

The following is excerpted from the book, Rescue 007: The Untold Story of KAL 007 and its Survivors, by Bert Schlossberg, Xlibris 2001, Chapter 4. "In the Water" ppg. 76-82, with the author's permission.

Most commentators have indeed concluded that KAL 007 did land in the water and that the water landing was "in pieces" – due to either a midair explosion, a high-speed collision with the sea, or both. But there is another possibility – KAL 007 made a successful water landing, after which all or most of the passengers and crew were evacuated from the airliner, which was then sunk and exploded under the sea in order to cover Soviet culpability for the shoot-down.

In order to evaluate these possibilities, we need to understand the "egalitarian" characteristic of midair explosions or plane crashes at sea. The sinking of the "unsinkable" Titanic was decidedly un-egalitarian. 1,513 lives were lost when the Titanic went down; only 700 survived. All the children in First Class, except one, were saved, while 49 children in Steerage perished. The overall survival rates were as follows: 63% of first class passengers, 47% of second class passengers, and 25% of third class passengers. This was primarily due to the location of these passenger groups in the hull of the ship at the time it struck the iceberg, but "class structure" prejudices played their parts as well.

Many commentators believe that a crash on land of an aircraft is likewise discriminatory, though to a lesser degree. Often enough, the tail section is shorn away with great structural damage, and consequently greater loss of life to the passengers seated to the rear of the fuselage than to those seated in the mid- or fore section of the aircraft. Other commentators deny this structural "bias."

But no other term than "egalitarian" can be used in cases of midair explosions or plane crashes at sea. In these instances, almost immediately after the crash or midair explosion, there is an indiscriminate mixture of flotsam and debris at the crash site. This admixture is made up of bodies; various articles which were with or on the persons of the passengers; articles from the cabin itself such as sweaters, jackets, dinner trays, life vests, magazines; articles from the cargo section of the aircraft such as suitcases, packing crates, cartons, sporting goods, industrial and electronic equipment; and finally, various sized fragments of the aircraft itself. The greater the altitude of the aircraft at the time of the explosion, or the greater the duration of breakup and disintegration in the air – even at lower altitudes – the more scattered and diffuse the flotsam and debris turned out. It is virtually impossible for there to be a midair explosion and subsequent crash at sea without these features obtaining.

But they did not obtain in the case of KAL 007. To understand this further, we need to compare the immediate resultant aftermaths of actual crashes having similar conditions to the alleged crash of KAL 007 with the case of KAL 007 itself.¹

Case One. Air India Boeing 747 Flight 182 was blown up by a terrorist bomb while flying above the North Atlantic near the coast of Ireland on June 23, 1985. It was then at the altitude of 31,000 feet, about 4,000 feet less than that of KAL 007 when it was hit. Flight 182 plunged into the sea, killing all 329 passengers and crew. That same day, 123 bodies were recovered, and the next day eight more were recovered. Four months later, another body was recovered, strapped to its seat in a section of the fuselage lifted from the ocean bottom. The bodies were described by British Royal Navy doctor, Lt. Richard Cribb as "badly shattered and broken but all in one piece."² Over 40 percent of the passengers of Flight 182 were recovered, and from a depth of about 6,700 feet beneath the ocean surface. Debris was dispersed across four miles of sea bottom,

¹ Prior to the downing of KAL 007 on September 1, 1983, a Boeing 747 had never crashed at sea, making it more difficult for investigators and general public alike to imagine what the aftermath might be.

² A. P. dispatch, Deseret News, June 24, 1985.

and for a month luggage and other debris could be seen floating on the Irish Sea. Search operations had lasted four months.

Case Two. A South African Airlines Boeing 747 crashed into the Indian Ocean on November 28, 1987. Aircraft debris, luggage, and bodies were scattered over 150 square miles and to the great depth of 12,000 feet. At least 15 of the 159 passenger and crew bodies were recovered—that is, about ten percent. Much luggage and debris were seen floating on the ocean surface for days. The search continued for one year.

Case Three. On July 3, 1988, during Operation Earnest Will, over 200 people were killed when the U.S.S. Vincennes, an Aegis class cruiser, shot down an Iranian Airbus passenger plane over the Persian Gulf toward the conclusion of the Iraq-Iran War. Hundreds of intermingled bodies and pieces of luggage were retrieved from the water.

Case Four. On January 28, 1986, at a height of 38,000 feet—3000 feet higher than KAL 007 when it was rocketed—the Space Shuttle Challenger experienced an explosion of such magnitude that parts of the space craft were hurled to an altitude of 52,800 feet (ten miles high!). This is the largest non-nuclear explosion that has ever occurred. “Yet, despite an explosive inferno that would make a Soviet rocket detonation (involving perhaps seventy pounds of explosives, the amount of the Anab missiles of the type fired at KAL 007 contain) seem like a firecracker, searches soon recovered more than twenty tons of the challenger wreckage.”³ The bodies of all seven crew members were recovered—100% recovery rate—mangled but all identifiable.

Case Five. July 17, 1996. Trans World Airlines Flight 800, a Boeing 747, exploded possibly due to mechanical causes in the air over the Atlantic.⁴ All 230 passengers and crew perished. All 230 passengers and crew were recovered and identified over a one-year period, the last two being identified through DNA analysis.

The case of KAL 007. On September 1, 1983, rocketed at 35,000 feet over Sakhalin Island. Aircraft remains and other debris located on the surface and at shallow depths of Tatar Straits ranging from 656 feet (200 meters) to 1,640 feet (800 meters).

Luggage recovered at sites—0

Bodies recovered at sites—0

Percentage of recovered bodies to passengers—0

Amount of aircraft structural debris—“likened to that of a crash of a Piper Cub.”⁵

The total amount of debris, including aircraft structural parts and fragments of parts, passenger belongings, cabin articles, and even including the 13 unidentifiable body parts found awash eight days later at the Japanese coastline hundreds of miles from the shoot down (of doubtful connection to the shoot-down itself)—1,020 small pieces.⁶ Of this number, 785 (77%) were supplied by the Japanese and only 235 (23%) were handed over by the Soviets.

The CIA report concludes that “Almost all of KAL 007’s wreckage, luggage, and all the 269 innocent people on it seem to have simply disappeared completely on the night of August 31—September 1, 1983, almost without a trace... The lack of debris from KAL 007, as compared to empirical evidence from other events presumed to be similar to the KAL 007 incident

³ Robert W. Lee in the “New American,” August 29, 1988.

⁴ The FBI’s best conjecture posited the following: The central fuel tank was empty of fuel but filled with fumes. The plane had been sitting on the runway for a long period of time getting hot. Air conditioners were under the central tank heating it up. An electric cable passed over the tank. There may have been a short circuit which caused the heated fuel vapor in the tank to explode.

⁵ CIA/Republican Staff Study, p. 10.

⁶ The largest item was a 30 x 36 inch strip of metal believed to have come from the vertical tail fin.

involving massive amounts of debris, suggests that massive amounts of debris also should have been recovered from KAL 007, if it indeed 'crashed.'⁷

"Because of the fact that there was a dearth of remains from KAL 007, and such little debris was late being recovered, it is reasonable to speculate that maybe KAL 007 did not crash after all."⁸

The United States terminated its search for KAL 007 on November 7, 1983, just two months and six days after the shoot-down. Japan terminated its search two days later. The United Nations International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) finished its investigation and issued its report in December of that year. All soon came to a standstill. A study of the nature of the floating debris at both the "crash site" and at the shores of Hokkaido should have alerted the governmental agencies charged responsible for the investigation that not only was the rescue of the passengers suggested by the nature of the evidence, their rescue was indeed required by it. The nonstructural 1,020 items that had been recovered included dentures, newspapers, books, seat cushions, 8 "KAL" paper cups, shoes, sandals and sneakers, a camera case, a "please fasten seatbelt" sign, an oxygen mask, a handbag, blouses, a bottle of dishwashing liquid, an identity card belonging to 25-year old passenger Mary Jane Hendrie of Sault Ste. Marie, Canada, bottles, a vest, the business card of passenger Kathy Brown-Spier of New York, and a baby doll.

All of these items, as well as all the other nonstructural items that were recovered, came from only one section of the jumbo jet – the passenger cabin, the "top section" of the aircraft which includes its distinctive hump. Nothing had been recovered and nothing had been reported floating on the ocean surface that had come from the "bottom section" of the aircraft's fuselage – the cargo hold.

This alone ought to have alerted investigators that the passenger jet could not have exploded in the air – neither at missile impact (as would nine years later be confirmed by the black box tape analysis), nor in proximity to the Japanese cuttlefish boat *Chidori Maru* (as would be confirmed nine years later by analysis of Soviet ground-to-ground communication – the explosion seen by the boat crew occurred at 6:30 a.m., while KAL 007 had been tracked by the Soviets at 6:34 a.m. flying 16,400 feet over Moneron, 22 1/2 miles distance from the *Chidori Maru*). Nor could KAL 007 have crashed at sea since such a conjectured crash at such conjectured force would also have demolished the aircraft "top and bottom." No suitcase (over 450 were on board), crate, carton, or any other cargo area item emerged from the deep.

It should have been apparent from the start that KAL 007 had successfully landed and that any explosion of the aircraft could only have occurred subsequent to its landing, and after all passengers, crew, and luggage had been removed.

The CIA/Republican Staff Study of 1991 concluded that, "The only way to explain the lack of wreckage, bodies, and luggage from this great airliner incident is to assume that after its twelve-minute flight in search of a landing spot, KAL 007 successfully ditched at sea, and that the Soviets either rescued all the passengers who survived and recovered their luggage, or that the Soviets recovered all the bodies, wreckage, and the luggage. Since the Soviets are now known to have recovered the black boxes and the wreckage, as revealed in 1991 by Izvestiya, it is reasonable to presume that the Soviets also recovered at least all the passengers, dead or alive, and all the luggage."⁹

⁷ The miniscule amount of KAL 007's debris may be compared with the Challenger's 20 tons of debris (245,000 pounds) and Air India Flight 182's more than 4 tons of debris (4,480 pounds).

⁸ CIA/Republican Staff Study, p. 10.

⁹ The CIA/Republican Staff Study was written prior to Boris Yeltsin's surrender of the actual black box tapes to the ICAO in Montreal.

“Passengers, dead or alive.” But did the Soviets ever find dead passengers of this ill-fated flight? To sharpen the question—did the Soviet divers who located the remains of KAL 007 at the shallow bottom of waters of the Tatar Strait off Moneron Island find KAL 007’s passengers and crew dead?

Note: For an answer to this question, please see the article “KAL 007, the U.S. Seventh Fleet, and the Great Russian Ruse” at <http://www.rescue007.org/story.htm>.