

Editorial

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Still wrong Soviet attack inexcusable

It's been nearly three years since a Soviet fighter plane shot down Korean Airlines Flight 007 over its airspace and killed all 269 people aboard. Since then, most have believed the Soviets shot down the plane deliberately. Few bought Moscow's claim that the airliner was on an American spy mission.

But former New York Times intelligence reporter Seymour M. Hersh believes the Soviets were sincere in their belief that KAL 007 was a spy plane. He says in an article appearing in the September issue of *The Atlantic* magazine that the Soviets mistook the airliner for an American intelligence flight and, through a series of errors on the ground, failed to realize their mistake.

Hersh charged that the Reagan administration knew the Soviets believed their own story, but insisted the attack was deliberate in order to further its political goals.

Hersh doesn't dispute the consensus that the pilots of KAL 007 didn't know they were over Soviet airspace. What made the Soviets suspicious was that a regular American intelligence flight had been operating near the Soviet coast several hours before the airliner wandered into Soviet airspace for the first time. Soviet radar operators thought the first plane had returned to the area — and, when it headed toward land, they assumed it was looking for Soviet military bases.

In the following minutes, as the airliner left Soviet airspace and then returned, KAL 007 was tracked, spotted and eventually shot down. But while some Soviets on the ground apparently questioned whether KAL 007 was a spy plane, the article indicates

that the Soviets didn't confirm the plane was hostile before they shot it down.

All commercial airliners, the article says, are equipped with a transmitter identifying them as civilian rather than military. Soviet radar was fully capable of picking up this signal — and indeed had done so with other airliners passing nearby — but the operators didn't even seek out the signal this time.

The Soviets also have a basic rule that their attacking planes must make a visual identification of their prey before they shoot it down. Because it was dark and cloudy, the pilot reported, he couldn't see his target, and thus couldn't identify it. Yet he was ordered to shoot the plane down anyway.

Why would the Soviets ignore their own rules? The answer, the article says, is that junior officers are supposed to make certain that no unidentified aircraft enter their airspace and get away.

That should send a chill over airline passengers on flights anywhere near Soviet territory. At the time KAL 007 was shot down, the article says, it was heading out of Soviet airspace again and would have been over safe territory. Although the Soviets weren't sure the airliner was a spy plane, they decided to risk killing hundreds of innocent people rather than let one plane escape their clutches. Maybe the Soviets did make a mistake. But that mistake lies in not giving KAL 007 the benefit of the doubt and allowing it to go on its way. The facts of what happened three years ago don't change the judgement most reached: that the attack on KAL 007 was dreadfully wrong.

Export grain subsidy Polls show Nebraskans opposed

Recent events underscore just how much politics affects the "economics" of agriculture.

First, recent movements to extend grain export bonuses that would have the effect of subsidizing grain sold to the Soviet Union garners little support even in Nebraska.

In a poll conducted by Research Associates of Lincoln and published in the *Lincoln Journal*, over half of the Nebraska respondents opposed subsidized grain exports to Russia. Twenty-nine percent supported the Reagan administration's controversial move.

Of course, this isn't the first time that U.S.-Soviet relations have affected farm incomes. Several years ago many farmers and farm state leaders complained that they unjustly had borne the brunt of sanctions imposed upon the Soviet Union as a result of its invasion of Afghanistan.

Without any doubt, the balancing of national interest and farmers' business interests is difficult. While farmers seem to

have at least some ground for complaining, the United States has legitimate foreign policy objectives. The U.S. Constitution articulates a general policy (though severely limited by court decisions) that costs imposed upon private citizens for public purposes ought to be borne by the government rather than left severely burdening private citizens.

This would mean that while U.S. agricultural export policy would justifiably be subordinated to U.S. international policy interests, they alone should not bear all the cost, but the cost of the policy be spread throughout the population as a whole.

Agricultural states are not opposed to bearing their fair share of military expenditures, but may begin to feel used if such leaks are foisted on top of grain boycotts and on top of an already sluggish economy.

Certainly more equitable methods of allocating defense costs vis-a-vis the agricultural economy, given its already pallid demeanor, is warranted by these recent revelations.



Another crazy news season

Irrelevant summer stories a columnist's dream come true

When I refused DN summer editor Bob Asmusen's request that I write a column for the summer Daily Nebraskan, I had no idea what a choice season it would be for inane news stories. Columnists live for the kind of stuff that went on during those sultry months. So I decided to use my first shot at the hallowed newsprint this fall to catch up on all those tremendous chances I missed. Here goes!

The State Election Petition Fiasco. I lost count on how many petition drives got into trouble for one violation or another this summer. I suppose they do have rules for these things, and I suppose these rules are available somewhere for people to look at. But that apparently did not stop the nomological crusaders who felt that right must prevail at all cost (and on any pay scale). I've always known that such referendum powers are important to keep the checks and balances of a democratic society in place. But I didn't know that they also carried such fabulous entertainment value.

The Rehnquist Hearings. This has to be my favorite. Something is ironic about Ted Kennedy dragging anybody over the coals concerning things that happened so many years ago. Why, Judge Rehnquist's shady dealings in the south and west were cold, moldy and forgotten years before an unresolved incident known lovingly as "Chappaquiddick." But Teddy, like so many politicians, has marvelously selective amnesia. After all, as I heard one astute citizen remark, that whole incident is just water under the bridge.

Reagan's Federal Employee

Drug Testing Program. If you can think of George Schultz, Edwin Meese and Larry Speakes undergoing a urine test and keep a straight face, you are a better (generic) man than I. I hear George stayed up all night studying for his. Oh well, I guess this is just one giant leak for mankind.

James Sennett

John DeCamp and the Prom Queens. I think they're going to play for the homecoming dance this year. Every year I struggle over who has been the most obnoxious political figure over the last 12 months — John DeCamp or Ernie Chambers. Well, Ernie has a lot of ground to make up after Johnny's accolades for our gubernatorial candidates. Just when I thought that Nebraska really could be a prophetic voice with its historical race for the mansion, I was reminded by the Neligh Knucklehead of the brand of politics that made this state what it is today.

The NFL/USFL Lawsuit. Who says a dollar doesn't buy much anymore? Three of them bought an entire professional football empire. What really amazes me is that anyone in the world was surprised at the demise of the (erst-while) Spring Ball Boys. Do the acronyms AFL or WFL mean anything to anyone? When will entrepreneurs and sportswriters wake up to the simple facts of the situation? It's not that the NFL has a throathold on the market; it's just that no one really wants to see any more professional

sports. We've got enough high-priced dope addicts as it is, thank you.

The Wedding of Prince Andrew and His Beloved Fergie. What is there about big hips and blue blood that can make millions of us crawl out of bed three hours early to watch people we don't even know flaunt obscene wealth before a nation in economic crisis? Celebrity is an indecipherably irrational phenomenon. At a time when genetic engineering and quantum physics promise (or threaten) to hurl us into a future dreamed of only by an Asimov or a Bradbury, we are more interested in the measurements of a young English girl who happened to smile in just the right way at just the right time to just the right person.

There were many more reasons I regretted my decision not to write this summer. But now I have covered many of them, and for a much larger audience. In these quips you see evidence of one of my driving motivations. I have declared myself on a one-(non-generic) man campaign to rid the news of the newsy and search for the newsworthy. I do this by ignoring some issues and by ridiculing others.

Just remember, rarely does an issue come along that really will make a difference and really warrants our attention. And those are usually so involved and complicated that most of us decided to read *People* instead. Whatever became of the Joan Rivers — Johnny Carson thing, anyway?

James Sennett is a graduate student in philosophy and campus minister with College-Career Christian Fellowship.

Child turns in drug-using parents; recognized as new hero by media

In Stalin's Russia, it was a great honor for a child to turn his parents in to the authorities. The tradition lives on in Tustin, Calif., where 13-year-old Deanna Young turned her parents in to the police for drug use. I know, I know: The child had tried to persuade her parents to stop, saw no other way out, was at the end of her tether, etc. etc.

But recognizing the child's dilemma is one thing. Celebrating it is another. The media loved it. ABC News gave her an honorable mention on *Person of the Week*. Neighbors hailed her courage. The director of a local foster home called her action "a genuine act of love." (Love means never having to say "Freeze!") Eleven television and movie producers are after the rights to her story.

Eleven. Deanna is hot. Her story marks a milestone in the cocaine hysteria. There are not many things for

which you can turn in your folks and earn applause. Treason is one. Now coke.

Charles Krauthammer

The media-borne cocaine panic finally has hit Washington. A couple of weeks ago the Democratic House of Representatives hastily cooked up an omnibus anti-drug bill advertised as yet another war on drugs. Republicans, not about to be out-cooked in an election year, demanded that the President produce his own initiative. Reagan obliged. Hence, sign two of the hysteria: a First Lady's issue (hands-on sua-



tion, consciousness raising, public education) is swiped by the President and the polls. They now will throw money and task forces and acronyms at the problem.

Sign three of any hysteria is the call for blood. James J. Kilpatrick has calmly led the way with a proposal to hang drug dealers "in a public square." Gov. Mario Cuomo of New York has just offered a more humane variation: three years to life for carrying three vials (\$50 worth) of crack cocaine.

We have been here before. Thirteen years ago, in the grip of another drug hysteria, New York also tried life sentences. In 1973, Gov. Rockefeller pushed through a law that made the sale of as little as an eighth of an ounce of cocaine punishable by three years to life. The law lasted six years before being abandoned as a disaster.