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ICAO COUNCIL RECEIVES REPORT ON KAL 007

Montreal, 13 December 1983 -- The Council of ICAO has conducted an initial examination of the report of the investigation by its Secretary General of the destruction of Korean Air Lines flight 007 near Sakhalin Island, USSR, on 1 September 1983.

In concluding its initial examination, the Council adopted a resolution exhorting all parties involved in the investigation to cooperate fully in furnishing to ICAO without reservation, all information at their disposal as soon as possible. The resolution also referred the report to the Organization's Air Navigation Commission for a technical review in light of its ongoing review of all related international provisions. The Council will continue its consideration of the matter during its next session beginning on 23 January 1984.

The report of the investigation, conducted by a team of technical experts from within the Organization's professional Secretariat under the direction of its Secretary General, Mr. Yves Lambert, was given to representatives on the 33-member ICAO Council on 5 December. The investigation was called by an Extraordinary Session of the Council on 16 September.

The report indicated that both the flight crew of KAL 007 and the aircraft, a Boeing 747, were properly certificated and that all necessary navigation and avionics systems were operable on the flight's departure from Anchorage, Alaska, United States. Its departure time was found to be calculated correctly for an "on-time" arrival in Seoul, Republic of Korea, had the flight followed its planned and assigned route.

Soon after its departure, however, the investigation found that the flight began straying slightly to the right of its assigned course. The flight continued

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on a consistent deviation to the north of its assigned course and, ultimately, penetrated airspace under the jurisdiction of the USSR and overlying its sovereign boundaries. The aircraft, viewed as an intruder by USSR authorities, was twice the subject of interception attempts by its military interceptor aircraft. At the time of its destruction, it was some 300 nautical miles to the north of its assigned route over the sovereign territory of the USSR.

The investigation found no evidence that the flight crew of KAL 007 was ever aware of its major deviation. Further, the report indicates there was no evidence of any deliberateness in the flight's off-course deviation. The report postulates that it was likely that the flight crew had incorrectly set its navigation systems and that, through inattentiveness and a lack of alertness, it had unknowingly permitted the aircraft to continue straying off its assigned course for almost five and one half hours.

The ICAO investigation, which is the basis for the Council's deliberations concerning the destruction of KAL 007, included field visits to Japan, Republic of Korea and the United States. The Secretary General and the leader of the investigation team visited the USSR from 11 to 17 November 1983. In addition, members of the investigation team observed search and rescue and salvage efforts in the Sea of Japan where the aircraft crashed and sank. Team members also travelled to Seattle (United States), where flight simulation studies were conducted at the Boeing Company.

The submerged wreckage of KAL 007 was the subject of intensive search and rescue and salvage efforts for over two months. However, only fragmentary pieces of the wreckage and of personal property were found. The flight data and cockpit voice recorders - the so-called "black boxes" - were not recovered from the wreckage. Search and rescue and salvage operations have now been suspended or terminated by all States.

Also to be considered by the Council is a report of ICAO's Air Navigation Commission (ANC) on interception of aircraft. Pending review of the investigation data, the ANC report presents tentative conclusions of the Commission, including the nature and scope of potential measures aimed at assuring the safety of civil aircraft in areas where interceptions could occur.

The technical body has concluded that the current ICAO provisions are adequate to protect civil aviation if they are strictly applied globally by all States and flight operators. Potential improvements it has recommended include the routine exchange of flight plan information between adjacent air traffic control authorities and maintenance of two-way air-ground radiocommunications especially for the reporting of positions in designated sensitive areas and air routes in order to facilitate identification of civil aircraft and avoid the need for interceptions. The ANC also recommended that all intercept control units as well as intercepting and intercepted aircraft be able to communicate on the aeronautical emergency frequency 121.5 MHz.

The Council of ICAO previously decided to convene an Extraordinary Session of the Assembly of 152 Contracting States on 24 April 1984, to consider proposed amendments to the Convention on International Civil Aviation or other measures that would assure that States abstain from the use of force against civil aircraft. Proposed amendments have been presented by Austria and France and by the United States.