



communiqué

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CANADIAN REACTION TO SOVIET GOVERNMENT STATEMENT ON KOREAN AIRLINES

The following statement was made by the Honourable Allan J. MacEachen, Deputy Prime Minister and Secretary of State for External Affairs, on September 6, 1983 à 1715 hours. A transcript of questions and answers following the statement is also included.

"The statement that has been issued, it is the first statement that has been issued in the name of the Soviet Government and I think that is an indication that the Soviet Union is attempting to respond to the requests for an explanation. There is certainly no way that I can be satisfied with the statement having read it just a little while ago. The acknowledgement that the Soviet fighter did indeed "stop" this civilian airplane is made, but that acknowledgement that the interceptors "stopped" the civilian aircraft is overshadowed by the package in which the acknowledgement is wrapped.

There is absolutely no acceptance of responsibility for the incident. In fact in the statement the Soviet Union transfers "entire responsibility" for the incident to the United States and that surely is not plausible on the basis of facts. I am glad that the Soviet Union has in the concluding paragraph expressed or extended condolences to the families, but it has expressed no regret at its own action. It expresses no regret at "stopping" the civilian aircraft. Indeed the statement descends into the lure of fiction when it suggests that this whole event was preplanned by the United States. That this civilian passenger plane had been put on a spy mission and that, if that effect was

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stymied by the Soviet Union, that the United States had prearranged a major propaganda effort against the Soviet Union even to the preparation of speeches prior to the event. So I do not think that one can be satisfied with this response.

At the beginning it is an acknowledgement that indeed the Soviet fighter "stopped" the civilian aircraft to use their expression, presumably that means shot it down, because that is what happened. We still have to continue our efforts particularly to insist upon a full and impartial international investigation. Because if you read this statement there are allegations made about weather conditions, about the lighting on the plane, quite different to those that were made last night by the President of the United States and these allegations can only be settled and determined by a full and impartial international investigation. We have called for that in the United Nations Security Council and we will be looking forward at the International Civil Aviation Organization."

Questions and Answers

Q.: Have you received the TASS reply officially or have you just read it from wires?

A.: I have not received it yet, but I'm reading from what is distributed as a statement in the name of the Government of the Soviet Union.

Q.: Would you say it was a step in the right direction?

A.: Yes. I think it has to be regarded as a move. The move, now in the form of a statement in the name of the Soviet Government, a move in that the Soviet Government acknowledged that its fighter aircraft "stopped" the civilian aircraft. Those are moves, long delayed but necessary at this stage.

Q.: (inaudible)

A.: If we base it upon what has happened there has been, in a sense, an evolution in the disclosure, and in the acknowledgement.

Q.: But do you expect more?

A.: I am not sure. I will be, and others will be, pressing for further moves. I believe that the moves that have been made are the result of the pressure that has already been exercised not only by Canada but by other countries.

Q.: Any idea why the statement came out today? Is it in response to the President's speech last night?

A.: It could be. It could be because sanctions have begun, or measures have been taken by Canada that may be followed by other countries. It may be an effort to avert further moves by other countries. It represents a further disclosure that we haven't had up to the present time.

Q.: Are you disappointed that other countries haven't followed Canada's lead on sanctions?

A.: No. I have no disappointment on that at all. We have to wait to see what they will do, if they do anything. We have made our move because of Canadian interests that are involved, and other countries will have to assess what they ought to do. I said I would welcome similar action by other countries, not attempting to solicit or propagandize.

Q.: Will Mr. Pepin be raising this tomorrow at the Madrid Conference, and will he also join with Mr. Shultz in demanding answers from Mr. Gromyko?

A.: This will be raised by Mr. Pepin tomorrow when the CSCE meets. This will be the first part of his remarks.

Q.: Will this response change your position on sanctions?

A.: No. I do not regard it as a sufficient basis on which to withdraw these sanctions.

Q.: What about Gander. Mr. Mulroney has called for stopping Aeroflot flights there.

A.: We have stopped all scheduled and charter flights into Canada. I believe that any charter into Canada is out of the question. What remains using Gander is a flight that may occur once a month, probably less than that. I think that we have made a move that is quite direct, concrete. I'm not sure that touching that single charter will add very much. An occasional charter involving Gander to refuel would be an added pressure point.

Q.: Do you expect any more options? Is this as far as the Government is prepared to go, just to stop flights to Montreal?

A.: No. I've never said that. I think the response has been a graduated one or progressive one. It will depend on events whether anything else happens. I'm not planning on a further step at the present time.

Q.: Does the Soviet statement today make compensation easier to obtain?

A.: I think it would be easier to obtain if the Soviet Union accepted some responsibility for the event, for the shooting down of this passenger plane. The Soviet Union in its statement has accepted no responsibility whatsoever. Because it states the entire responsibility rests with the United States. It's quite implausible.

Q.: I understand the Premier of Nova Scotia cancelled the Moscow Circus tour. Are these steps still appropriate?

A.: I think that if the Premier of Nova Scotia cancelled the circus, that it was in accordance with the feelings of the government of Nova Scotia, and I would support it.

Q.: You went into caucus today. Did this come up?

A.: I think that what I heard from members of the caucus was they generally thought we had responded in a pretty appropriate way.

Q.: What does Canada want?

A.: Let me repeat that in addition to the efforts that we ought to take up in international bodies such as the United Nations and the International Civil Aviation Organization, actions which should involve the full disclosure and revelation of what happened. To set up procedures on safeguards or understandings, so that a repetition can be avoided in the future. That obviously will be of deep significance to every traveller. These are things we want. We want the Soviet Union to accept responsibility for this particular event, which it has not yet done, because it has clearly said that this is the responsibility of the U.S.A., even though we have stopped the plane. It has not gone in the direction of

compensation. We will be seeking formally from the Soviet Union compensation for the loss of life and for the families affected by this tragic loss.

Q.: Have you asked Mr. Pepin to meet with Mr. Gromyko?

A.: No. I have not recommended that Mr. Pepin seek a meeting with Mr. Gromyko. I have sent a message to Mr. Gromyko asking for his response and I have not yet received a reply.

Q.: Should the City of Ottawa cancel the Moscow Circus?

A.: I think it's up to the City of Ottawa. We've done what was within our capacity to do as Government of Canada. I'm sure authorities in Ottawa have been hearing what I have said. They know what the attitude of the Government of Canada is. They know what the attitude of the people of Canada is and it seems to me it is their decision as to what they want to do in the circumstances. It's not for me to ask them or pressure them. That is their responsibility.

Q.: Why not?

A.: Because I don't run the City of Ottawa.

Q.: Will sanctions stay as long as your demands are not met?

A.: I have said the sanctions will be on for 60 days. They will lapse at that time, unless they are extended. We'll look at the situation then.