

IMMEDIATE

OPS CC MASTER

CONFIDENTIAL

SUBJECT: DISASTERS: Korean  
Airliner Sept 83

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PRIME MINISTER'S

PERSONAL MESSAGE

SERIAL No. T132/88

FROM: PRIME MINISTER  
TO: PRESIDENT REAGANBT  
DEAR RON,

THANK YOU FOR YOUR MESSAGE OF 8 SEPTEMBER ABOUT THE SHOOTING DOWN OF THE SOUTH KOREAN AIRLINER. MY VIEWS ON THE BARBARITY OF THIS ACT ARE COMPLETELY AT ONE WITH YOURS. I SHARE YOUR PROFOUND HORROR AT WHAT OCCURRED AND EXPRESS MY SINCERE SYMPATHY TO THE FAMILIES AND RELATIONS OF THE AMERICANS WHO LOST THEIR LIVES.

THIS INCIDENT HAS VIVIDLY ILLUSTRATED THE TRUE NATURE OF THE SOVIET REGIME. ITS RIGIDITY AND RUTHLESSNESS, ITS NEUROSES ABOUT SPYING AND SECURITY, ITS MENDACITY, AND ITS APPARENT INABILITY TO UNDERSTAND, LET ALONE APPLY, THE NORMAL RULES OF CIVILISED CONDUCT BETWEEN NATIONS, HAVE BEEN AN OBJECT LESSON TO THOSE WHO BELIEVE THAT GOODWILL AND REASON ALONE WILL BE SUFFICIENT TO ENSURE OUR SECURITY AND WORLD PEACE.

I ALSO VERY MUCH AGREE THAT WE MUST CONTINUE OUR SEARCH FOR BALANCED AND VERIFIABLE AGREEMENTS WITH THE SOVIET UNION WHICH REDUCE THE THREAT OF WAR AND ENHANCE INTERNATIONAL SECURITY. EQUALLY, I AM CONVINCED THAT LONG-TERM STABILITY IS UNATTAINABLE UNLESS THE SOVIET UNION IS CONVINCED OF OUR COLLECTIVE STRENGTH OF WILL AND THE ADEQUACY OF OUR COLLECTIVE DEFENCES.

I THEREFORE VERY MUCH AGREE WITH YOU, BOTH FOR THE IMPORTANT REASONS OF AIRLINE SAFETY AS WELL AS THE WIDER QUESTIONS I HAVE TOUCHED ON ABOVE, THAT OUR COLLECTIVE RESPONSE TO THE SOVIET ACTION MUST BE COORDINATED AMONG AS WIDE A CIRCLE OF COUNTRIES AS POSSIBLE. THE RUSSIANS MUST NOT BE ALLOWED THE EASY OPTION OF TRYING TO PORTRAY THIS AS AN EXERCISE IN EAST/WEST CONFRONTATION. THIS IS VERY MUCH AN ISSUE FOR THE WHOLE INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY. I WAS THEREFORE GLAD THAT OUR JOINT LOBBYING EFFORTS WERE SUCCESSFUL IN PRODUCING THE NECESSARY NINE VOTES FOR THE UN SECURITY COUNCIL RESOLUTION TO HAVE BEEN ADOPTED HAD THE RUSSIANS NOT USED THEIR VETO.

I AM DISAPPOINTED THAT WE WERE NOT ABLE TO SECURE A STRONGER NATIONAL RESPONSE FROM OUR EUROPEAN PARTNERS IN THE TEN AND OUR ALLIES IN NATO. AS YOU KNOW WE PRESSED HARD FOR A TWO-WAY BAN OF ALL AEROFLOT FLIGHTS, INCLUDING OVERFLIGHTS, OF AT LEAST A MONTH. IT WAS VERY CLEAR, HOWEVER, THAT WITH THE FRENCH AND GREEKS STARTING (AND REMAINING) AT NIL, 14 DAYS WAS THE UPPER FIGURE WHICH COMMANDED BROAD SUPPORT. THE BAN WILL, HOWEVER, AFFECT NOT ONLY AEROFLOT FLIGHTS TO OUR COUNTRIES, BUT ALSO NATIONAL AIRLINES FLIGHTS TO THE SOVIET UNION. WE AND OTHERS HAVE ALSO BANNED AEROFLOT OVERFLIGHTS, WHICH WILL PROVE A SUBSTANTIAL ADDITIONAL PROBLEM FOR THE RUSSIANS FOR THEIR REMAINING SERVICES TO THE WESTERN HEMISPHERE, INCLUDING CUBA.



WE MUST NOW CONCENTRATE ON THE MEETING OF THE COUNCIL OF THE INTERNATIONAL CIVIL AVIATION ORGANISATION IN MONTREAL ON 15 SEPTEMBER. I BELIEVE WE SHOULD BE ABLE TO OBTAIN AN ADEQUATE RESOLUTION COMMANDING WIDESPREAD SUPPORT AND SETTING IN MOTION BOTH AN IMPARTIAL INVESTIGATION AND SPECIFIC MEASURES FOR INCREASING THE SAFETY OF FLIGHT IN THE FUTURE. IN THIS WAY WE MAY HOPE TO DERIVE SOME LONGER-TERM BENEFIT FROM THIS DISASTER. I KNOW THAT OUR DELEGATIONS WILL BE COOPERATING CLOSELY TO ACHIEVE THIS.

IN CONCLUSION MAY I SAY THAT, THROUGHOUT THIS INCIDENT, I HAVE GREATLY ADMIRERD AND APPRECIATED THE LEAD YOU HAVE GIVEN. YOUR FIRM STATEMENTS, TOGETHER WITH INSISTENCE ON THE WIDEST POSSIBLE CONSULTATION, STRUCK EXACTLY THE RIGHT NOTE.

I LOOK FORWARD ENORMOUSLY TO OUR MEETING IN WASHINGTON LATER THIS MONTH.

WITH BEST WISHES  
YOURS EVER  
MARGARET  
BT

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