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# KAL 007 spy story refuted

The British magazine that made the widely publicized charge that KAL 007 was on a spy mission for the United States when the Soviets shot it down has published an apology and a refutation of the charge in its latest issue.

Our media gave wide publicity to the spy charge made a year ago. They have so far ignored the apology and refutation.

*Defence Attache* magazine made headlines around the world in June 1984 with an article charging that the Korean airliner had been flown over Soviet airspace deliberately to "turn on" Soviet electronic air defense systems that were then monitored by the space shuttle and a U.S. spy satellite. "P.Q. Mann" was a pseudonym for the writer, whose true identity was not disclosed by the magazine for "professional reasons." The media jumped to the conclusion that he was an expert in space matters because he appeared to have access to previously unpublished technical data. He was subsequently identified as an employee named Devereaux of a London advertising agency, who appears to have drawn upon material that had appeared in Soviet publications.

Korean Air Lines sued *Defence Attache* for libel, saying that there was "no foundation whatsoever for the suggestions made in the offending article." Attorneys for the magazine acknowledged this in court last November. The magazine paid "substantial" damages to Korean Air Lines and agreed to publish an article refuting the charges and an apology.

The apology and the rebutting article appeared in the latest issue of *Defence Attache*. The article by U.S. space expert James Oberg points out that the alleged spy satellite that Mr. Devereaux said was ideally situated to monitor the Soviet electronic defenses triggered by the overflight of KAL 007, was actually a weather satellite which did not have the electronic monitoring

capacity Mr. Devereaux assumed.

Mr. Oberg also demonstrates that the role allegedly played by the space shuttle in this episode was a physical impossibility. He calculates that the shuttle was never closer to KAL 007 than 300 kilometers. He says that the space shuttle could communicate only by line-of-sight communications, since it was above the ionosphere. (Shortwave communications which are not line-of-sight have to be bounced off the ionosphere to make their way around the world.) Mr. Oberg calculates that the space shuttle's line-of-sight communication capability would have fallen about 1,000 kilometers short of KAL 007 because the earth would have gotten in the way at that distance.

Mr. Oberg says: "The unavoidable conclusion is that the second part of the Mann spy scenario utterly collapses due not merely to policy but to the basic laws of nature." Moreover, Mr. Oberg buttresses this refutation by pointing out that the activities of the astronauts on the space shuttle and their conversations with Houston are public knowledge. There is not the slightest indication in the record that they were engaging in spying activities. Mr. Oberg says that at the time Mr. Devereaux imagined their disappointment to find that KAL 007 had vanished, the astronauts were actually all asleep.

Mr. Oberg also discusses and demolishes other well-publicized claims that KAL 007 was spying, especially the much ballyhooed article by Yale graduate student David Pearson published in *The Nation* magazine last August. Mr. Pearson had charged that the United States had the technical capability of tracking KAL 007 all the way from Alaska to Sakhalin. He said the failure to detect its deviation from course "would have been a scandal and a failure of a high order."

Mr. Pearson said that the Cobra Dane radar in the Western Aleutians had the ability and duty to track KAL 007. Mr. Oberg points out that Cobra Dane is a missile-tracking radar operating line-of-sight. KAL 007 would have been out of its range at about 450 kilometers. Moreover, it is designed to reject aircraft returns, to avoid overloading and confusing its tracking function.

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