

In their recent statements on the Korean Air Lines tragedy, senior Soviet officials have shocked the world with their assertion of the right to shoot down innocent civilian airliners which accidentally intrude into Soviet airspace. In the murder of 269 innocent victims, the Soviet Union is not prepared to recognize its obligations under international law to refrain from the use of force against civilian airliners. World opinion is united in its determination that such a tragedy must not be repeated. As a contribution to the achievement of this objective, the President has announced that the United States is prepared to make available to civilian aircraft the facilities of its Global Positioning System when it becomes operational in 1988. This system will provide civilian airliners three-dimensional position information.

The United States delegation to the ICAO [International Civil Aviation Organization] Council meeting in Montreal, under the leadership of FAA Administrator J. Lynn Helms, is urgently examining all measures which the international community can adopt to enhance the security of international civil aviation. The United States is prepared to do all it can for this noble aim. We hope that the Soviet Union will at last recognize its responsibilities and join the rest of the world in this effort.

*Note: Deputy Press Secretary Larry M. Speakes read the statement during his daily briefing for reporters at 12:30 p.m. in the Briefing Room at the White House.*