



10 DOWNING STREET
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THE PRIME MINISTER

29 July, 1988.

Dear Mr. Reid,

Thank you for your letter of 5 July about the Iran Airbus tragedy.

I have certainly not tried to mitigate the seriousness of the Iran Airbus incident. I said in my statement of 3 July, and in answer to a question in the House on 5 July, that the British Government profoundly regret the loss of life on the airliner and extend their deep sympathy to the bereaved. The incident was a tragedy for all concerned. We welcome the decisions by the United States and the International Civil Aviation Organisation to mount investigations.

There is no comparison between this accident and the shooting down of the Korean airliner in 1983. The Iranian aircraft was brought down in an area of hostilities where military action was actually taking place. The Commander of the SS Vincennes believed that he was under threat of attack, and issued warnings to the aircraft. In the case of KAL007, no hostilities were taking place and there is no evidence that the airliner was warned.

In my statement of 3 July I also said that 'this tragic accident underlines the urgent need for an early end to the Iran/Iraq conflict, including an end to all attacks on shipping'. I welcome the decision by Iran to accept Security Council Resolution 598. The Government have pledged full support to the Secretary-General of the United Nations in his efforts to bring about a rapid ceasefire and a lasting settlement.

Yours sincerely
Margaret Thatcher

Dr. John Reid, M.P.