

Russian Explanations for the Missing Passengers and Crew of KAL 007

Unlike any other passenger plane crash at sea, KAL 007's alleged crash produced no bodies at all—and no luggage at all, either—at the supposed “crash” site. The amazed puzzlement at this fact has been noted by such diverse personages as the Russian divers at the scene, Gen. Vladimir Kamenski, the “Strategic” Soviet general responsible for the shootdown and former NASA crash analysis specialist, James Oberg. Kamenski's comments are noted on the Rescue 007 website, www.rescue007.org. The book, *Rescue 007*, details the Russian attempts to account for these missing bodies.

(The following section is from Rescue 007: The Untold Story of KAL 007 and Its Survivors, Bert Schlossberg, Xlibris, 2000, pages 82-92. Used with permission.)

Russian commentators have been pained in their attempts to explain the virtual disappearance of KAL 007's 269 passengers and crew from the scene of what they claim is the underwater wreckage. There are four theories that the Soviets have contrived. The earliest was that there were no bodies found because KAL 007 had but a small complement of military personnel and no civilian passengers. This first version of the spy plane theory was by and large discarded by September 9, 1983, when Marshal Nicolay Ogarkov, U.S.S.R. Chief of General Staff and First Deputy Defense Minister, conceded that there had been civilian passengers aboard KAL 007.

In his press conference of September 9, 1983, as quoted by Moscow Radio of the same date, Ogarkov stated, “It has been proved irrefutably that the intrusion of the plane of the South Korean Airlines into Soviet airspace was a deliberately, thoroughly planned intelligence operation. It was directed from certain centers in the territory of the United States and Japan. A civilian plane was chosen for its deliberately, disregarding or, possibly, counting on loss of human life.”



Marshal Nikolai Ogarkov during his September 9, 1983 press conference on the shootdown of KAL 007. Ogarkov gave a good performance, but his remarks were a coverup from beginning to end.

The anguish of thousands of relatives and friends of the victims of KAL 007 had also discredited this non-civilian passenger theory from the start.

The second theory maintains that there were no bodies because they were thoroughly pulverized either in a midair explosion or a catastrophic crash at sea. A thorough pulverization of bodies is untenable, never having occurred before or since. The crew of the space shuttle Challenger is more the rule. At an even slightly higher altitude than KAL 007, the Challenger did have a cataclysmic midair explosion and did have a subsequent catastrophic crash into the sea. Yet, all the bodies were not only recovered but also identifiable, however smashed. Subsequent to KAL 007's downing, midair explosions and subsequent crashes at sea of other Boeing 747 jumbo jets did occur.⁷⁴ The aftermath of these latter incidents are illuminating for our understanding of what occurred with KAL 007. Many bodies were immediately recovered at the latter crash sites and all were identified! This last point is telling, as a full eight days after the shoot-down just two partial bodies and 11 small body parts would be washed up at the Japanese shore—all unidentifiable. These few small body parts in themselves, therefore, serve to support the contention of passenger and crew rescue, a mute but horrific testimony of how far the Soviets might go to cover up passenger rescue. It is not inconceivable that the people represented by these 13 body parts were killed for the purpose of Soviet cover-up. Most devastating to any passenger pulverization theory, from examination of the Black Box tapes handed over by the Russian Federation to the United Nations in 1993, it is clear that KAL 007, in fact, did not explode on missile impact and a crash at sea merely postulated—wrongly.

The third theory for the virtual disappearance of 269 people from the site of the alleged crash is truly ludicrous but is included here as it is suggested by Soviet correspondent Andrey Illesh in his book, The Mystery of Korean Boeing 747. This theory proposes that the bodies were eaten by giant crabs. There is even a picture of one of those crabs that supposedly populate the sea bottom where KAL 007 finally came to rest. But what of the bones? How did these crabs dispose of them?! The crab theory has been persistent and been echoed by the Soviet interceptor pilot Gennadie Osipovich himself (though evidently not with full conviction).

“...I heard that they had found the ‘Boeing’ when I was still on Sakhalin. And even investigated it. But no one saw people there. I, however, explain that by the fact that there are crabs in the sea off Sakhalin that immediately devour everything... I did hear that they found only a hand in a black glove. Perhaps it was the hand of the pilot of the aircraft that I shot down. You know, even now I cannot really believe that there were passengers on board. You cannot write off everyone to the crabs... Surely something would be left?... Nevertheless, I am a supporter of the old version: It was a spy plane. In any event, it was not happenstance that it flew towards us.”⁷⁵

⁷⁴ The closest parallels are the crashes of the South African Airways Boeing 747 on November 28, 1987, and Air India Boeing 747, blown up by a terrorist bomb over the North Atlantic on June 23, 1985.

⁷⁵ Izvestiya, February 8, 1991, p. 7.

Professor William Newman, marine biologist, explains why the crab (or any other sea creature) theory is untenable:

“Even if we proceed from the supposition that crustaceans, or sharks, or something else fell upon the flesh, the skeletons should have remained. In many cases, skeletons were found on the sea or ocean floor, which had sat there for many years and even decades. In addition, the crustaceans would not have touched bones.”⁷⁶

The fourth explanation is provided us by *Izvestiya* correspondents Shalnev and Illesh through the mouth of Mikhail Igorevich, Captain of the *Tinro 2* submersible, interviewed for the *Izvestiya* series of articles on KAL 007. In the May 31, 1991 edition, Igorevich provides this fourth explanation—the passengers were sucked out of the aircraft, leaving their clothes behind! Igorevich’s words are included to demonstrate how esoteric the theories become when once the simple conclusion that the passengers were rescued is precluded. Igorevich, nevertheless, provides unintended support for the contention of passenger rescue by the very information he supplies to illustrate the paucity of passenger remains.

“Something else was inexplicable to us—zipped up clothes. For instance, a coat, slacks, shorts, a sweater with zippers—the items were different, but, zipped up. And nothing inside. We came to this conclusion then: Most likely, the passengers had been pulled out of the plane by decompression, and they fell in a completely different place from where we found the debris. They had been spread out over a much larger area. The current also did its work.”⁷⁷

Needless to say, this “much larger area” has never been located!

In such ways do our feverish imaginations work when we close our eyes to the truth staring us in the face! But the underlying current in all these theories is the irrepressible need to explain or explain away one salient fact—there ought to have been bodies but there were not!

The mysterious disappearance of the passengers’ and crew’s bodies, as well as the nonappearance of luggage (or any other cargo area item) among the 1,020 fragments of flotsam and debris which were retrieved, will be further discussed in a later chapter. But with this chronicle of KAL 007’s post-hit flight, we may now complete the list of indicators supporting the contention that KAL 007 was under a “good measure” of controllability during its entire post-missile impact flight. The entire list reads as follows:

- Sufficient oxygen for pilot alertness.
- All engines were operating normally.
- Electrical system was operative. (Otherwise, the plane’s radio and engines would not have operated).
- Demonstrated pilot ability to decrease speed of KAL 007 in its downward phase. (If he would not have been able to do so, the aircraft would continue to increase

⁷⁶ *ibid.*

⁷⁷ *Izvestiya*, May 28, 1991, p. 8.

its downward acceleration—only to collide with the water in from 2 to 2-1/2 minutes. KAL 007's flight lasted at least 12 minutes).

- KAL 007 was able to regain its pre-missile hit altitude almost exactly. (It is highly unlikely that KAL 007 regained exact altitude after its arc by chance.)
- KAL 007 was able to regain its pre-missile hit rate of forward acceleration.
- Captain Chun was able to bring KAL 007's nose (pitch) to the plane's exact level of flight.
- KAL 007 was able to maneuver turns.
- Captain and/or crew were able to occupy themselves with preparing the passengers for emergency sea landing and rescue.
- KAL 007 was able to descend in spirals and/or was able to circle.