



Security Council

Distr.
GENERAL

S/15961
7 September 1983

ORIGINAL: ENGLISH

LETTER DATED 7 SEPTEMBER 1983 FROM THE PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE
OF JAPAN TO THE UNITED NATIONS ADDRESSED TO THE PRESIDENT OF
THE SECURITY COUNCIL

I have the honour to transmit herewith the statement issued on 7 September 1983 by the Director-General of the Public Information and Cultural Affairs Bureau of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan in response to the statement made by the representative of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics at the 2471st meeting of the Security Council on 6 September 1983.

I should be grateful if you would kindly have the contents of this letter and the attached statement circulated as a document of the Security Council.

(Signed) Mizuo KURODA
Ambassador Extraordinary and
Plenipotentiary
Permanent Representative of
Japan to the United Nations

Annex

Statement by the Director-General of the Public Information and
Cultural Affairs Bureau, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Japan,
dated 7 September 1983

At the official meeting of the United Nations Security Council on 6 September 1983, the Soviet representative, Ambassador Oleg A. Troyanovsky, accused Japan asking why, if Japanese air traffic control authorities were aware that the Korean Air Lines jetliner was flying in Soviet air space, Japan did not stop the aircraft or give any warning to it.

The same criticism of Japan has also figured in reports by Soviet media. In response to these Soviet charges the Government of Japan makes the following rebuttal:

1. Japanese air traffic control authorities usually rely upon air traffic surveillance radar and communications from the pilot of a civilian aircraft to determine whether each aircraft is flying according to its flight plan. However, Japanese surveillance radar visibility is limited to the air space over and around Japan and, for an aircraft flying at over 20,000 feet altitude, even the Yokotsudake radar station at Hakodate, Hokkaido, which is located closest to NAKKA position (42° 23" North, 147° 28" East), some 270 kilometers East-South-East of Kushiro, can cover only as far as 42° 14" North, 145° 13" East, some 150 kilometers South-South-East of Kushiro. It was thus impossible for any Japanese air traffic surveillance radar station to ascertain that the Korean Air Lines jetliner was flying off course.

The only way to ascertain the actual location of an aircraft which cannot be seen by air traffic surveillance is to rely upon communication from the pilot, and standard practice is to assume that the said communication is correct. The record of radio transmission between the pilot of Korean Air Lines flight 007 and the Japanese air traffic control authorities (Tokyo International Air Control at Narita) after that aircraft entered Japanese air control jurisdiction over the broad expanses of the North Pacific is as follows.

2. Gist of communication (as released by Civil Aviation Bureau, Ministry of Transport)
 - A. 17:09 GMT (2:09 JST)

KE-007 (call sign): Korean Air 007. Over NIPPI (49° 41" North, 159° 19" East) 17:07. Level 330 (flight level 33,000 feet). Estimating NAKKA 18:26. 132.0 (132,000 pounds fuel remaining). Minus 49 (outside temperature minus 49°C). 320 diagonal 45 (Northwest winds at 45 knots). Requesting selcal check.

/...

RJAA (Tokyo International Air Control): (Send selcal)

KE-007: Check. Korean Air 007. Selcal okay.

B. 18:15 GMT (3:15 JST)

KE-007: Korean Air 007 Requesting 350 (flight level 35,000 feet).

RJAA: Roger. Standby. Call you back.

C. 18:20 GMT (3:20 JST)

RJAA: Korean Air 007 clearance. Tokyo ATC clears Korean Air 007. Climb and maintain flight level 350 (35,000 feet).

KE-007: Roger. Korean Air 007 climb maintain flight level 350 (35,000 feet), leaving 330 (33,000 feet) this time.

RJAA: Tokyo Roger.

D. 18:23 GMT (3:23 JST)

KE-007: Tokyo Radio Korean Air 007 level 350 (Altitude 35,000 feet).

RJAA: Korean Air 007 Tokyo Roger.

E. 18:27 GMT (3:27 JST)

KE-007: KE007 Hmrrrrrrrr (Signal was noisy and weak).

3. As may be seen, communication between Korean Air Lines flight 007 and Tokyo International Air Control at Narita was normal until the start of unintelligible transmission from Korean Air Lines flight 007 at 3:27 Japan Standard Time. Narita fully expected to receive the pilot's report that he had passed NAKKA some 270 kilometers East-South-East of Kushiro at 3:26, and it was not until 3:27 that there was any suspicion that there might be trouble (e.g., radio failure) with Korean Air Lines flight 007 near NAKKA.
4. For approximately 17 minutes from 3:12 to 3:29, the Air Self-Defense Forces radar station at Wakkanai sighted and recorded an aircraft flying southwest over Sakhalin approximately 100 miles north of Wakkanai, but there was no way that the Air Self-Defense Forces could have known at that time that this aircraft was Korean Air Lines flight 007. The Air Self-Defense Forces were not following Korean Air Lines flight 007 by radar all the while that it was in communication with Narita Air Traffic Control but rather suddenly picked that aircraft up on their radar at 3:12 when it entered the air space over Sakhalin, and even then it was sighted as an unidentified aircraft.

/...

5. It was only the after-the-fact integration and analysis of radar and communication records of 3 and 4 above which revealed the possibility that Korean Air Lines flight 007 had strayed from its route and flown into Sakhalin air space.
6. Information provided under 1-5 above points to the following conclusions:
 - A. Since it was not until 3:27 that Narita Air Traffic Control became aware of any irregularity regarding Korean Air Lines flight 007, even if Narita had immediately contacted the Air Self-Defense Forces and had been able to deduce that the unidentified aircraft which had flown into the air space over Sakhalin was indeed Korean Air Lines flight 007, this was already after the said aircraft had been shot down by the Soviet Union at 3:26 21'.
 - B. Japan was in no position to warn Korean Air Lines flight 007 since we had no way of knowing that the aircraft had strayed from its route between the time it left Anchorage and the time it was shot down near Moneron (Kaiba) Island off the coast of Sakhalin.
7. As may be seen from the above explanation, it can only be concluded that the Soviet charges are completely groundless and that this Soviet attitude represents an attempt to shift to Japan part of the blame which the Soviet Union must rightly bear for this incident.

The Government of Japan hereby strongly demands that the Soviet Union promptly retract these charges and respond in good faith to this incident.
