

ABC WORLD NEWS TONIGHT  
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MISSING PLANE/  
JAPAN

JENNINGS: Good evening. The Soviet Union has made its most elaborate attempt yet to convince the world community it was justified in shooting down Korean Airlines Flight 007. We go first to Moscow and ABC's Walter Rogers.

ROGERS: It was a news conference without precedent here. Soviet Chief of Staff and First Deputy Defense Minister Marshal Nikolai Ogarkov meeting with Western reporters. Ogarkov said six Soviet fighter planes followed that South Korean airliner for two and a half hours, and there was not the slightest doubt it was on an intelligence gathering mission as it overflowed a top secret Soviet strategic missile base. Ogarkov at one point suggested the airliner even flew on a close parallel course with a nearby American RC-135 reconnaissance plane for 10 minutes. The Soviet chief of staff said the Korean Airlines pilot, flying in the dead of night through thick clouds, ignored repeated Soviet attempts at radio contact and refused orders to land. Ogarkov explained the Soviet fighter plane then fired 120 warning shots in four bursts, but he said the airline pilot then took evasive action and behaved arrogantly. OGARKOV (Translated): An interceptor aircraft was given an order to terminate the flight using air-to-air missiles. The order was executed.

ROGERS: Ogarkov added there were no survivors, and for the first time he disclosed the order to shoot down the jumbo jet was given by the local air defense commander, who the marshal said acted properly and legally. Ogarkov added the general staff was informed later, but he refused to say when President Andropov and the Politburo were informed of the incident. The Soviet chief of staff was only able to offer circumstantial evidence the airliner itself was a spy plane. OGARKOV (Translated): What proof do you need when the airplane deviated by over 500 kilometers from the established route and is flying over Soviet Union territory?

ROGERS: At one point, today an American embassy official said the Soviet's explanation of this tragedy remains absurd. In his words, 'they have lied consistently and manifestly,' and he predicted the stigma of this incident will long hang over U.S.-Soviet relations. Walter Rogers, ABC News, Moscow.

MCWETHY: This is John McWethy at the Pentagon. Sources in the U.S. government say some of what General Ogarkov said today is true, but much of it is not. Ogarkov charged that the Korean airliner and the American reconnaissance plane rendezvoused off the Soviet coast and flew together for 10 minutes to confuse Soviet radar. American officials insist that the two planes never came closer than 75 miles, and were flying in opposite

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directions, always two distinct blips on Soviet radar screens. Officials admit that American spy planes sometimes do shadow airliners to confuse Soviet radar, but that was not the case in this instance. Ogarkov claimed that every effort was made to get the Korean airliner to land in Soviet territory. American sources say there is no evidence the Russians tried to reach the Korean plane by radio, no evidence that warning shots were fired. In fact, intelligence sources claim the SU-15 interceptor that shot down the plane could not have fired warning shots because it had no guns, only missiles. Ogarkov expressed frustration at being unable to make the Korean airliner land, and said it was only after two hours of tracking the aircraft that it was shot down as a spy plane. American sources say the Soviets probably could have shot it down much sooner, either from the air or the ground, but they were apparently waiting for two things. One, a positive visual identification, which sources say they did get; and two, permission to destroy the plane from higher in the chain of command, who the Russians say gave the order. That permission, sources say, came just as the Korean plane was about to pass out of Soviet airspace. Intelligence analysts say in another 60 seconds it would have done so. Government sources tell ABC news that since the incident last week, the U.S. has flown at least one additional RC-135 spy plane mission in that area. What the U.S. discovered is that the Soviets have now changed all of their secret codes and communications procedures, presumably because of all that the U.S. government has revealed in public about how closely and accurately it can monitor Soviet activities. John McWethy, ABC News, the Pentagon.