed," not that it was drastically slowing down. But during his interview with *Izvestia*, he asserted that KAL 007 had slowed from "about 1,000 kph" (621 miles per hour, some 60-80 miles faster than the jetliner was likely traveling) to "about 400 kph" (less than 250 miles per hour, for an astounding alleged speed reduction of well over 300 miles per hour). If we are to believe Osipovich, KAL 007 came to within less than 15 mph of the absolute minimum speed (235 mph) that aircraft experts say would have been required to keep KAL 007 aloft at cruise altitude.

The attack occurred at 1826 GMT (3:26 a.m. Japan time). The evidence indicates that KAL 007 was hit by a single heat-seeking missile (the other, despite Osipovich's contrary claim, likely missed). Osipovich asserted at 1826:20 GMT that the rockets had been launched, and declared (prematurely) two seconds later: "The target is destroyed." From this vantage point "five kilometers" (more than three miles) from the jetliner, he may have thought it was, but he was wrong.

When he and pilots of the other fighters which were chasing KAL 007 tried to locate the "wreckage" thereafter, they couldn't find it. Among their comments, according to the transmission transcripts, were: "I don't see it" (1829: 13); "No I don't see it" (1835:54); "He doesn't see the target" (1836:02); and, "I don't see anything in this area. I just looked" (1838:37). Eventually, with fuel running low, they had to return to their base without sighting remains of the "target" Osipovich had supposedly "destroyed."

Osipovich claimed that one of his rockets hit KAL 007 "near the tail," and the other "took off half the left wing." Other evidence suggests, however, that a single rocket zeroed-in on the number four (outboard) engine on the right wing, At 1809:00 (about 17 minutes prior to the attack), Osipovich reported to ground control that the "target is 80 [degrees] to my left," which means that he was flying to the jetliner's right. At 1823:18 (about three minutes before the rockets were launched) he reported that KAL 007 was still "located 70 [degrees] to the left."

Were he positioned to the right of the jet when the rockets were fired (as the transcripts indicate that he was), the outboard (Number Four) engine on the jetliner's right wing 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 sources of equal intensity (in this instance the two engines on the right wing), 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.

Tenacious Aircraft

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, the jet could have lost three engines and still be flown. On May 2, 1988 a United Airlines Boeing 747 with 258 people aboard landed safely at New Tokyo International Airport after three of its four engines failed. According to Associated Press, "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." 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. An article entitled "Ten Minutes to Live" in the May 1967 *Reader's Digest* described events surrounding the mid-air collision of an Eastern Airlines propeller-driven Constellation and a TWA Boeing 707 jet. 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 which resulted in only four deaths among the 54 persons on board -- including his own when, having escaped, he returned to help a trapped passenger. Regarding the Boeing 707, the article said: "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."

That KAL 007 was not "destroyed" by the rocket attack on impact is continued by the fact that KAL 007 made a brief, but garbled, radio transmission after the attack. During this transmission, the co-pilot referred to the decompression of the plane and mentioned figures apparently related to the jet's descent. The ICAO report states: "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."

The ICAO then contradicts this assertion by including a partial transcript of the supposedly "unreadable" transmission: "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) ... radio compressions ... (unintelligible) ... descending to one zero thousand [10,000 feet]." Remember, the missiles were launched at about 1826:20 GMT, with at least one impacting KAL 007 seconds later. The ICAO, in other words, placed the time of the final radio transmission from KAL 007 as occurring between about 49 to 64 seconds after the explosion.

On August 30, 1984, ABCs 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* magazine for August 17/August 24, 1985, David Pearson and John Keppel quoted Dr. Malcolm Brenner of Aviation Safety Associates International (described 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 (who reached conclusions regarding KAL 007 with which your reporter disagrees in most respects) 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 is that they did not consider the emergency to be of "Mayday" proportions. In any event, merely reporting trouble and sundry rates of descent seems strange for an airliner that is supposedly "plummeting" mortally wounded and out of control toward the sea.

Since the transmission was so garbled, the context of the few discernible segments cannot be known with certainty. 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 at least one member of the cockpit crew was alive (and the radio operational) at the time.

The Soviet Union co-opted 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. 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 KAL 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."

According to the recent *Izvestia* series, concern about the U.S. and Japanese entry into the "crash" area resulted from a Soviet desire to keep hidden the "fact" that it had found the wreckage, "black boxes" (flight voice and data recorders), etc. But there is another possibility that would readily account for their behavior: The desire to keep others from discovering that no "crash" had even occurred.

Twelve-Minute Hurtle?

The impression that KAL 007 was blown-up and had plunged into the sea was also bolstered by media reports employing such terminology as the following to describe what had allegedly happened: "suddenly falling" (*U.S. News & World Report*); "tumbled out of the sky" (*Newsweek*); "spun uncontrollably downward" (*Reader's*

Digest); "cartwheeling toward the sea" (*Time*); "plunged into the ocean" (*Maclean's*); "spiralled out-of-control" (United Press International); and "blasted from the skies" (Associated Press).

To the contrary, however, compelling evidence indicates that the jetliner remained airborne for at least 12 minutes after the attack. 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 [16400 feet]. At 1838 hours [12 minutes after the attack] the Korean plane disappeared from the radar screen." Similarly, *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." And Newsweek for September 12, 1983 reported: "...3:30 a.m.: 007 is picked up by radar at 16,000 feet, but at 3:38 a.m. it disappears from ... [Japan's] radar screen."

As noted earlier, both fighter pilot Osipovieh and Soviet Marshal of Aviation Petr Semenovich Kirsanov allege that KAL 007 disappeared from Soviet radar ten minutes after the attack while still at an altitude of about 16,400 feet. While their accounts appear to conflict with KAL 007's actual descent pattern, they do tend to support the conclusion that KAL 007 remained aloft for an extended period. And to date, no one has adequately explained how a jetliner supposedly blown up and hurtling out of control toward the sea could take 12-plus minutes to fall 35,000 feet.

For comparison, consider this Associated Press dispatch from Salt Lake City's *Deseret News* for February 20, 1985: "A China Airlines jumbo jet fell 32,000 feet in less than two minutes Tuesday [February 19th] 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 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 simply disappearing from the Japanese radar screen 12 minutes after the attack does not mean that KAL 007 reached ground (or sea) level and crashed, any more than its disappearing from Soviet radar at an altitude of more than three miles means it was "destroyed." It could have remained airborne thereafter until it either landed or ran out of fuel. The September 12, 1983 *Newsweek* reported that the plane went off radar while it was still 5,000 feet in the air, while R.W. Johnson claimed in his book *Shootdown* that it went off radar at 1,000 feet.

In any event, KAL 007 apparently remained aloft for at least 12 minutes after the attack, an indication that the crew was at least partially in control of the aircraft. Otherwise, the descent should have been far more precipitous. (In an apparent attempt to explain the time aloft, *Izvestia's* reporter claims that KAL 007, with a "destroyed engine and missing wing," is "thought to have circled twice around the island of Moneron" before diving into the sea. It is a most unlikely scenario, and is contradicted by other evidence regarding the jetliner's descent.)

Even more startling than the time it remained aloft was KAL 007's distinct change in the rate of descent as tracked by radar. 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 feet to where the plane dropped from radar is a descent rate of less than 2,000 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, except that 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 which has suffered an engine loss and decompression, but is still 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 your 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 which could be caused by, for example, 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 seven minutes and 45 seconds to reach the 5,000-foot level (the point at which *Newsweek* claimed KAL 007 had 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 confirming 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 conflicts with the official U.S./ICAO accounts, and with the recent *Izvestia* story of what supposedly happened to the jetliner.

Minimum Speed for a 747

According to the ICAO, "The location of the main wreckage was not determined" but it nevertheless guessed that the "approximate position was 46° 35'N and 141° 20' E, which was in international waters." This point is about 45 miles from the shore of Sakhalin Island and some 30 miles southwest of Moneron Island (which is about 30 miles southwest of Sakhalin's southern tip). According to *Izvestia*, the remains of the jetliner were located at a depth of about 570 feet just inside the 12-mile airspace claimed by the Soviets ("approximately at the 11th mile") off Moneron. According to *Izvestia*, "Ships gathered here, at this point on the map, from all sides -from our shores; Soviet ships, and from neutral waters, American and Japanese." A November 15, 1983, U.S. Navy report (which was declassified in late May of this year) confirmed (as summarized by the *Washington Times* for July 4, 1991) that "a Navy task force searched a 225-square-mile area *north*west to *north*east outside the 12-mile territorial limits...[off] of Moneron Island, near Sakhalin Island...." (Emphasis added) Clearly, the points of both the U.S. search, and the alleged Soviet discovery of the "wreckage," were north of Moneron (i.e., between Moneron and Sakhalin).

Remember, Sakhalin is 30 miles northeast of Moneron. Any "wreckage" located "approximately at the 11th mile" off the latter would be about 19 miles from the former. If the jetliner was attacked while leaving (or just after leaving) Soviet air space near Sakhalin (as the evidence indicates), that point of attack would have been approximately seven miles from the alleged "wreckage" site. But if the jetliner was in the air for 12-plus minutes (as radar trackings indicate), its average speed from the point of attack to the "wreckage" site (assuming that the jet continued on a reasonably straight course) would have been a mere 35 miles per hour!

According to the ICAO scenario, the plane would have flown about 33 miles from the presumed point of attack (12 miles offshore of Sakhalin) to the alleged "crash" site (45 miles from Sakhalin), or an average of 165 mph.

Is it conceivable that such a huge aircraft could remain airborne for 12 plus minutes at such low average speeds? In 1988, we discussed the matter with a flight instructor who trains pilots on the 747 for a major U.S. airline. 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 (the point of attack), 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 which 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 (you will recall that fighter pilot Osipovich claimed that KAL 007 had at one point slowed to less than 250 mph at cruise altitude prior to the attack), 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 physically impossible that KAL 007 could have flown for 12-minutes plus while averaging 35 miles per hour, or even 165 mph (unless the flaps were down). After all, the jetliner would have been flying much faster at the point of attack, so would have had to travel far slower than the average at some point simply to make the average. And when the configuration of an aircraft has been modified (as by an engine explosion, fuselage puncture, wing damage, or whatever) a faster speed than normal is required to keep it aloft.

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. During its rapid descent to 16,000 feet, aviation experts with whom we have discussed the matter (including pilots who fly the 747) speculate that the speed would have been reduced to perhaps seven miles per minute. Thereafter, the aircraft would likely have slowed to perhaps 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 six miles per minute. During 12 minutes, unless it changed direction, it would have traveled 72 miles, placing it about 84 miles -- not 19 or 45 -- from the shore of Sakhalin.

The amount of the debris recovered in the wake of the supposed "crash" of KAL 007 is also puzzling. Only about 1,000 total items (including pieces of the plane, human remains, and personal effects) were reportedly recovered. Two badly mutilated bodies were presumed (but not proven) to have been passengers. The number of human body parts recovered totaled 13, none of which were retrieved by the Soviets. Those found were washed up on the shores of Japan.

It should be noted that falling great distances does not usually "disintegrate" bodies, as *Izvestia* claimed. Indeed, some persons have survived incredible falls from aircraft at high altitude. According to the *Guinness Book of Records*, Soviet Lt. I. M. Chisov fell 21,980 from a severely damaged Ilyushin 4 in January 1942, and survived (though he suffered a fractured pelvis and severe spinal damage). The most spectacular, according to *Guinness*, was the 33,330-foot fall of stewardess Vesna Vulovic inside a segment of the tail section of a Yugoslavian DC-9 airliner that blew up over Czechoslovakia in 1972. She was hospitalized for 17 months.

As recently as May 19, 1991 a skydiver whose parachute failed to open survived a fall from 10,500 feet. She suffered a compressed fracture of the spine and other broken bones and bruises (but no serious internal injuries) after landing in swampy muck in rural Geauga County, Ohio. Such occurrences are extremely rare, but they do help to show how ridiculous *Izvestia's* assertion is that the bodies disintegrated.

According to figures compiled by a South Korean investigative committee, the following had been recovered from KAL 007 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.

Six days later, the Soviets turned over another 76 items. And on December 19, 1983 the Soviets surrendered yet another 83 small items, bringing the total of all items recovered to a paltry 1,020. The January 1984 *Life*magazine reported: "The Russians picked up 18 articles of clothing and sent them to Japan -- but only after having them drycleaned."

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 taft fin." (Deseret News, September 9, 1983) 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, author 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 gigantic 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 before adding fuel, passengers, crew, cargo and baggage.

Comparing Debris

In 1983, 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 (and a body count) which might result from a Piper Cub crack-up, there was no precise precedent with which to compare it. Before long, sadly, there was.

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. The next day, another eight were retrieved. 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. Whereas the two bodies supposedly 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 Air-India 182] were 'badly shattered and broken but all in one piece.'" (*Deseret News* June 24, 1985)

Many huge pieces of the airliner were found (about four tons in all). Nearly three weeks after the incident (July 10, 1985), the in-flight voice recorder was retrieved from the taft section at a depth of about 6,700 feet. The next day, an underwater robot also located and recovered the in-flight data recorder.

According to *Izvestia*, KAL 007 "wreckage" was located at a depth of about 570 feet. The ICAO reported: "The search area consisted of an underwater ridge with an average depth of 200 [meters, 656 feet], and an area west of the ridge, where the depth varies between 500 and 800 meters [1,640 feet to 2,625 feet]." So the water depth in the area of the KAL 007 incident was at most less than one-half that where Air India 182 crashed. Yet scores of bodies, and tons of wreckage, were recovered from the latter.

For another comparison, consider the horrific explosion which 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 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 which would make a Soviet rocket detonation (involving perhaps 70 pounds of explosives, the amount which 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) and the remains of all seven crew members (who, obviously, had not disintegrated as those on board KAL 007 were alleged to have).

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." (*Deseret News*, August 28, 1986)

The *Challenger* search and recovery effort lasted more than seven months. 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 any meaningful congressional probe. The U.S. 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 body parts, including two mutilated bodies 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. (If the plane landed on Sakhalin, as we believe it did, the Soviets would have had the "black boxes" from the start. *Izvestia* reported that a device giving off phony "black box" signals had been planted by the Soviets to mislead U.S. and Japanese search ships. It is what you would expect the Soviets to do if there were no actual "black boxes" to find in the sea.)

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 a 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, the huge jet 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.

Isn't that exactly what the crew and passengers of KAL 007 would likely have done during their relatively lengthy 12 minutes-plus descent? Yet, neither of the two mutilated bodies discovered in the wake of KAL 007 were wearing life vests, indicating that they may have had no chance to put them on, for reasons we will consider shortly. No vestiges of vests were even reported among the debris. There should have been some in the wake of a "crash" into the sea of an airliner which had been aloft for 12-plus minutes.

In another incident, a terrorist bomb exploded aboard TWA 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 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 recovered bodies of the woman and child thought to have been passengers of KAL 007 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. The next day, UPI reported: "Four badly mutilated bodies were recovered Monday [November 30th] ... increasing to nine the number of victims recovered."

And, according to the November 29, 1987 *Washington Post*, South Africa's transport minister "told reporters at a crisis command post at Johannesburgs 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." Keep those suitcases in mind.

One year after the crash, it was announced that the world's deepest ocean search for wreckage had located "a large piece" of the jet on the ocean floor at 12,000 feet. Other wreckage found included "parts of an engine and pieces of the galley, wings and the cargo compartment floor." (Reuters dispatch, November 28, 1988).

Note that the search for the politically non-controversial South African Airways jet had continued for a year, in sharp contrast to the short-schrift, two-month search for the "remains" of KAL-007.

On March 14, 1988 an engine on a Piedmont Airlines two-engine Fokker F28 jet "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." (*Salt Lake Tribune*, April 15, 1988)

The explosion tipped a hole two feet wide and six feet tall on the right side (adjacent to the engine which 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 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 28, 1988 one of the most incredible incidents in aviation history occurred when a structural weakness in an Aloha Airlines Boeing 737 resulted in about 20 feet of cabin being tipped 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. Some of "the passengers hung on to another standing flight attendant so she would not be sucked out of the plane." (*Deseret News*, April 29, 1988)

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."

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,"

On December 21, 1988 a bomb tipped apart Pan Am 103 (a 747) over Lockerbie, Scotland. All 259 persons on board (and 11 others on the ground) perished. The most remarkable and widely-publicized piece of debris was the huge front section of the plane, including the cockpit, lying in a field. Despite the enormous impact of the plane falling 31,000 feet, cockpit windows were not broken and the windshield wiper remained intact! It was a further indication of the large chunks of debris that remain after a jetliner disaster, unlike the small pieces that KAL 007 was supposed to have broken into.

In contrast to the short-shrift "investigation" of KAL 007 by our government, FBI Director William Sessions asserted last November that the investigation into the bombing of Pan Am 103 could continue for years. "We will not let go. We are not only tenacious, but we are diligent about our responsibility," he told reporters in Glasgow. Why has our government not shown the same tenacity, and diligence, regarding the monstrous KAL 007 tragedy?

On February 24, 1989 the cargo door (and part of the fuselage) of United Airlines Flight 811 (also a 747) blew off at an altitude of 22,000 feet southwest of Hawaii. Nine of the 354 persons on board were expelled through the 10-by-40-foot hole created by the explosive decompression. The number three engine (inboard on the right wing) caught fire and had to be shut down. Minutes later the number four engine also failed. The captain was able to land the aircraft safely with two functioning engines on the left wing.

During the decompression of UAL 811, three rows of seats were ripped out of the plane. Loose cabin debris was also expelled. One woman's earrings were ripped off by the wind. A Navy helicopter subsequently spotted in the ocean what appeared to be some personal effects belonging to passengers and an overhead compartment from the cabin. A search by Coast Guard and Navy personnel turned up two airplane seats, a shoe, a 4-by-6-foot piece of metal believed to be from the jet, and several emergency escape pamphlets usually found tucked into the back of seats.

On September 17, 1990 (nearly seven months after the incident), the lower haft of the missing cargo door (measuring 6-by- 10-feet) was recovered from the ocean floor at a depth of around 14,000 feet. On October 2, 1990 the Navy announced that the top half of the cargo door had also been located and recovered.

Suppose, for a moment, that United 811 and those on board had been hidden away after the plane's return to Hawaii and authorities had falsely announced that the jet had "crashed" into the ocean, "killing" all on board. When searchers arrived in the area of the alleged "crash," they could have found some bodies (persons expelled from the plane during the decompression), along with what they actually did find (a chunk of the plane, personal effects belonging to passengers, airplane seats, etc.). This debris could then have been cited convincing "proof" that the plane had indeed smashed into the ocean, just as a similar miniscule amount of debris was used as convincing "proof" that KAL 007 had crashed into the Sea of Japan. (The only reason United 811 was not a KAL 007-type incident is that there was no attempt to cover up what actually happened.)

The United 811 tragedy clearly demonstrates (as do some of the other incidents we have cited) how passengers and debris from inside a jetliner, and even pieces of the plane itself, can get into the water without a crash occurring, and without most passengers being harmed or the plane itself being rendered inoperable.

Many observers have wondered how a jetliner could be hit by an air-to-air missile, yet remain under the control of the crew. (You will recall Soviet fighter pilot Osipovich's claim that he was told it would ordinarily take seven to bring down a 747.) On March 19, 1990 two U.S. F-15 fighter planes were flying a combined training exercise and ferrying mission from Elmendorf Air Force Base to the forward deployment base at King Salmon, Alaska. One of the planes was carrying a live Sidewinder heat-seeking missile, which it was transporting to Salmon Island. During a simulated dogfight between the two planes, the Sidewinder was accidentally fired.

The pilot of the other plane saw it headed his way and immediately throttled back to idling speed to cool his engines, while taking sharp evasive action. But, as described by an Air Force report: "The missile struck the left side of the plane's tail, knocking off the left horizontal stabilizer. The warhead severely damaged the right rudder and fragments penetrated the external fuel tanks, engine burner cans and left flap. One fragment struck the left side of the fuselage just behind the cockpit." Despite this extensive damage, the pilot brought the F-15 out of a roll, dumped the fuel tanks, and flew 180 miles back to Elmendorf for a safe landing. Needless to say, the F-15 compares in size with a 747 as a tomcat does with a tiger.

N**ature of the Debris**

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

And what about the nature of the debris allegedly recovered from KAL 007? Based on news reports, television footage showing items recovered, the testimony of persons who viewed the items on the scene in Japan, and the recent *Izvestia* series, 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.) which 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, none were turned over by the Soviets, none were washed up on the shores of Japan, and none were found floating in the sea.

Among the items that *Izvestia* claimed were retrieved were "clothing, documents, wallets, women's purses ... suits and dresses ... tape recorders ... jackets ... coats ... powder compacts ... umbrellas," and such. A joint statement by a trio of divers cited by *Izvestia* claims that amidst the debris they saw were "suitcases ... crushed as if by a sledge hammer," but this statement is not supported by others divers quoted in the series, or by any other source that has publicly catalogued debris.

For instance, another diver quoted by *Izvestia* expressed surprise that "there were really no people there," and asserted: "As a rule there are suitcases and bags, or at least the handles of suitcases. But there we found things I would not think ordinary people would take on an airplane."

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. 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 *Izvestia*, 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 miniscule total amount of such debris, But there is a scenario Which easily explains these details, as well as the other puzzling aspects of the incident. We will present it shortly.

First, let us briefly look at the early reports that KAL 007 had returned to Sakhalin and landed safely. Sakhalin is a major military outpost where there are a number of Soviet air bases and runways. Indeed, as described in a 1984 ABC *20/20* program, Sakhalin is "home for at least six Soviet airfields...." 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. Lt. Osipovich told Isvestia that he took off from the Sokol base.

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." And *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 as being false 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, flit 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?

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? His 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 50-50 for those who might survive the initial impact. The possible political and diplomatic ramifications of an emergency landing in Soviet territory. would have taken a back seat to the need to land the damaged plane as quickly and safely as possible.

The pilot of KAL 007 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. Consider this example: A dispatch in the *Washington Times* for April 4, 1986 reported that the pilot of TWA 840 (mentioned earlier) "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 that the emergency landing was difficult "only because you wonder if you have brakes and your hydraulic system, even though it shows [on the cockpit's instruments]."

Phone Call from FAA

The pilot of KAL 007 would have had to make an about-face, 180 degree turn to return to Sakhalin. Is there any evidence that he did so?

Shortly after the attack, the Rome, Georgia office of U.S. Representative Larry McDonald, a passenger on the plane, received a number of calls from officials of Korean Air Lines and our Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) claiming that the jet had landed safely on Sakhalin. For instance, one call came from Mr. C. K. Suh, manager of the American regional office of Korean Air Lines in Los Angeles. Suh told 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 Mr. Toles [his statement was tape recorded]:

> This is Duty Officer Orville Brockman at FAA headquarters in Washington, D.C. We have just received information from our FAA representative, Mr. Dennis Wilham 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 very unlikely that it could have misled air controllers regarding the direction in which KAL 007 was flying. And 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 l, 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." Since Wakkanai is about 40 miles from Sakhalin's southern tip, KAL 007 would have had to have been 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 and was heading toward a runway on Sakhalin, it was under the control of the crew.

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

What Really Happened?

Assuming KAL 007 did not crash, then what happened after the attack? Is there an explanation which takes into account the time the plane remained aloft, its fast-slow descent rate, the incongruities regarding the location, nature, and extent of debris, and the early reports that the jet had landed on 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 which 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 descent.

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 get on the ground safely and 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 below the Wakkanai radar some 50 miles away.

Continuing with our scenario, once on the ground the passengers and crew 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 which resulted from the engine explosion and decompression was soon discovered (Soviet vessels and aircraft began searching the area within an hour after the attack) and thereafter cited by the Soviets as "proof" that KAL 007 had crashed into the sea with no survivors. Later, segments of the plane and other props were planted, like Easter eggs, so that they could be conveniently "discovered," and publicized years later, as conclusive proof that KAL 007 had "crashed."

Is there any other scenario that so completely takes into account the amount, location, and nature of the debris; the small number and condition of the bodies which were found; the time KAL 007 is known to have remained airborne; the considerable distance it likely travelled during its descent; the early reports of a "safe landing;" and the other key components of the case?

The truth about KAL 007 has been obfuscated, to a significant degree, by the tendency of even well-intentioned conservatives and anti-communists to remain willfully blind to the implications of the abundant evidence that conflicts with the official line.

Consider, for example, this extract from a May 6, 1985 response by a prominent senator (widely perceived to be a conservative) 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."

Similarly, the recently declassified November 15, 1983 Navy report (referred to earlier) asserts that the search was conducted from September 1-November 5, 1983, over a 225 square mile area, during which the navy utilized remote-controlled, unmanned submarines capable of descending 6,000 feet; special underwater navigation systems; a special "side-scan" sonar system; and a line-of-sight precision navigation system. Nevertheless, "nothing associated with KAL 007 was discovered."

Surely the expenditure of all that time and money, covering such a broad expanse of the sea and utilizing topnotch technology, with nothing whatsoever to show for it, might -- just might -- raise the possibility that a crash had not occurred. And 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, a summarized by the senator's letter an, the Navy report, 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 and head off what could otherwise become a major roadblock on the road to the much-vaunted new world order. Were the full truth to come out, for instance, programs of aid and trade with the Soviets, summit meetings, arms controls treaties, and the many other aspects of our government's (and especially our State Department's) questionable foreign policy agenda, would undoubtedly become far more difficult to implement.

Victims Alive?

Avraham Shifrin, a one time major in the Red Army and legal adviser in the USSR's Ministry of Defense, was imprisoned for a decade during a purge of Soviet Jews. He was eventually allowed to emigrate to Israel, where he established a research center to document the existence of prisons and concentration camps in the Soviet Union. His 1980 book, *The First Guide to Prisons and Concentration Camps in the USSR*, listed more than 2,000 Soviet prisons, slave labor camps, and psychological prisons. Since 1989, Shifrin, as executive director of the Jerusalem-based Research Centre for Prisons, Psych-prisons and Forced-Labor Concentration Camps of the USSR, has been investigating the KAL 007 tragedy. On July 11, 1991 he issued a lengthy press release which included this startling paragraph:

> Our investigation (in-complete yet) has brought us on the tracks of the kidnapped people. We know, for instance, that Congressman McDonald has gone through a number of prisons in Moscow, among them the Central Lubyanka, Lefortovo, [and] a "special dacha" of the KGB in a suburb of Moscow. As far as his present whereabouts are concerned, the investigation is underway, and the information available at the moment cannot be disclosed. We partially know the camps where the plane people were and, with a high degree of probability, are kept now. As for the children from the plane, they were separated from their parents and safely hidden in the orphan houses of one of the Soviet Middle Asian republics.

It should be emphasized that this report is unconfirmed. But it is sufficiently specific to merit thorough follow-up by our government. Yet, as we write (in early August), it has been ignored by both the major U.S. media and the State Department.

Let us briefly note the steps which our State Department and other U.S. agencies took (and are taking) to muddy the water 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* 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 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 the State Department would handle the investigation. Eighteen months after the airliner was shot

down, when asked if the State Department ever conducted such an inquiry, a high-level State Department official replied, 'How is the State Department going to investigate?'"

(b) Administration sources claimed shortly after the attack that Soviet searchers had recovered some bodies. It was another false contention which mainly served to bolster the Soviet-instigated claim that the plane had indeed "crashed."

(c) 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 of Georgia. 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 which 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 Larry 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-NC."

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."

(d) The U.S. 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."

(e) 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." (David Corn, the *Nation*, August 17/August 24, 1985)

(f) Following publication of our earlier analysis of the KAL 007 incident in THE NEW AMERICAN for August 29, 1988, Assistant Secretary of State for Legislative Affairs J. Edward Fox was assigned to respond to congressional inquiries about the article. At one point, Fox stated that "the many responsible investigations already conducted into the tragedy ... leave no doubt that the charges levied by the article ... -- that KAL 007 did not crash, that the Soviets took the passengers on board as prisoners, and that the United States Government is somehow involved in a conspiracy of silence on the subject -- are dead wrong." Yet he at no point attempted to answer the specific questions we raised. He ignored every crucial point and question, which was understandable, since them was simply no way that they could be credibly addressed without abandoning the official "crash" scenario.

Fox asserted that Congress had "already conducted several thorough investigations of the tragedy," which was not (and is not) true, since there has to this day been no thorough investigation of the incident by Congress or any other official entity, including the ICAO (which Fox cited as one of the "most prominent" of the investigators). By its own admission, the ICAO report was incomplete and hurried. And its conclusion that KAL 007 crashed was entirely inconsistent with even the incomplete data it did include.

As a further indication of how incomplete the investigations have been, on November 14, 1990 liberal Democratic Senators Carl Levine (MI), Edward Kennedy (MA) and Sam Nunn (GA) wrote to Mikhail Gorbachev, noting that a "number of official and unofficial investigations by U.S. and international agencies have failed to shed light on a most important, unresolved mystery surrounding the aircraft's destruction, namely: was the wreckage of the plane, or were the remains of its passengers, or any of its effects, ever located by the Soviet government?" The Senators urged Gorbachev to release any official Soviet findings or conclusions on this "central issue." On December 20, 1991, *Izvestia* reported that the letter (and a similar missive sent in August 1990 by Democratic Senator Bill Bradley of New Jersey) had "gone unanswered so far," but the first segment of *Izvestia*'s initial ten-part series on KAL 007 appeared on January 22, 1991, replete, as we have seen, with disinformation intended to lock in the myth that the jetliner "crashed" and that no bodies were found by Soviet divers.

Our State Department's response to date has also been misleading and evasive. Whatever the motives of those involved, it is time once again to retrieve the KAL 007 file from the memory hole and re-scrutinize it. If, as we firmly believe, KAL 007 did not crash, but instead landed on Sakhalin Island, where its crew and passengers were taken captive, 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 were one or more persons 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.

Unanswered Questions

If KAL 007 landed instead of crashed, it means that the Soviets have pulled off yet another incredibly audacious deception, with the cooperation of our own government. the United Nations, and possibly Japan, in camouflaging the capture of the plane and disappearance of those on board.

The key questions which must be answered include the following:

- How could KAL 007 remain airborne for 12-plus minutes without the crew being in at least partial control?
- How could the plane descend so fast during the early stage of its descent, then slow to less than one-half the initial rate, without the crew being in substantial control?
- How could a jetliner be "out of control," yet so closely follow a textbook descent pattern?
- 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?
- How could the supposed "crash" site (and locations of debris) be closer to the point of attack than the plane's minimum speed to remain airborne for 12 minutes plus would seem to allow?
- Why was so little debris (and so few human remains) found, considering debris recoveries from other disasters involving huge aircraft?
- Why was the recovered debris devoid of the sort of items one would expect to come from the plane's cargo pit (such as luggage)?
- Why were no life vests (either on or off bodies) found among the debris?
- Why was the search for KAL 007 abandoned by the U.S. after only ten weeks (and never resumed), when searches for debris and remains from other far less controversial air-crash incidents often last for many months or years?
- How does one explain the radar trackings which 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?
- How does one explain the confirmed report from the FAA (based on information from the Japanese self-defense force) that the plane was tracked by the Hokkaido radar to a landing on the island?
- If the airliner was indeed under sufficient control of the pilot to make a 180 turn and head toward Sakhalin, why would the captain choose to ditch it in the sea rather than land on a runway?

We urge you to raise these (and any other pertinent questions which may come to mind) with your senators and representatives, the President, the State Department, local newspapers, friends and acquaintances, radio talk shows, and other media. And do not accept evasive, weasel-worded replies from legislators and officials. Insist on clear-cut, detailed answers and explanations. Above all, be persistent! Write, call, or telegram as often as it takes to receive sensible answers to the questions you pose.

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 who may still be alive, and all of who deserve to be listed along with other POWs/MIAs who have fallen victim to communism and for whom there has as yet been no proper accounting.

It is time for Americans to unite in demanding the truth about what happened to KAL 007 and an accounting of its passengers and crew. Let the chips fall (and heads roll) where they may.