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'SHOT DOWN AIRLINER MAY HAVE BEEN SPYING'

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THE Korean passenger jet shot down over the Soviet Union last year may have been used to trigger Soviet radar and electronic defense signals so U.S. spy satellites could monitor them, according to an article in a British defense magazine.

The article, published by the journal Defense Attache under the pseudonym "P. Q. Mann", said one of the two satellites involved was the U.S. space shuttle.

It also speculated that in the resultant diplomatic confrontation Moscow may have extracted a secret accord from Washington to demilitarize the shuttle.

Defense Attache, a twice-monthly journal widely-read in the British defense industry, said it did not necessarily agree with all the views in the article but published it to inspire further investigation.

The editor said the author had to remain anonymous for professional reasons but was someone well-known to him.

The article linked the incident last September to separate incursions into Soviet bloc air space by two U.S. military planes in 1964, shortly after the first satellites went into orbit.

The incursions by the U.S. planes, both of which were shot down, coincided with Ferret surveillance of the area, it said.

Expert's chilling theory

In Washington, a Pentagon spokesman said today the Defense Department would have no comment on the allegation until it obtained a copy of the article.

He said both the White House and State Department at the time of the incident denied various allegations of any U.S. involvement.

Washington said all along that the Korean plane was not engaged in intelligence work. But the article recalled that a U.S. military jet with a similar profile to that of the Korean plane flew within range of Soviet radar shortly before the airliner entered Soviet airspace. It described this as a dummy-selling tactic to put Soviet defense systems on

guard.

The writer said Moscow itself initially drew attention to apparent coordination between the Korean plane's movement and repeated passes by a Ferret satellite. It also noted that the shuttle was launched some 36 hours before the incident "eastwards at the unusual local time of 0232, the first night-time launch."

It acknowledged that the orbit went over neither the Soviet Union nor the incident area but said the shuttle would have passed close enough.

"It is possible that, in its orbital passes to the south of the Soviet Union, it would have been advantageously placed to eavesdrop on emergency communications streaming east to west across the USSR between the Far Eastern command and the center of political control in Moscow," it said.