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Pilot of Korean Jet Downed In Russia Fails to Explain Incident

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The commander of the South Korean airliner forced down by the **Soviet Union** was released from Russia yesterday, refusing to comment on an official Kremlin statement that he disobeyed clear orders by Soviet fighters to land his lost aircraft.

Pilot Kim Chang Kyu was closely advised by Korean airlines officials, who potentially face millions of dollars of damage suits arising from the dramatic international incident that left two dead and ten injured last week. He said he was too tired and emotionally exhausted to answer detailed questions about either his own actions or the Soviet assertions.

Kim, 45, looked tired but composed at an airport news conference here moments after he stepped from a commercial flight from Leningrad where he was released by the Soviets late yesterday afternoon.

The pilot, whose aircraft bearing 110 passengers and crew strayed into Soviet airspace April 20 and was shot at south of Murmansk by Soviet interceptors, offered only the barest account of his actions and those of his crew during the fatal, mistaken passage of Flight 902.

Tass, the official Soviet news agency, earlier in the day asserted that Kim and his navigator "confirmed" to Soviets who have questioned them for the past week, "that they had understood the orders of the Soviet aircraft but did not obey these orders."

The Soviets declared that their investigation "established that the incident . . . had taken place as a result of the failure of the crew to abide by the international rules of flight and refusal to obey the demands of Soviet fighter planes of the air defense to follow them for a landing at an airfield."

Kim, who could have provided much information to dispel the questions surrounding Flight 902's last hours before its interception by a Sukhoi-15 missile firing Soviet fighter and one other Soviet jet, only added to the mystery.

Although he speaks and understands English, Kim refused to speak English last night, using instead an interpreter from the South Korean embassy here.

Here is the substance of Kim's statements:

He refused to say if he had seen or heard any signals of any kind from the Soviets asking him to identify his plane or threatening harm if he did not follow the fighters to a landing.

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Asserted that he was sure his radios "worked properly before the accident" but added "in my opinion, the civilian and military frequencies are different."

Refused to say if he had seen any Soviet jets. His co-pilot, S. D. Cha, in an interview last week without the knowledge of Korean Air Lines officials, said he himself had seen one fighter and was quoted by western diplomats later as saying he saw it make a sign which he took to be threatening.

Kim refused to say if he knew the Soviet planes shot at him, saying he was only aware of "an explosion" in the passenger cabin behind the cockpit which caused him to dive from 35,000 to 4,000 feet and search for an hour and a half before he landed safely on a frozen lake near Kem, a small Soviet city some 200 miles south of Murmansk.

Refused to say whether he thought the Tass statement was accurate or what documents, if any, he had signed while under investigation by the Soviets.

Confirmed that the flight recorder and cockpit voice recorder, devices vital to understanding what happened to Flight 902 and how the crew conducted itself, are in Soviet hands.

The only hard information came from the navigator, Lee Kun Sic. He said the plane was not equipped with a special Inertial Navigation System that provides relatively trouble-free directional aid and is especially important in a circumpolar route such as that taken by Flight 902 when it left Paris April 20 headed for Seoul via a refueling stop in Anchorage, Alaska.

Lee, a veteran of 70 such flights, said the plane, a Boeing 707, was equipped with gyrocompass system that went awry sometime during the flight. Somewhere in polar airspace, the plane veered east and south over the **Soviet Union's** heavily defended Kola Peninsula. It was shot down after passing over Murmansk at 35,000 feet. Murmansk is the base for the **Soviet Union's** intercontinental ballistic missile submarine fleet and center for other major military installations.

Lee said that in reviewing the events of the flight he now realized the gyrocompass system, which needs frequent astronomical observations to maintain its accuracy during polar flight, began steering them wrong while he thought he was somewhere over Greenland.

Lee also said a radio navigation beacon called Loran failed as well. There have been reports that the flight plan filed according to Federal Aviation Administration regulations in Anchorage asserted that the plane had an Inertial Navigation System aboard. The new conference was ended before Lee could be asked about this.

Some of pilot Kim's vagueness may be ascribed to fatigue or perhaps to the delicate atmosphere which has hung over negotiations between the United States and the Kremlin for the release of the two crew members.

Kim and Lee were detained by the Soviets after the remaining surviving passengers and crew were sent west from Murmansk to Helsinki last weekend aboard a Pan American rescue plane. The South Korean government is not recognized by the Soviets and has no diplomatic relations with it.

The Soviets, through unofficial sources whose account cannot be verified, have said the air crew ignored repeated queries from the ground and signals from the interceptors. These signals, the sources have said, included wagging of wings and illuminated landing lights, plus a machine gun firing run past the nose of the plane before it was attacked.

Nothing Kim or Lee said here last night did anything to dispel this Soviet version. Kim repeatedly refused to answer questions about the Tass versions of his actions or its portrayal of his guilt.

A Japanese diplomat said here last night that the Japanese victim aboard the plane, Yoshitaka Sugano, 31, died of a bullet that penetrated his body beneath the left armpit and into the right shoulder. The Soviet sources asserted the plane was fired upon with an air-to-air missile on direct command from Moscow.

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LANGUAGE: ENGLISH

GRAPHIC: Picture, Korean pilot Kim and navigator Lee arrive in Copenhagen after being freed by the Kremlin. AP

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