

STATEMENT OF DONALD SEGNER, ASSOCIATE ADMINISTRATOR FOR POLICY AND INTERNATIONAL AVIATION, FEDERAL AVIATION ADMINISTRATION, BEFORE THE SENATE COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN RELATIONS, SUBCOMMITTEE ON EAST ASIAN AND PACIFIC AFFAIRS, CONCERNING AIRSPACE UTILIZATION IN THE PACIFIC AREA. OCTOBER 6, 1983.

Mr. Chairman and Members of the Subcommittee:

Before touching briefly on the operation of the North Pacific route system, I want to reiterate in the strongest terms Mr. Willis' remarks concerning the need for adherence to international agreements to assure the safety of civil aviation. In this respect, I think Administrator Helms' statement before the Extraordinary Session of the Council of the International Civil Aviation Organization is significant: "The international community has rejected deadly assault on a civil airliner by a military aircraft in time of peace as totally unacceptable. It violates not only the basic principles set forth in the Convention, but also the fundamental norms of international law enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations and established firmly in the practice of the civilized world." Thus, as we look generally at the circumstances surrounding the KAL tragedy, it is important to remember that it occurred as the result of armed intervention by the Soviet Union.

I would like to emphasize for the Subcommittee that the NOPAC route structure is safe. Except for minor changes in 1982 to

increase air traffic efficiency in NOPAC, the basic routing has been in use by civil air traffic for years. Between March and September 1982, through joint U.S./Japanese monitoring of the navigation accuracy of 6,696 flights conducted by 20 carriers from 15 countries at the end points of the NOPAC route system, we found only one aircraft with a lateral position error greater than 10 nautical miles. The aircraft was 17 nautical miles from centerline, well within the accuracy required for the safety of aircraft using the routes. Routes within the NOPAC are separated by 50 miles laterally. Aircraft on adjacent routes are separated by 1000 feet altitude.

Today's navigation systems used by civilian airliners are excellent. The common international practice is for oceanic aircraft to use Inertial Navigation Systems (INS), a combination of INS and OMEGA, or OMEGA. OMEGA in the NOPAC has a demonstrated accuracy of better than 4 nautical miles. The maximum permissible error for INS in the NOPAC is about 10 nautical miles at the end point. Thus, OMEGA and INS perform well within even the most conservative safety tolerances.

In addition to requiring sophisticated navigational systems, the FAA also requires that U.S. air carriers using large turbojet aircraft in the NOPAC have functioning airborne weather radar capable of day and night ground mapping. We require that this radar be operational for U.S. carriers prior

to departing over these routes, and that it must be used continuously by the flight crew to monitor flight progress over these routes.

Pilots can also use ground navigation aids to perform gateway checks upon entering the oceanic area. The geographic coordinates of a ground navigation aid being overflown can be checked against the position readout on the navigation systems. After overflying the navigation aid, the subsequent track of the aircraft can be checked by the pilots against the course stipulated in the air traffic control clearance. Thus, position information can be corrected by the pilots, and the onboard navigation system providing the most accurate readouts for the crew is then selected for use as a steering reference.

I should also mention that just last March we issued to NOPAC system users a special publication entitled the "North Pacific Operations Manual." That Manual provides information to operators and pilots to assist them in flight planning and using the NOPAC composite route structure. It covers such topics as communications and position reporting procedures, oceanic clearances, transponder codes, and the like. Thus, we have made a special effort to disseminate information concerning this route structure to users.

I would also add that before we reopened the specific route used by KAL 007, the FAA reassessed the safety of the route and flight checked the performance of the navigation aids. I can assure you that had we had any reservations about the safety of that route, we would not have reopened it for civil use.

Before closing, Mr. Chairman, I would point out, as a part of our comprehensive efforts to modernize the aviation facilities and equipment throughout the U.S., we are planning radar improvements that will provide improved coverage of the eastern end of the NOPAC route structure by October 1984. In addition, by June 1985, we will have nearly complete radar coverage of Alaska and an expanded automation capability to provide a radar mosaic for Alaska which will provide additional coverage of the eastern end of the NOPAC route structure.

We are also considering additional options that will expand navigation, communications, and surveillance for NOPAC airspace. Further, the White House has indicated that the Global Positioning System may be made available for civil use. We are also considering the possibility of dependent surveillance in oceanic routes, since traditional radar coverage of the large expanses of the oceans is just not practical.

Again, I want to express our firm conviction that route R-20 is safe for civil use. The combined traffic for the five routes which comprise NOPAC averages about 59 aircraft per day. Aside from the KAL flight which was shot at and forced down by the Soviet Union in 1978, and the recent KAL tragedy, we are not aware of any other problems encountered by civil aircraft flying into or out of Alaska, or in the oceanic airspace in the North Pacific. As in other places, we expect the traffic demands to grow in that area. We intend, of course, to continue to make improvements in our radar and navigation capabilities in Alaska and elsewhere. Moreover, as has already been indicated to the Subcommittee we are exploring in the international arena other means of improving the safety of international civil aviation from armed threat anywhere in the world.

I can assure you that we will continue to cooperate fully in the ICAO investigation, that we intend to assess carefully the results of the investigation when completed, and that we will take appropriate action in response to the findings of the investigation.

That completes my prepared statement, Mr. Chairman. We would be pleased to respond to questions you may have at this time. Given the continuing investigation by the International Civil

Aviation Organization into the KAL 007 tragedy, however, I am sure you will understand that we are not in a position to speculate about what may or may not have happened regarding that flight.