

BEST RESPONSE TO BRUTALITY:

Don't let Soviets land

Wednesday afternoon, one of eight pursuing Soviet interceptors fired a heat-seeking Atoll missile into Korean Air Lines flight 007. The missile homed into one of the huge engines of the Boeing 747, blowing off part of the wing and sending the aircraft and its 269 passengers plunging 33,000 feet to their deaths.

The doomed Korean airliner was apparently some 200 miles off course and deep into one of the USSR's most sensitive air and naval zones. The flight's regular course would have taken it from Anchorage, Alaska, east of the Soviet-controlled Kuril Islands over Hokkaido, Japan's northern island, and on to Seoul, Korea.

But it appears that the Korean jetliner may have strayed across the Kurils and then over either the southern tip of Sakhalin Island or the strategic La Perouse Strait.

This strait, a narrow sea gap between Sakhalin and Hokkaido, is one of the Soviet Union's critical "gateways." Warships and submarines from Vladivostok, the USSR's principal Far Eastern military base, must traverse either the La Perouse or the more southerly Tsushima Strait in order to gain the open sea. These narrow choke points are a primary target for mining and wartime air attack by the U.S., Japan and South Korea.

The Kurils, seized by the USSR from Japan at the end of World War II, have also lately become a high-priority Soviet military zone. As Japan has intensified its demands for the return of the Kurils, the USSR has fortified and heavily armed these strategic islands. In the past year, the Soviets have placed new interceptor and bomber units plus a full mechanized division in the Kurils. Flight 007 strayed right over this important military complex.

So far, the Soviets have issued conflicting reports and have denied attacking the airliner. But electronic monitoring by Japan's Self-Defence Agency confirms the exact time of the missile firing. There is no question that this attack was not accidental.

All interceptors of the USSR's PVO-Strany Air Defence Command operate under strict ground control. They are vectored to their targets and told when to fire. The Soviet Union's Far Eastern air defence command links directly by satellite to central air defence headquarters near Moscow — it is inconceivable that the Far Eastern com-



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mand would have acted without the approval of Moscow.

This is the second time a Korean plane has been downed by the Soviets. In 1978, a Korean 707 on a polar flight strayed over the USSR's most important military zone, the Kola Peninsula, with its complex of submarine pens and naval and air bases. The plane was fired upon and forced down with some loss of life.

No doubt, suspicious Soviets assumed that the latest Korean incursion was some sort of espionage mission, or a surprise attack. What the Soviets found on the 707 forced down in 1978 has never been revealed.

It seems probable, given the Soviets' highly-centralized air defence system, that some high authority in Moscow decided to teach the South Koreans a lesson, perhaps in response to Seoul's recent sinking of two North Korean spy ships.

The Soviets have become extremely nervous of late as a result of well-publicized American contingency plans to launch, in the event of a war in Europe, air and naval attacks on the vulnerable Soviet Far Eastern ports. Combined with growing Japanese pressure over the Kurils, and persistent Chinese hostility, the Soviets appear to have become dangerously trigger-happy.

How can the West respond? By denying the Soviets landing rights anywhere in the free world, Canada should immediately stop refuelling Cuba-bound Soviet flights at Gander. Otherwise, the Soviet Union will feel itself safe to flaunt its brutal power before the civilized world.

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