



communiqué

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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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for this action. Quite the contrary, Tuesday in the first official statement by the Soviet Union the entire responsibility was placed on the shoulders of the Government of the United States. Absolutely no responsibility was taken by the Soviet authorities. Matters did not change yesterday, when Mr. Gromyko spoke in Madrid. The proposed resolution before us talks about the wish that the Soviet Union express regret, "Apologize for it", namely, their action in shooting down the plane. It is true that the Soviet Union now has expressed condolences to the grieved families but it has not yet expressed any regret for the action itself, nor has it taken any responsibility for that action. It has not offered to make reparation or compensation to the families of victims. I notice that, in the concluding paragraph of this resolution, the items that you have identified are certainly very much these objectives that I have been following, both at the United Nations and the Conference on European Security and Cooperation in Madrid, and elsewhere in pursuing this event. So, I have made these comments to outline my view, how seriously we view this situation. We are not out to create escalation in East-West tensions. We are not out to escalate the matter into confrontation. We don't think we can overlook the killing of Canadians. We don't think we can overlook the threat to safety to civilian aircraft. Therefore, we are pursuing the matter vigorously and we will continue to do so".

The text of the resolution adopted by the Meeting is as follows:

Resolution re Attack on Korean Airlines Plane

Whereas respect for individual human rights has always been a fundamental tenet of free and civilized nations; and

Whereas that respect for individual human rights has been expressed by many nations in recent years through their adherence to a variety of international human rights documents; and

Whereas the most basic human right of all is the right to life; and

Whereas the recent action of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics in shooting down an unarmed and unprotected South Korean commercial airliner is a brutal and unwarranted violation of the right to life of 269 innocent human beings; and

Whereas the purpose of this Federal/Provincial/Territorial Conference is to consider the protection of human rights in the international community;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED THAT:

The Federal, Provincial and Territorial Ministers responsible for human rights in Canada deplore and condemn the Government of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics for attacking and destroying a South Korean commercial airliner and for killing 269 innocent human beings; and

The Federal, Provincial and Territorial Ministers responsible for human rights in Canada call upon the Government of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics to acknowledge their responsibility for the attack, apologize for it, and make reparation to the families of the victims.