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CANADIAN RESPONSE TO THE SOVIET CLAIM FOR DAMAGES TO AEROFLOT

The Honourable Allan J. MacEachen, Deputy Prime Minister and Secretary of State for External Affairs, announced today that the Canadian Ambassador in Moscow has rejected as totally without foundation a statement by an official of the Soviet Foreign Ministry which protests the Canadian measures against the Soviet airline "Aeroflot" alleging they are in breach of the 1966 bilateral air agreement with the Soviet Union and which claims compensation for material damages.

Mr. MacEachen said that this was an obvious attempt by the Soviet Union to evade its responsibility for the destruction of a civilian aircraft, Korean Airlines flight 007, and the resultant death of 269 innocent passengers, including ten Canadians. The Soviet Government must be held fully accountable for this tragedy. Irrelevant claims, which are as baseless in law as in fact, cannot alter its responsibility for a flagrant breach of general principles of international law as well as of established rules and procedures of international civil aviation.

Mr. MacEachen recalled that the ICAO Council by decisive majority adopted a resolution which deeply deplored the Soviet action of attacking and destroying an aircraft in commercial international service as "incompatible with the norms governing international behaviour and elementary considerations of humanity and with the rules, standards and recommended practices enshrined in the Chicago Convention..."