

KAL 007:

Questions still surround infamous flight a year later

By TIM AHERN
Associated Press Writer

WASHINGTON — A year after a heat-seeking Soviet missile blasted a Korean Air Lines 747 out of the nighttime sky over the Sea of Japan, killing all 269 persons aboard and sending U.S. Soviet relations into a steep dive, mystery still surrounds the fate of Flight 007.

New questions have been raised, new data asserted and new answers proposed. But chances are that the public will never know for certain why or how disaster befell this jumbo jet on Sept. 1, 1983.

Answers to some of the questions are elusive because no survivors and very little wreckage was found. Search ships heard "pings" from the submerged "black box" flight recorder for a time but it could not be recovered. Other possible answers remain shrouded in government secrecy.

The flight began in the pre-dawn darkness of Anchorage, Alaska, the last leg of a trip to Seoul, South Korea, that had begun the previous day in New York.

Aboard were 29 crew members and 240 passengers, including 61 Americans. Among them was Rep. Larry McDonald, a conservative Democratic congressman from Georgia and president of the John Birch Society, an organization created to warn the world about communism.

The plane left Anchorage a half-hour late. Within 10 minutes, it began to stray from its designated route. "Red-20." The B-20 path is the most northerly of five parallel flight routes on the northwest rim of the Pacific Ocean, a corridor that passes near sensitive Soviet military facilities.

One is a large missile-firing submarine base on the Kamchatka Peninsula. The other is a Soviet air base near Kamchatka, it was picked up on Soviet radar screens, and fighter jets went up to find it. It took them 2 1/2 hours, but the Su-16 finally caught it — then one of them shot it down with an Anab missile.

Here are some of the questions and answers concerning the flight:

● Why was the plane off course?
Flight 007 was more than 200 miles off "Red 20" when it was shot down. The United States says it was lost because of a navigation mistake, and its pilot didn't know he was over Soviet territory. Ground controllers did not spot it because there is no civilian radar coverage of it, 20, most of which is over water, U.S. aviation officials say.

After an investigation, the International Civilian Aviation Organization agreed, concluding the plane's navigator must have punched the wrong longitude for Anchorage — 149 instead of 150 — into the computerized navigation system. Although that's only a theory because the flight recorder was not recovered, it would have set the 747 on the erroneous course it followed, the ICAO said.

But the Russians contend the plane intentionally flew the course it did to photograph sensitive military installations.

A version of that theory is that KAL 007 was not necessarily taking pictures but was probing Soviet air defenses, trying to draw fighter planes up from the ground.

The Russians assert that the half-hour delay in departure from Alaska allowed the Korean airliner to coordinate its path with the U.S. space shuttle then orbiting the Earth so the shuttle could measure Soviet response to the intruding aircraft.

The Russians back up this contention by pointing to a 15-year period in the 1950s and early 1960s when U.S. planes frequently penetrated Soviet airspace to photograph military sites or measure Soviet responses.

The Russians shot down at least 11 American planes on such missions, including the U-2 spy plane piloted by Francis Gary Powers in 1959. But such flights generally ended in the mid-1960s when the development of high-altitude photography and spy satellites permitted the United States to safely watch the Soviets from afar.

U.S. officials, including Defense Secretary Caspar Weinberger, say those contentions are nonsense. KAL 007 was on "absolutely nothing remotely resembling any kind of (intelligence) mission," Weinberger said.

U.S. officials say they would not risk the lives of 290 people to take pictures that could be snapped by satellites. And U.S. space experts say the space shuttle that was aloft at the time was orbiting far to the south of the plane and nowhere near radar or radio range of the Korean plane.

● What and when did the U.S. government know about Flight 007, and why wasn't the plane warned it was off course?

Shultz was harsh in his condemnation, saying there was "no excuse whatever for this appalling act" and "the United States reacts with revulsion to this attack."

President Reagan was also extremely critical, declaring his "disgust at the entire world at the barbarity of the Soviet government in shooting down an unarmed plane." He added, "Words can scarcely express our revulsion at this horrifying act of violence."

But within days, U.S. officials began softening their criticism, particularly their contention that the Russians had knowingly destroyed a civilian plane.

Within four days, the Pentagon confirmed reports that a U.S. RC-135 spy plane had been in the general area of KAL 007 for a time and at one point had passed only 75 miles from the Korean plane, raising the possibility that the Russians thought they were shooting at the spy plane.

Furthermore, Shultz had claimed that the Soviet pilot had gotten close enough for a visual inspection of the KAL plane before he fired, and U.S. officials said the distinctive nose hump of the 747 made it unlikely that it could be mistaken for anything else.

But it was later disclosed that the Soviet pilot had fired his rocket from behind and below the 747; from that position, the 747's nose hump cannot be seen. In addition, although the sky was clear, the half moon did not supply that much light, U.S. officials said.

"It's not that easy to do visual identifications in the dark," said an Air Force pilot who has flown a number of fighter missions and who asked not to be identified.

Although the Russians said their plane had fired warning shots, Shultz said the tapes gave "no indication" they had fired any warning, which is standard international procedure to chase away a plane.

But the United States changed its story 11 days after the incident when it issued a revised transcript of the Soviet pilot's transmission and said he had fired his cannon almost six minutes before he fired the Anab missile.

U.S. intelligence officials are now inclined to believe the Soviet contention that they thought they were shooting at the RC-135.

"I think they simply made a mistake," said one official, speaking on condition he not be identified.

"The plane was leaving their airspace and they simply pulled the trigger."

For two months after the plane was shot down, the U.S. and Soviet navies hunted the Sea of Japan for wreckage, particularly the flight recorder that would yield clues about the plane's course.

Pentagon officials scoff at reports that the "black box" was recovered by the United States but is being hidden because it proves the plane was really on a spy flight.

The United States and the Soviet Union constantly watch each other. Some of the tightest U.S. surveillance is in the northern Pacific, particularly in the Kamchatka and Sakhalin Island areas.

Kamchatka is a target test site for Soviet land-based nuclear missiles, and U.S. spy satellites had spotted Soviet preparations to test-fire a new missile, U.S. officials say.

The monitoring network included land-based radar in northern Japan and airborne radar and receivers aboard U.S. RC-135 jets flying across the "Red 20" route. The Air Force RC-135s, based in the Aleutian Islands, are modified Boeing 707s packed with radar and radios that fly near the Soviet Union.

The U.S. Navy was operating an intelligence ship, the Observer Island, that night in the northern Pacific, according to U.S. officials.

The pursuit of the KAL plane by Soviet fighters was monitored by U.S. and Japanese electronic snoops, Shultz said, and the tape recordings of the Soviet pilots talking to their ground bases was later released in Washington.

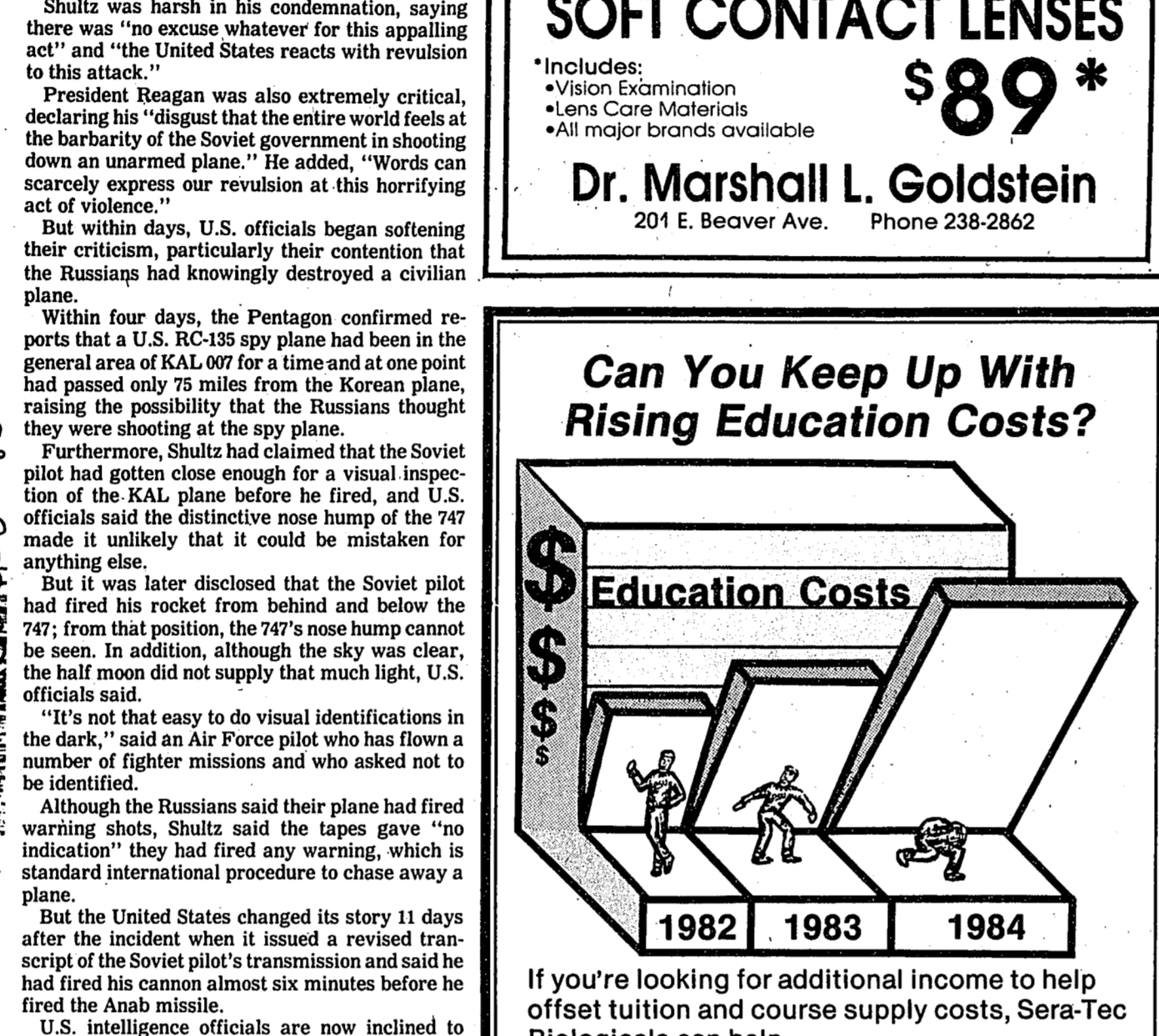
Although the United States has not publicly acknowledged that it tracked the wandering KAL jet, it is highly likely the plane's course was monitored by the U.S. military spy network.

But, say U.S. officials, speaking on condition they not be identified, KAL 007 probably wasn't warned because none of the watchers thought the Russians would react by shooting it down. The general belief, those officials say, was that the most severe reaction would be simply to chase the plane away from Soviet territory.

● Did the Soviets know they were shooting at a civilian airliner?
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America gets pieces that may fit in Noah's puzzle

NEW YORK (AP) — Samples of rock and decayed wood that biblical archaeologists hope will prove the existence of Noah's Ark have been brought to this country for laboratory analysis, an expedition spokesman said yesterday.

Expedition member Ron Wyatt of Nashville, Tenn., said the samples, taken last week from the southwestern face of Mount Ararat in Turkey, would be analyzed at Galbraith Laboratories in Knoxville, Tenn., to determine their content and approximate age.

He said metal tests indicated the rocks may contain oxidized bronze, copper or tin that could have been used as metal brackets on a boat. Petrified wood also was found at the site, he said.

"There is no room for doubt in my mind that this is a boat," said Wyatt.

Wyatt and fellow explorers in Ankara said the formation they uncovered corresponds in size to the Ark — about 450 feet long.

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Master Harold: Play depicts Zimbabwe's racist past

By JOHN EDLIN
Associated Press Writer

HARARE, Zimbabwe — When young Master Harold spat in the face of Sam, a black waiter, blacks knowingly shook their heads and whites shifted uneasily in their seats.

The scene was in the Zimbabwean production of Athol Fugard's critically acclaimed "Master Harold and the Boys," currently playing at the Edinburgh International Festival in Scotland. And the spitting was for real.

In the work by the South African playwright, Master Harold is a swaggering 16-year-old white South African student. Sam Semela is a dignified, middle-aged black who works as a waiter in the South George's Park Tearoom owned by the youth's mother.

This sudden outrageous act, in which Harold vents his rage on Sam, served as a stark reminder to Zimbabwe's racially mixed audiences of an era that faded in their country only a few years ago.

The play is set on a rainy Thursday in the South African city of Port Elizabeth. But it could have been Salisbury, Rhodesia, before the onetime British colony became black-governed Zimbabwe on April 18, 1980.

After nine decades of white-minority domination, the indignity and insensitivity of institutionalized racial segregation, which Fugard exposes in his plays, was entrenched in Rhodesian society and was still vivid in the minds of blacks and whites at the Zimbabwe premiere of "Master Harold" last January.

"One white matron with blue-rinsed hair brushed tears from her eyes after Harold's violent outburst. It was not out of guilt, she insisted, but out of sadness for 'that lovely old waiter.'"

Blacks, on the other hand, saw the play as a chilling cameo of their former suffering in Rhodesia and the treatment of blacks in South Africa today.

"Master Harold," which was plucked from a chapter in Fugard's own youth, tells of a special relationship between himself and Sam the waiter and serves as a political indictment of the apartheid system which destroyed it.

Fugard really did spit at Sam. The act has haunted him ever since, and caused him to seek the retired waiter's permission before he wrote the play. Sam died last year in his mid-70s, shortly before the play opened in Johannesburg.

The incident originated from a fit of fury and frustration when Harold, laughing and joking with Sam and fellow waiter Willie Malopo, was called to the telephone in the tearoom. He learned from his mother that his crippled, drunken father, whom he both loves and loathes, was to return home from the hospital. Harold feared the return would disrupt his studies.

So, pulling racial rank for the first time, Master Harold hysterically harangues the black man, and spits in his face.

The production, by a privately funded company called Sundown Theatre, played to packed houses throughout Zimbabwe after its January premiere in Harare's tiny Theatre Uprising.

The play opened to rave reviews on Broadway in 1982, winning a Tony Award for best actor for Zakes Moku, who played Sam.

The Zimbabwean audiences ranged from poor blacks in the teeming township of Seke near Harare to conservative white farmers.

Now, sponsored by private companies and government-backed foundations, "Master Harold" is being presented by the Sundown Theatre at the annual Edinburgh Festival. The play will run there until Saturday.

The original Sundown cast — a white journalist, a black hotel waiter and a black company personnel director — has been joined in Edinburgh by a white Rhodesian-born director, John Haigh.

Haigh, a schoolteacher who emigrated to Australia last August, helped launch the Sundown Theatre in 1975.

Negligent homicide, which carries a 3 1/2-to-7-year prison term, normally is associated with deaths involving drunken driving, and Garrod said his research found few other cases.

But Payne said courts have held that injury can be inflicted without battery, and that people have been convicted of causing death by shocking or exciting their victims.

New Hampshire law recognizes "intentional infliction of emotional distress" and defines deadly force as any assault or confrontation known "to create a substantial risk of causing death."

The case centers on a piece of land rented from Dodier by Ruth Moody, mother of Daniel Moody and Lynda Ryder and mother-in-law of Perley Ryder.

Garrod said the defendants didn't know about the heart condition, and that Dodier himself provoked the heart attack by running and getting upset.

Perley Ryder, 27, Lynda Ryder, 31, and Daniel Moody, 18, all of Ossipee, will be tried next month in Superior Court on negligent homicide charges that they provoked an argument with Dodier and knew he had a heart condition. The three are free on bail.

"It is a subjective situation," Payne says. "It might not be deadly force in your case or mine, but what is deadly force for a guy with a heart condition?"

Attorney Harvey Garrod, representing the defendants, responds: "Does this mean that if neighbors get into an argument venting a grievance about a trespassing dog and one has a heart attack that this is negligent homicide?"

A Carroll County grand jury indicted three adults in the death of Donald Dodier of Wakefield, who died of a heart attack while arguing with them over back rent. A juvenile is being tried separately.

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Detectives go undercover to catch Atlantic City prostitutes; fill jail

ATLANTIC CITY, N.J. (AP) — Detectives disguised as Vietnam veterans — one an amputee in a wheelchair — made 30 arrests in an undercover sting in an ongoing battle against prostitution, authorities said yesterday.

Last month, detectives posed as wealthy sheikhs dressed in turbans and sunglasses and cruised city streets in a limousine to make 40 arrests, a play that angered a group concerned about ethnic stereotyping of Arab-Americans.

Like the July operation, the four-hour sweep Saturday night and early Sunday had to be discontinued when the jail became full, said Capt. Peter Mucci, who leads the police department undercover team.

"All in all, it was a very successful operation," said Mucci. "We had to stop. The jail couldn't hold any more."

Eighteen women, a 16-year-old girl and a man were rounded up by detectives Paul Wegner, posing as a U.S. Marine veteran, and Larry Ross, who tucked his right leg under him while being pushed in a wheelchair down Pacific Avenue, where prostitution is concentrated.

Ross sported a beard, earring and cowboy hat, while Wegner also had a beard and wore a red Marine Corps cap and a button reading "13th Annual Reunion, Sixth Marine Division Association, Cherry Hill, N.J."

Wegner also had on a tag reading "Michael Tserra," but Mucci pointed out that the last name spells "arrest" backwards.

"Their cover was good," the captain added.

As the disguised detectives encountered alleged prostitutes, backup patrols watched and waited for the signal to move in.

The women were charged with prostitution and held in the women's section of the city jail.

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