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COMMENTS ON KAL INCIDENT BEFORE FEDERAL/PROVINCIAL/TERRITORIAL CONFERENCE ON HUMAN RIGHTS

The Honourable Allan J. MacEachen, Deputy Prime Minister and Secretary of State for External Affairs, made the following comment concerning the Korean airline incident before the Federal/Provincial/Territorial Ministerial Conference on Human Rights in Ottawa on September 8.

"I want to refer to the issue raised by Minister (of Justice) Lane (Saskatchewan) and a number of others, namely, the shooting down of the Korean airliner. I've no doubt its a human rights issue of the deepest significance. It's a choking and inexplicable event. It creates deep unease for the world and particularly it creates deep uneasiness at the prospects for safe international air travel. The fact of the matter is that a civilian aircraft carrying passengers was shot down deliberately by the action of the Soviet fighters. It was deliberate certainly because the evidence is clear that this aircraft was tracked for a long period of time, messages were exchanged with the ground control and Soviet aircraft. Who knows what messages were exchanged from ground control and other authorities in the Soviet Union. We do not know. We do know that the aircraft was shot down and we know in what circumstances. There may be explanations that would clarify the situation. It may have been a colossal blunder. But up to the present time the Soviet Union has not accepted any responsibility

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