

I would like to review briefly the current situation with respect to the Korean airliner which was shot down by the USSR on August 31 and to announce a measure which is necessary in the circumstances.

The Soviet Government has informally reported to my Department that, as of September 3, no survivors had been found in the area of the search. Nor were the remains of any passengers found as of that date. Some countries have asked the Soviet Government to allow them to participate in the search, but to date permission has been denied.

The USSR has a clear obligation under the Chicago Convention on International Civil Aviation to institute an inquiry into any accident involving a foreign-registered aircraft in Soviet territory and to allow the Republic of Korea to be present at the official Soviet inquiry into the circumstances of this disaster.

For our part, we have still not received an official response from the Soviet Government to our demand for an explanation of the circumstances surrounding the tragic death of the Canadians on board. Indeed, far from expressions of regret or apology, the only comments from Moscow are a repetition, with minor variations, of the TASS accounts which world public opinion has dismissed.

I want you to know that we continue to maintain our position that the USSR must explain this disaster. We have provided ample time and opportunity. I have sent a message to Foreign Minister Gromyko asking him to give this matter his urgent personal attention.

To impress upon the Soviet authorities the gravity and determination with which we view this matter I have, in consultation with my colleague the Minister of Transport, decided to suspend the rights of Aeroflot to the use of Montreal Mirabel airport for its scheduled and charter flights for a period of sixty days. This will take effect as soon as formalities have been completed.

I hope that this suspension will prompt a review by the Soviet authorities of the merits of continuing to evade their responsibility for the death of Canadians and of so many other innocent passengers.

I want to add that we are taking this measure as an aggrieved party. We would welcome similar action by other nations.