

**(U) Back in Time: The KAL-007 Shootdown**

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*(U) One of the sporadic crises that flared up during the Cold War took place in 1983, when the USSR shot down a Korean airliner that had strayed into its air space...*

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(S//SI) The NSA-Japanese SIGINT relationship was significantly shaken following the events of 1 September 1983. The Soviet shootdown of the Korean Airlines flight 007 was clearly, indisputably reflected in SIGINT intercepts from US and Japanese SIGINT sites in northern Japan. However, getting copies of the Japanese intercept tapes would be a very bureaucratic process requiring the approval of ██████████ the Director of the Japanese SIGINT organization, i.e. the "G2 Annex."

(S//SI) Once in US hands, the tapes were whisked off to Washington, DC, to become the central part of evidence of Soviet wrongdoing, but in the process, the politics, and public demonstration, the fact of the US SIGINT relationship with Japan was blown, and the involvement of the Japanese, a most retiring group of cryptologists, became public knowledge.

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(S//SI) Ambassador Jeanne Kirkpatrick represented the US at the UN After listening to denials from the Soviet ambassador, she launched an attack reminiscent of Adlai Stevenson's charge during the Cuban Missile Crisis in 1962. *She actually played the tapes intercepted by the Japanese* (owing to the fact that it was the better quality of the two available), following which she made a point-by-point refutation of Soviet denials and evasions.

(S//SI) How did the cryptologic community fare concerning the amount of classified material released? **The Soviets had known for years generally what the US capability was, and the KAL-007 shootdown told them nothing new. It had a far more serious impact on NSA's relations with the G2 Annex.** The Annex received instructions which hamstrung it in future cases of this nature, and cast a shadow of concern over the relationship at least through the end of the Cold War.

(U) This article is largely derived from Book IV, Cryptologic Rebirth, 1981-1989, American Cryptology during the Cold War, 1945-1989, by Dr. Tom Johnson.

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*(U//FOUO) This article was published in the Foreign Affairs Digest, May edition.*

(U//FOUO) Does anyone have memories from that period they'd like to pass on? Please comment on the [SIDtoday Blog](#). (There have been a number of interesting postings already!)