

SERIAL= 2/19/2515-84
 DE [REDACTED] #2066 2292315
 ZNY MMNSH
 ZKZK ZZ RID SOL ZNN DE
 Z 162310Z AUG 84 ZYH
 FM USN-39
 TO [REDACTED]
 ZEM
 S E C R E T SPOKE
 XXMMENPO1FI984229

SERIAL: 2/19/2515-84 SPOT REPORT

TAGS: [REDACTED]

SUBJ: BOGUS NOTIFICATION OF WAR BETWEEN SOVIET UNION AND UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

REQS: 0R000

TEXT:

(S) AT [REDACTED] ON 15 AUGUST 1984, [REDACTED]
 [REDACTED] INFORMED A SOVIET PACIFIC OCEAN FLEET, AND PROBABLY A STRATEGIC MILITARY AUDIENCE THAT "WAR HAS BEGUN WITH THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA."
 (S) THE STATEMENT WAS CANCELLED BY [REDACTED]
 [REDACTED]

DECL: OADR
 XXHH
 #2066
 NNN
 SEE CHANGE ONEUSN-39 170827Z AUG 84 FOR TEXT CHANGE

---EOD---

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PL 86-36/50 USC 3605

~~(S//SI-SPOKE)~~ Product report from USN-39

(U) KAL-007

(U) Shemya

~~(S//SI-SPOKE)~~ Late in the evening of August 31, 1983, a lone EC-135 Cobra Ball aircraft took off from Shemya. Its mission was to monitor the re-entry telemetry of a Soviet SSX-24 missile that, according to DEFSMAC, would be launched before dawn the next day to impact off the Kamchatka coast. Soviet air defense facilities first picked it up at about 2245 local and tracked it routinely throughout its flight along the Kamchatka periphery. It left Soviet radar coverage just before 0200 the next morning, August 31, and got back to Shemya at 0322 Japan time, 1 September.²¹

~~(S//SI-SPOKE)~~ Meanwhile, at 0051 Japan time, the Soviets began tracking a second aircraft. Confused, they first identified it as a probable RC-135 SIGINT collection aircraft. This new track headed southwest parallel to the Soviet coastline. But, in a highly unusual move, it continued on a direct flight path, over the southern tip of Kamchatka Peninsula.

(See map) It never got within seventy-five nautical miles of the Cobra Ball, which crossed the new track on its way back to base.²²

~~(S//SI-SPOKE)~~ The Soviets launched two fighters in pursuit of what they thought was a U.S. reconnaissance aircraft. Possibly surmising that the new aircraft would fly east out of Soviet airspace as soon as fighters were launched, the ground controller vectored the pilots in the wrong direction. Instead, the intruder continued south in a straight line, seemingly unconcerned about Soviet reaction. It left Soviet airspace only a few minutes later and proceeded south across the Sea of Okhotsk.²³

~~(S//SI-SPOKE)~~ The ESC unit in Elmendorf, Alaska, intercepted the Soviet tracking. The intruder was reflected as a hostile raid, number 6065, with negative IFF. But Elmendorf was unconcerned, believing it to be practice tracking.

(U) But it was a real aircraft. Early on September 1, Korean Airlines flight 007 had taken off from Anchorage, Alaska, on its way to Seoul. It was programmed to fly commercial track R20, which skirted Soviet airspace along Kamchatka. It was obviously off course.

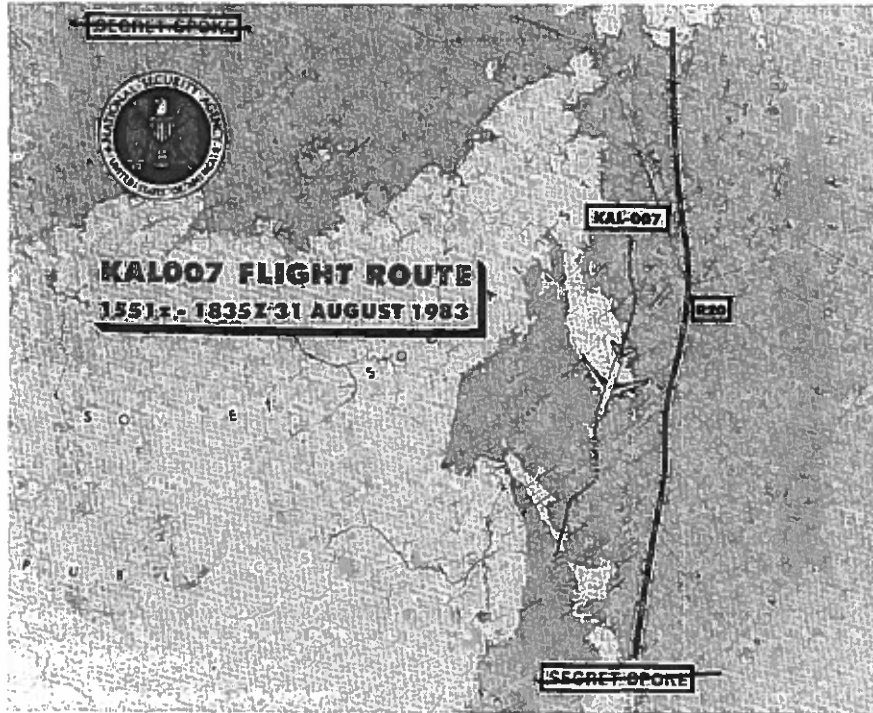
~~(S//SI-SPOKE)~~ At 0246 local it was redetected by Soviet air surveillance facilities, this time just north of Sakhalin Island. This time it was not identified except as a "negative IFF" target. Fifteen minutes later two SU-15 air defense fighters took off from Sokol, a fighter base on southern Sakhalin Island, and headed straight for the intruder. Fifteen minutes after that, a Soviet radar station reported that the aircraft had crossed into Soviet airspace over Sakhalin, even as one of the SU-15s maneuvered behind it.²⁴

(U) While the SU-15 maneuvered, the airline pilot was engaged in routine conversations with the tower at Narita airport, outside Tokyo. At 0320 the tower controller gave KAL-007 permission for an altitude change, and three minutes later the pilot reported that he had climbed to the new altitude and had leveled off. At 0327 the controller tried to contact KAL-007, but the answer was lost in a haze of static. Tokyo tower never heard from KAL-007 again.²⁵

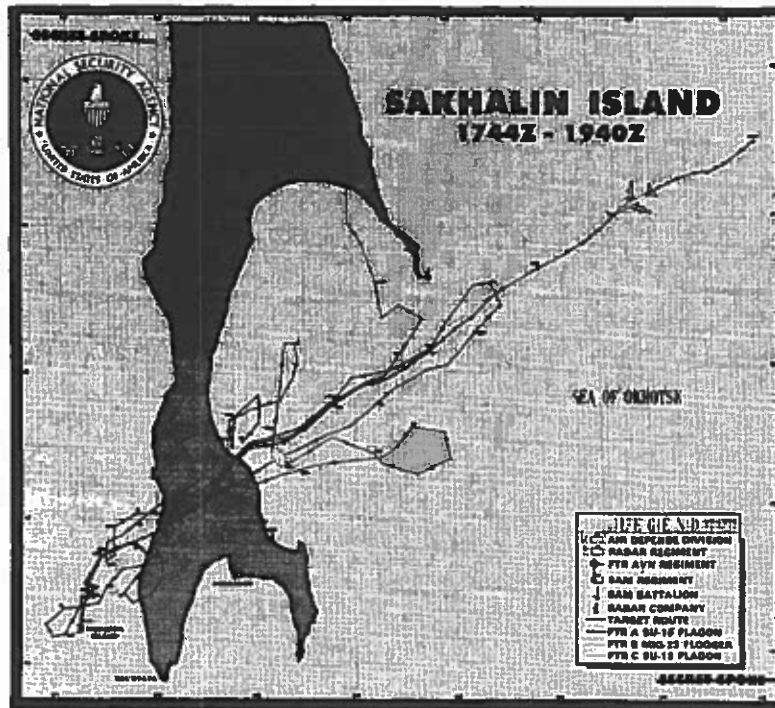
(U) Misawa

~~(S//SI-SPOKE)~~ It had been a typically slow mid shift on the ground at the Air Force collection site at Misawa, Japan. But sometime after 0300 an analyst raced to the plotting board with a fist full of intercepted traffic and began frantically plotting a tangle of air defense raids in the vicinity of southern Sakhalin. She tapped on the plexiglass plotting board, a clue to the reporting supervisor that she had something hot. Everyone turned to look at the activity. The raid was identified as a "border violator" at 9,000 meters. Beginning at 0328 it began a spiral descent, and at 0330 it had plummeted to 5,000 meters. Eight minutes later the Soviet facilities stopped reflecting it altogether. At the time, at least five Soviet fighters were shown in reaction.²⁶

~~(S//SI-SPOKE)~~ [REDACTED] the senior analysts on duty, briefly discussed the possibility of practice tracking, but they discovered that more than



~~(S//SI SPOKE)~~ KAL-007 flight route



~~(S//SI SPOKE)~~ Tracking details of the shootdown

~~TOP SECRET//COMINT//UMBRA//TALENT KEYHOLE//X1~~

one radar site was reporting the same tracking, a strong indication that they had valid traffic. Calls to 5th Air Force produced no information. So [] got in touch with USA-34. Elmendorf reported that they had intercepted tracking of the same raid, 6065, earlier in the morning, but thought that it was practice tracking and had not reported it.²⁷

~~(S//SI)~~ [] contacted NSOC with his concerns, but was advised that it was practice tracking. A Klieglight series was sufficient; no product report should be issued. [] argued, but was overruled by the A Group Senior Coordinator. Still, he was convinced: "...there was no doubt in my mind that it was actually valid tracking. I still had absolutely no idea who it was."²⁸

~~(S//SI)~~ Four hours passed. The day shift relieved mids, and [] briefed the new reporting team on the activity. Then, just before eight in the morning, 5th Air Force was on the phone. A Korean civil airliner had disappeared near Hokkaido and was reported to be two hours overdue in Seoul. Misawa people knew what they had, and at 0905 local the day shift surveillance and warning supervisor [] issued their first Critic of the year.²⁹

~~(S//SI-SPOKE)~~ A bitter long-range argument ensued between NSOC and Misawa about the Critic. The SOO believed that the incident did not meet Critic criteria and demanded cancellation. Instead of cancelling the Critic, Misawa issued a follow-up. This provoked more arguments over the Opscomm. An hour later Misawa cancelled the Critic. But almost immediately they received information that Soviet SAM controllers had been overheard discussing the incident and confirming that a Soviet pilot had shot down the aircraft. With this iron-clad confirmation, Misawa issued a second Critic.³⁰

(U) Wakkanai

~~(S//SI-SPOKE)~~ There is a [] intercept site at Wakkanai, on the northernmost tip of Hokkaido, which is itself the northernmost point of land in Japan. The wind constantly blows across the frozen, stubby hills surrounding Wakkanai - a Japanese Siberia. It was originally a Security Service unit placed there to copy VHF communications from southern Sakhalin Island. In 1983 the successor command, ESC, had been given approval to reopen temporarily for a hearability test under the name of []

~~(S//SI-SPOKE)~~ The [] operators worked only days and eves; when they left for the night, they kept the recorders on and the receivers tuned to the standard Soviet air-to-ground frequency. But [] linguists routinely worked around the clock, and early on the morning of September 1 they were transcribing tapes. The receivers were active, and when the oscilloscope spiked on the air-to-ground frequency, the transcriber reached over, switched on the tape recorder, and kept transcribing. What he heard in the background from the speaker on the intercept position was apparently a live missile firing of some sort, followed by Soviet pilots returning to base. The conversations sounded normal, but a live

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missile firing at night was highly unusual. Since their secure phones were down because of a crypto problem, they could not call Misawa to ask for further information.³²

~~(S//SI-SPOKE)~~ At about eight that morning the weary mid-shift workers were packing to go back to the barracks when they received a phone call from Misawa. (It appears that Misawa was making the call at the request of Major General James O'Donnell, commander of 5th AF.) The analyst at Misawa began reading a just-published UPI dispatch:

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A Korean Air Lines jumbo jet flying from New York to Seoul Wednesday with 269 people aboard, including a U.S. congressman, was forced to land on Sakhalin, a Soviet-occupied island north of Japan. The congressman was identified as Larry MacDonald, Democratic representative of Georgia....

The transcriber who had overheard the Soviet voices knew immediately what they had been talking about. He had overheard the Soviets in the act of shooting down a civilian airliner.

~~(S//SI)~~ With that, all semblance of normality vanished. Every linguist at the site was called to listen to the tape. They then called Misawa back with the word "Roger, we have an LMF" (live missile firing). No one went to bed - they spent the rest of the day transcribing that small section of tape, readying it for the inevitable avalanche of questions.³³

~~(S//SI-SPOKE)~~ Wakkanai continued to monitor Soviet communications, and that afternoon they intercepted the conversation that sealed the matter. Two Soviets at a SAM unit in southern Sakhalin were talking:

Station a: (They) shot down (1-2 words garbled) an RC-135 (1 garbled) at Moneron.

Station b: I don't understand

Station a: At Moneron (they) shot down as RC-135.

Station b: Really?

Station a: Yes

Station b: Who?

Station a: Who? We (1 garbled) from Sokol....

Station a: Then our pilots told us that it was not an RC-135, but it was a passenger (plane).³⁴

(U) Tokyo

~~(S//SI)~~ In downtown Tokyo, [redacted] got a call from Hugh Erskine, the NCRJ operations officer, soon after he arrived at 0800. Erskine had a Klieglight from [redacted] about the Soviets shooting down "an aircraft of unknown nationality" using a MiG-23. Obviously the Japanese had information on the

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same activity, and [] was told to get permission to get the voice tapes. [] reported back two hours later that [] did have intercept, but getting copies of the tapes would be a very bureaucratic process.³⁵

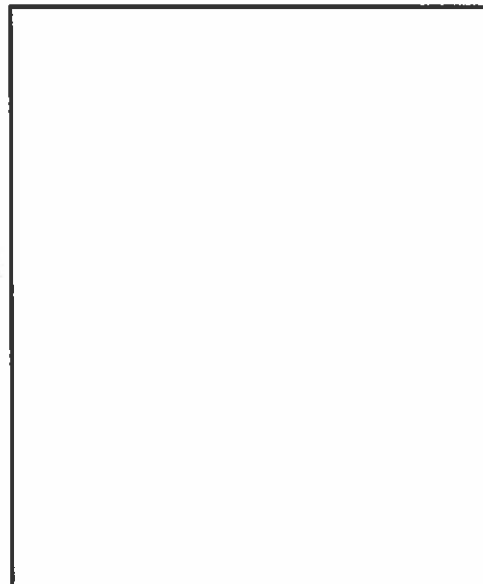
~~(S//SI)~~ At Yokota Air Base, NCRJ people were told to get both Japanese and American tapes back to Fort Meade - to pull out absolutely all the stops, that they were wanted at the White House on Saturday. Somehow, the people in Japan needed to make a Pan Am flight departing Narita at 1300 the next day. That morning, September 2, [] gave his permission. At Wakkanai, the American [] director, [] walked over to the Japanese site across the street from the American facility. After drinking a couple of ceremonial cups of Japanese green tea, the Japanese site commander handed over the tapes, which [] put into a flowered Japanese shopping bag and, as casually as he could, walked back to his office.³⁶

~~(S//SI)~~ Meanwhile, a U.S. Navy courier flight was on its way to Wakkanai for the tapes. It barely hit the runway and was off again with the flowered shopping bag full of tapes. At Misawa the bag of tapes was whisked to the far end of the runway in a black sedan, where a Navy jet fighter was waiting with engines running. The tapes were thrown into the back seat and the plane shot down the runway. An hour later it landed at the Naval Air Station at Atsugi, south of Tokyo, where it was hoisted into a helicopter for the ride to Narita, the international airport north of Tokyo. There, NCRJ people were waiting with the Pan Am representative. Pan Am delayed the flight about fifteen minutes while the crucial tapes were taken by an NSA official who had been designated to courier them back to Fort Meade. After takeoff, the Pan Am flight crossed the international dateline, and so landed on the East Coast that same afternoon. The tapes were at NSA that evening, September 2, having come all the way from Wakkanai in a single calendar day.³⁷

(U) Washington

~~(S//SI)~~ [] senior Russian linguist on the Soviet problem, was on the golf course Saturday morning, September 3, when he got a call. "Something has happened; you've got to come in." The tragedy of a lost Saturday was made more acute because he was having a very good round.

~~(TS//SI)~~ When he arrived in the Ops-1 transcription area, all was chaos. There were [] tapes, there were [] tapes, some with the pilot voice conversation, some with conversations by ground personnel, all mixed up, each in multiple copies. The shipment had arrived at



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midnight, and linguists had been up all night processing them. [] had to be at the White House with the air-to-ground tapes by 1700 that day. So they concentrated on sorting the tapes and finding the ones that they had to take.³⁸

~~(S//SI SPOKE)~~ What [] heard when he first listened to the air-to-ground tapes was the cold voice of an experienced pilot performing a maneuver he had practiced many times. (Note: all intercepts are of pilot billet suffix 805. The voices of two other pilots were on the tapes, as they maneuvered astern of 805, who was being vectored toward the intruder. The ground controller was out of range and was not intercepted, either by the Japanese or the Americans. Not all of 805's transmissions are included here. Times are in Zulu.)

18:19:02 I am closing on the target.
 18:20:08 Fiddlesticks. I'm going, that is, my Z.G. (indicator) is lit (missile warheads are already locked on).
 18:30:30 I'm turning lock-on off and I'm approaching the target.
 18:20:49 I have broken off lock-on. I am firing cannon bursts.
 18:21:34 Yes, I'm approaching the target, I'm going in closer.
 18:21:35 The target's (strobe) light is blinking, I have already approached the target to a distance of about two kilometers.
 18:21:40 The target is at 10,000 (meters).
 18:22:02 The target is decreasing speed.
 18:22:17 I am going around it, I'm already moving in front of the target.
 18:22:23 I have increased speed.
 18:22:29 No. It is decreasing speed.
 18:22:42 It should have been earlier. How can I chase it, I'm already abeam of the target.
 18:22:55 Now I have to fall back a bit from the target.
 18:23:10 The target's altitude is 10,000 (meters).
 18:23:18 From me it is located at 70 degrees to the left.
 18:23:37 I'm dropping back, now I will try rockets.
 18:24:22 Roger, I am in lock-on.
 18:25:11 I am closing on the target, am in lock-on. Distance to target is 8 (kilometers).
 18:25:16 I have already switched it on.
 18:25:46 Z.G. (missile warheads locked on).
 18:26:20 I have executed the launch.
 18:26:22 The target is destroyed.

~~(S//SI SPOKE)~~ Going through the voice tapes, [] heard nothing about either aircraft identification or warning. Ground controllers variously identified the raid as

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either an RC-135 or an unidentified intruder. The pilot apparently was not asked to identify or warn. Said [redacted] later,

I never heard course changes and parallel flying, wagging their wings, blinking their lights, notification, nothing; I heard nothing....when I first turned to one of the senior people, I said 'This sounds a lot like point to point to me.' That's jargon for point to point intercept, you know that you wish to shoot down a drone, you have the identification of the target and your intent when you take off is to destroy the target.³⁹

~~(S//SI-SPOKE)~~ Comparing the voice tapes with the air defense tracking, it was clear to [redacted] and to his analysis counterpart, [redacted] that the identification did not matter. The aircraft had flown through Soviet airspace over Kamchatka unhindered. Air defense controllers were concerned that it not happen a second time. It took several minutes to maneuver the SU-15 into position, during which time miscommunication between the pilot and controller caused the Sukhoi to overrun the target. By the time he had once again dropped astern and readied his weapons (this time missiles), KAL-007 was exiting Soviet airspace. There was just barely time to launch the weapons, and that was what the pilot was concerned with. At no time was he concerned with either identifying the target or warning it.

~~(S//SI)~~ When KAL-007 went down, the director, General Lincoln Faurer, was on leave in Maine. His deputy, Dick Lord, organized the response. As soon as he was sure that the [redacted] he notified the White House. His memo explained that [redacted] and that the language factor might slow down the translation process.⁴⁰

~~(S//SI)~~ Saturday afternoon an outraged secretary of state, George Shultz, who was the ranking administration official in Washington that day, accused the Soviets of shooting the aircraft down in cold blood. He stated that the the Soviets had tracked KAL-007 for 2 1/2 hours, and quoted the pilot as saying, "The target is destroyed." Later, on ABC *Nightline*, the presidential press secretary, Larry Speakes, used Dick Lord's memo to explain why the voice tapes were not yet ready, including the information about working through Japanese language difficulties. Before the day was out [redacted] the involvement of the Japanese, [redacted] was public knowledge.⁴¹

~~(S//SI)~~ [redacted] arrived at the White House just before 1700 that Saturday. They met in the Situation Room with NSC officials John Poindexter, Ken de Graffenreid, Bob Kimmel, and Oliver North and went over the material piece by piece. The NSC people wanted to know especially if any attempt had been made to warn the aircraft. [redacted] contended that none had. [redacted] stuck to his contention that it was a point-to-point intercept, with no thought given to warning. They also asked about the aircraft identification, but the NSA people reiterated that the voice transcripts indicated no attempt at all to identify. The NSC people informed them that they would be briefing President Reagan the next morning.⁴²

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~~(S//SI)~~ [redacted] and Lord returned to the White House at 0800 Sunday, and were ushered into the Cabinet Room, where they briefed the president. [redacted] played the tape and gave the English translation, while [redacted] explained what was going on and what the significance of it was. The briefing lasted only ten minutes, but the questions that followed went on for almost forty. Following that, the president conducted a highly unusual Sunday morning press conference to condemn the Soviets and demand an admission of guilt.⁴³



(U) Briefing President Reagan. Clockwise: President Reagan, George Shultz, Robert McFarlane, William Casey, and Caspar Weinberger.

(U) On Monday evening Reagan went on television again to repeat his charges and outline a program of sanctions against the USSR. To back up his charges, he played part of the tape. At the same time, administration officials were appearing on TV talk shows to condemn the Soviet shutdown. The State department frantically rounded up support for sanctions from friendly capitals. It was a full-scale propaganda blitz.⁴⁴

(U) Moscow

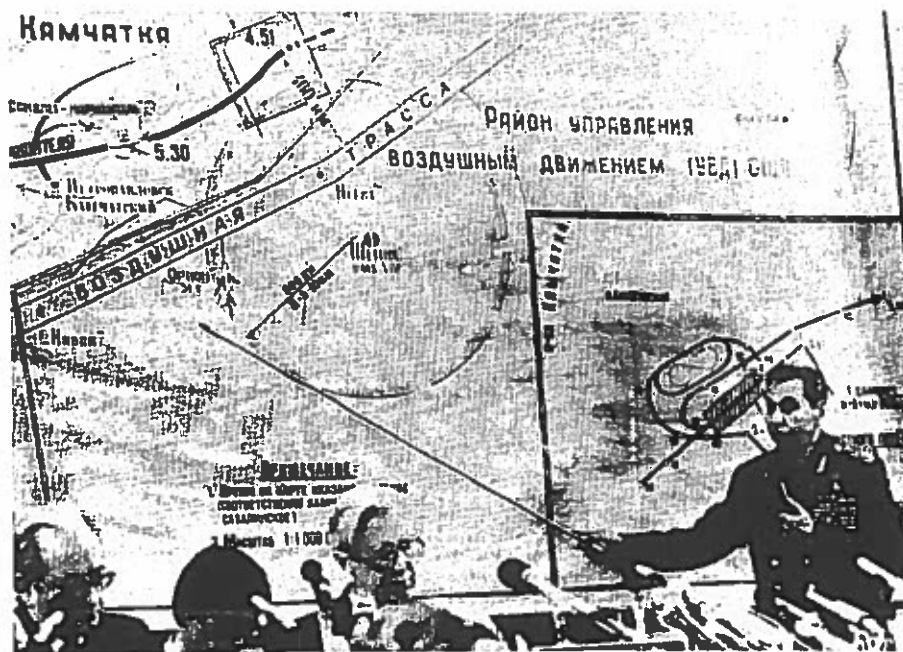
(U) The Soviets went into public denial. In the first official press release from Moscow, almost twelve hours after the shutdown and some nine hours after debris was confirmed floating on the ocean, *Tass* reported an encounter with an unidentified plane, which, it was alleged, failed to respond to queries and continued on its way. The next day *Tass* still denied any knowledge of the fate of the aircraft, but began hinting that it might have been some sort of "spy flight." It was not until Sunday, September 3, that Soviet official sources

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admitted that it might have been the missing KAL flight; but they reiterated that it was undoubtedly on an espionage mission.⁴⁵

(U) The spy scenario was one that the Soviets repeated and embellished. A writer in the *Moscow Literaturnaya Gazeta* for September 7 alleged that KAL-007 was "...a provocation hatched a long time ago and carefully prepared by the US CIA." He went on: "It is universally known that Boeing passenger aircraft are equipped with modern control instruments and also that they can be fitted with the most advanced intelligence gathering instruments to carry out highly secret assignments."⁴⁶

(U) The Soviets did not finally admit that they had shot the aircraft down until September 6, three days after President Reagan had played the incriminating tapes. They expressed regret that it had proved to be a civilian aircraft, but held the U.S. "fully responsible," in line with their contention that its flight course had been charted by the CIA.⁴⁷



(U) Nikolay Ogarkov

(U) On September 9, with worldwide criticism mounting, the Soviets took the unprecedented action of putting the chief of their general staff on television to explain the Soviet side of the story. Nikolay Ogarkov proved to be an articulate spokesman for the Soviet story, gesticulating at the flight route on the map and hammering away at the spy theme: It has been proved irrefutably that the intrusion of the South Korean airlines plane into Soviet airspace was a deliberately, thoroughly planned intelligence operation. It was directed from certain centers in the territory of the United States and Japan. A civilian plane was chosen for the mission, deliberately disregarding or, possibly, counting

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on the loss of human life. American radars, he asserted, tracked the flight (ignoring the laws of physics which prevented that) and would have warned the plane had it not been a spy flight. He contended that it flew in tandem with the RC-135, in a pattern designed to confuse Soviet air defense, then broke off into Soviet territory, deliberately evading pursuit.⁴⁸

~~(S//SI SPOKE)~~ A by-product of the press conference was Ogarkov's assertion that the Sukhoi pilot fired cannon bursts at the airliner. This line had originally been omitted from the official transcript because the pilot voice had been badly hit by static at that point, but when [] heard Ogarkov use the Russian words he immediately knew what had been in the garbled sentence. NSA corrected the translation after it had been released, an embarrassment which proved to be only temporary.⁴⁹

~~(TS//SI UMBRA)~~ The Soviet postmortem had begun immediately. Within two hours of the shutdown, the Soviet Far East Military District had released a full report to Moscow. This began a series of urgent meetings in the capital from 2 to 6 September, following which a high-level investigative team was dispatched to the Far East to interrogate everyone involved and report back to the general staff. This team delivered its report on September 13, four days after Ogarkov had already given a "full report" to the world. In many ways it contradicted his press conference.

~~(TS//SI UMBRA)~~ The "facts" in the report [] pretty much matched [] as had been originally established [] but offered significant new information. When KAL-007 approached Kamchatka, it flew into a Soviet radar zone that was under wholesale reconstruction and refitting, and not a single fighter direction post was operable on the entire peninsula that night. Because of the fragmentary radar reporting, the position of the aircraft was not known for sure until it was too late to make an intercept over Soviet territory. But air defenses on Sakhalin were alerted, and fighters were launched as soon as it crossed back into Soviet airspace.

~~(TS//SI UMBRA)~~ Far East military authorities offered up only one bald-faced lie. They alleged that the civilian airliner and the Cobra Ball rendezvoused over the Pacific, and after one pilot reported to the other that "all was in order," they departed in different directions. An intercept of such a conversation was no more plausible than the Ogarkov assertion that American radar could track the flight throughout its route.

~~(TS//SI UMBRA)~~ The Far East Military District commander was involved in the incident before the firing order was given, and at one point reported the situation to the commander in chief of the Far East Forces, his immediate superior. Despite this level of detail [] establish exactly who gave the order to fire, or if this order received prior approval from authorities in Moscow.⁵⁰

~~(S//SI SPOKE)~~ Soviet reactions to KAL-007 were a product of history. The insular nature of the regime had produced over years an obsessive concern with safety and secrecy, a concern that NSA had documented many times. The 1983 shutdown was, in fact,

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preceded by a similar incident involving a Korean Airlines commercial flight five and a half years earlier. On April 20, 1978, a KAL 707 flying from Paris to Seoul by way of Anchorage strayed into Soviet airspace over the Kola Peninsula. Soviet Air Defense launched several fighter sorties in an effort to catch the errant plane. Flagon E out of Afrikanda was first to catch up with the intruder. First thinking it to be a possible U.S. reconnaissance flight, the pilot discovered it to be a Korean Airlines passenger flight (which he incorrectly identified as a 747). The controller demanded that he shoot it down. The pilot protested, pointing out that he was equipped with air-to-air missiles, not cannons – a single shot was much more likely to destroy the plane. The controller insisted. Finally the pilot launched a missile that exploded close to the flight, killing two passengers and injuring several others. His controller demanded a second shot, but the pilot again demurred, contending that the aircraft was descending too rapidly for that. The Flagon pilot broke off the attack and returned to Afrikanda.

~~(S//SI-SPOKE)~~ Meanwhile, the crippled airliner dropped like a stone from 35,000 feet to 3,000 feet. It then flew an erratic pattern across northern Russia, finally crash-landing more than an hour later on a frozen lake south of the White Sea. The Soviets sent waves of helicopters to the site, where they picked up the passengers and took them to a nearby town. After a few days they were returned to the West by a Pan American rescue flight. Although NSA had detailed information on the incident, there was no demand to release information in 1978.⁵¹

~~(S//SI-SPOKE)~~ The Soviet concern for border security had escalated to paranoid intensity by August of 1983. The Reagan administration's campaign of psychological warfare and border probing had been bringing up the temperature for two years. Soviet tempers boiled over in April of 1983 as a result of the U.S. naval exercise in the Sea of Okhotsk. By Soviet accounts, the U.S. Navy flew bombing runs on April 4 that penetrated deeply into Soviet airspace in the militarily sensitive Kuril Chain area, and led to an Andropov-issued shoot-to-kill order. Following the April exercise, Soviet reactions to U.S. reconnaissance almost went through the roof.⁵²

(U) New York

(U) U.S. ambassador Jeane Kirkpatrick represented the United States at the UN. The Reagan administration intended to lay the wood to the Soviet Union, and she was well equipped to do this. Acerbic even in calm seas, she could be ferocious in a fight.

(U) After listening to denials from the Soviet ambassador, she launched an attack reminiscent of Adlai Stevenson's charge during the Cuban Missile Crisis in 1962. She played the tape

[redacted] following which she made a point-by-point refutation of Soviet denials and evasions: Contrary to Soviet statements, there is no indication whatsoever that the interceptor pilot made any attempt either to communicate with the

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airliner or to signal it to land....at no point did the pilots raise the question of the identity of the target aircraft....At a distance of two kilometers, under the conditions prevailing at the that time, it was easily possible to identify a 747 passenger airliner. Either the Soviet pilot did not know the Korean plane was a commercial airliner, or he did not know what he was firing at [sic].⁵³ Her interpretation of what had happened was near perfect, and her language was supported by the voice transcript. Her more general charge later in the speech about historic Soviet brutality and disregard of international law had much less to do with the evidence, and was part of the Reagan administration's diplomatic offensive against the USSR. KAL-007 simply opened the door of opportunity.



(U) Jeane Kirkpatrick

(U) The Postmortems

(U) When it was all over, the intelligence community, as well as the journalistic world, had some reassessing to do. What did the Soviets know, and when did they know it? What did the intelligence community know, and how did they use it? And what contributions did the White House make to the situation?

(U) To answer the last question first, the White House pounced on the shutdown and squeezed it dry of propaganda value. It was one of those opportunities that comes but once in a lifetime. There is no question that the Reagan administration made the very, very most of it. In years following the collapse of the Soviet Union, a Russian journalist assessed it as the single most disastrous propoganda defeat they ever suffered.⁵⁴

~~(S//SI)~~ It would not have been such a great coup, however, but for the stubborn insistence of some key NCOs at Misawa. When they first reported the information, they were ignored. They protested. They were told to forget it. They reported it anyway, and were told to cancel the report. They delayed for almost an hour, hoping that something would turn up. It did, just minutes after they had finally cancelled the report. So they reported it again. The NSA assessment tried to be even-handed: "Some interpretive problems surface dealing with the initial decision-making stages of the activity....no definite error in either's decision is apparent." Looking back on it four years later, General Faurer mused that the SOO's decision to have Misawa cancel the first Critic was "within what ought to be the expected envelope of human fallibility."⁵⁵

~~(S//SI)~~ This was exculpatory but wrong. Misawa's stubbornness put the intelligence community ahead of a curve that it absolutely had to be ahead of. To have missed the shutdown, and to have been jerked back into the picture by some outside, inquiring force,

~~TOP SECRET//COMINT-UMBRA/TALENT KEYHOLE//X1~~

would have besmirched NSA's reputation and called into question its capability to warn. While no one in NSOC was technically on a blacklist, the real heroes were in Misawa.

~~(S//SI)~~ Once set in motion, the cryptologic system performed more than passably well. From the executive leadership of Dick Lord, to the seat-of-the-pants innovativeness of the cryptologic people in Japan who got the voice tapes back to NSA, to the contributions of [redacted] in the White House, the people in the system responded extremely well. It was an example of how quickly a large and far-flung bureaucracy could move once pricked. It is hard to see how anyone could have done better. Seymour Hersh, one journalist who got most of the story right, singled out NSA for excellence and for a non-political approach. (He did not, however, have kind words for the Reagan people.)⁵⁶

~~(TS//SI//TK)~~ How did the cryptologic community fare concerning the amount of classified material released? Considering only the voice tapes and flight tracking, the incident resulted in virtually no damage. The Soviets had known for years exactly what the U.S. capability was, and the KAL-007 shootdown told them nothing. It had a far more serious impact on NSA's relations [redacted] received instructions which hamstrung it in future cases of this nature, much like the restrictions that the [redacted] Heavy governmental interference did nothing for the cause of cryptologic cooperation, and had a lasting effect on the closeness of those ties.⁵⁷

~~(TS//SI-UMBRA)~~ The most damaging were the persistent leaks from the White House following the release of the voice tapes, [redacted]

[redacted] William Casey decreed on September 21, 1983, that "...it is now time to circle the wagons and stop talking." But the Reagan administration, in some ways the most porous in memory, could not seem to stop talking.⁵⁸

~~(S//SI-SPOKE)~~ And, finally, how culpable were the Soviets in the incident? No question, ground controllers thought they were tracking an RC-135. Given the paranoia that had existed since April, it was unthinkable that such a penetration could be permitted without action. A scenario like that would place everyone's jobs at stake.

(U) The Soviet SU-15 pilot claimed that he did not recognize it to be a civilian airliner. Flying in the dim light of an early dawn, with the cabin blacked out so passengers could sleep, it could have looked like a military aircraft from a distance. The size of the silhouette, the rotating beacon, argue the opposite case. But far more egregious errors of visual identification are made every day, and were made during the attack on the *Liberty* in 1967, to name just one case.

~~(S//SI-SPOKE)~~ The entire shootdown proceeded like a pilot working through a checklist. The identification part of the checklist was long past - he was concerned only

~~TOP SECRET//COMINT-UMBRA/TALENT KEYHOLE//X1~~

with altitude and angles, with preparing missiles and launching before the intruder left Soviet airspace. That was his job.

~~(S//SI)~~ NSA reporting, once it got going, was right on the mark. It dispassionately recounted the incident from the Soviet perspective, from their own communications. It was the Reagan people who insisted that the Soviets could not have mistaken a 747 for a 707. That was their value judgment. It was wrong, but not so wide of the mark that one can impute anything more sinister than righteous wrath. It was the height of the Second Cold War.

(U) VERIFICATION

(U) SALT II was never ratified by the Senate, thus leaving a huge question mark about the fate of strategic arms limitation. In the absence of a ratified treaty, however, both sides decided independently to abide by the provisions of the draft. When Reagan became president, that was how matters stood.

(U) Reagan, too, continued the informal arrangements that the Carter administration had left him. But under Reagan there was much less trust. The issue of a "Soviet strategic breakout" from the treaty was never far from anyone's mind, and the intelligence work to discover such a "breakout" was intense. In late 1982 intercepted telemetry from a Soviet missile test showed 95 percent encryption, the first time Soviet telemetry encryption had ever hit that level. The intelligence community assessed that above 70 percent amounted to denial of capability to monitor treaty compliance. The next year, as the debate of telemetry encryption continued to rage, an advisory committee reported to the president on a long history of Soviet arms control treaties, including SALT I. The report reinforced Reagan's natural tendency to distrust the Soviets anyway.⁵⁹

~~(TS//SI-UMBRA//TK)~~ SIGINT and photography were the two primary forms of "national technical means of verification." Both were in high gear, thanks to generous funding over the years. From the SIGINT side, the main sources were three satellite systems: [redacted]

[redacted] In addition, the U.S. site in Sinop, Turkey, provided valuable information on launches of short- and medium-range missiles from Kapustin Yar Missile Test Range. The most critical gap was the loss of the Tacksman sites in Iran. When Reagan came in, this had not yet been solved except [redacted] This was pretty much the story of the effort against missile launches.⁶⁰

~~(S//SI)~~ Reentry was a different story. For that, several collectors were used: the Cobra Dane phased array radar on Shemya, the Cobra Ball EC-135 collection platform flying out of Shemya, and [redacted] (the Cobra Judy program).

~~(S//SI)~~ Cobra Judy was a floating collection platform in the Pacific Ocean configured specifically for downrange missile shots. But it was the strangest ship in the Navy. Although it was piloted and operated by the Navy's Military Sealift Command

[redacted]