

ONE YEAR LATER — THE LESSONS OF KAL 007

One year ago today, Moscow shocked the world by shooting down Korean Airlines Flight 007 carrying 269 passengers. The plane accidentally had strayed into Soviet airspace. Kremlin leaders defied worldwide moral outrage, stating that defense of Soviet territory is a "sacred duty" and threatening to handle future overflights in the same manner. Moscow also reminded the world of its readiness to sacrifice innocent human life in pursuit of its military priorities; it charged the plane had been on a spy mission.

In the year since this tragic event, Moscow has demonstrated consistently that it is ready to breach the most fundamental principles of international law and civilized behavior to advance its military ambitions. In Afghanistan, for example, an estimated 100,000 Soviet troops continue their assault against the Afghan people, randomly slaughtering countless Afghan civilians to deprive the Mujahideen Freedom Fighters of local support. Soviet helicopter gunships strafe undefended villages, while troops kill livestock, burn crops, and poison wells to starve the people into accepting rule by Moscow's puppets.

Moscow continues to foment revolutionary violence and instability throughout the Third World. In the Middle East, Moscow backs Syrian intransigence, supports Palestinian terrorism, and seeks to upset the military balance by massively arming its clients. Moscow and its satellites are still turning Nicaragua into a military base and surrogate for regional destabilization after having been foiled in Grenada.

To attain unilateral military advantages, Moscow violates arms control agreements and other international treaty obligations. On January 23, 1984, President Reagan reported to the Congress seven proven arms treaty violations, among them encryption of missile flight data, testing of a new mobile ICBM (the SS-X-25), and construction of an outlawed missile defense battle management radar at Krasnoyarsk in central Siberia. A recent report by the General Advisory Committee (GAC) on Arms Control and Disarmament documents 17 treaty breaches and an additional 10 suspected Soviet violations of major military significance. The test launching of six SS-20s on a polar trajectory toward the United States this April indicates that these weapons have potential intercontinental range, thus making SALT II ceilings on ICBMs essentially meaningless. Moscow's record on treaty compliance should give pause to those who call for more unverifiable and unenforceable agreements.

So also should the Soviet walkout from the arms talks at Geneva in late 1983 after NATO began deploying Pershing II and ground-launched cruise missiles in Europe to counter the already massive Soviet deployments of SS-20s. Since then, Moscow has accelerated SS-20 deployment, sent medium range SS-22s into East Germany and Czechoslovakia, increased missile submarine patrols along U.S. and Scandinavian shores, and intensified its bellicose rhetoric.

Moscow is also waging political and psychological warfare against the West. It charges the U.S. and NATO with fueling the nuclear arms race and exploits popular fears of nuclear war to win unilateral nuclear disarmament or to prevent necessary force modernization. It spreads falsehoods about U.S. foreign and military policy to split the U.S. from Europe. All the while, Moscow depicts its own military buildup as defensive and trumpets phony appeals for declaratory nuclear free zones, renunciation of force, and arms control to weaken Western resistance by undermining support for a strong defense and prudent foreign policy.

Integral to these efforts are Moscow's attempts to meddle in Western elections. Having failed to replace pro-U.S. governments in West Germany and England in 1983, the Kremlin has set its sights on ousting President Reagan this November. By its actions and rhetoric, Moscow tries to pin the blame for poor East-West relations and the breakdown of arms control talks on the U.S. administration. It depicts Reagan as a reckless warmonger, comparing him to Adolf Hitler.

At the same time, Moscow openly commends Reagan's opponents for their support of a nuclear freeze, opposition to strategic defense, and lack of resolve to counter Soviet subversion in Central America. The Moscow-controlled U.S. Communist Party even has advised its voters to cast their ballots for the Democratic ticket to defeat Reagan.

The killing of 269 innocent civilians a year ago aboard the Korean airliner was not an aberration, as Moscow's apologists like to have it. On the contrary, it exposed the true nature of the Soviet regime. Events since then--as before then--confirm it. This tragic anniversary is a forceful reminder that U.S. security cannot rest on the good will of an unrestrained Soviet Union. A strong U.S. defense, including defense against nuclear weapons--not unverifiable arms control agreements and pledges of peaceful intentions--is the only guarantor of peace for the U.S. and the West.

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For further information:

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"Pravda Commends Democratic Platform," The Washington Post, July 20, 1984.

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