



US FEDERAL COURT AWARDS TERROR VICTIMS \$378 MILLION AGAINST NORTH KOREA



government of North Korea trained and financed the terrorists who carried out this heinous massacre.

Along with the Gary Osen Law group of New Jersey, attorney Robert Tolchin of New York and attorney Manuel San Juan of Puerto Rico, I represented the families in the case.

In May 1972, terrorists from the Japanese Red Army (JRA), working in league with the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP), placed automatic weapons, ammunition, and grenades in their check-in luggage on a flight from Italy to Israel. When their bags emerged on the luggage carousel in Tel-Aviv, the terrorists took out the weapons and opened fire in every direction, gunning down passengers, flight crew members and airport workers. They also attempted to blow up airplanes on the ground using hand grenades. Two of the three attackers were killed, and a third, Kozo Okumoto, was captured, tried, and sentenced to prison in Israel. Most of the victims were Catholic-American pilgrims from Puerto Rico who had come to visit the Holy Land for the first time.

We accused North Korea of being behind the massacre. In the months leading up to the massacre the leaders of the JRA and PFLP organized the attack, along with North Korean officials, who provided funding, intelligence, training, and other material support for the terrorists. The attack was part of the JRA's declared strategy of exporting their anti-Western violence and plans of communist revolution to other parts of the world, beginning with Israel — a strategy strongly encouraged by the North Korean government and its intelligence agency.

The Court found North Korea liable for the Lod Airport Attack and the resulting injuries inflicted on the families. As the Court wrote in its decision:

“As a matter of its official policy, North Korea provided training, resources, weapons and safe haven to the JRA and the PFLP during the period relevant to this case. Defendants ran roughly 30 terrorist training camps from 1968 to 1988 within North Korea's borders; those camps specialized in terrorist and guerilla warfare training. These camps serviced in excess of 10,000 terrorists, including members of the JRA and PFLP, and provided courses lasting from three to eighteen months.”

The Court also found that members of North Korea's military and intelligence agencies served as instructors in the training camps.

This is the first time that North Korea has been held accountable in a U.S. court for its support of terrorism over many decades. The government in Pyongyang has also been responsible for building an enormous underground bunker system for Hezbollah in South Lebanon prior to the 2006 Lebanon War, that dramatically increased the Islamic terrorist group's fighting capacity against the IDF.

Because of its blatant support for terrorism, the U.S. State Department put North Korea on its official list of states that sponsor terror in 1988, a fact that made it possible for American victims to sue the North Korean government and collect against their assets in the United States. In late 2008, however, the Bush Administration surprisingly removed North Korea from the State Department's list of terror sponsors to encourage Pyongyang to enter into talks concerning its nuclear policy. Now the State Department is considering returning North Korea to the list.

For the first time the the terror victims are showing North Korea that there is a cost involved for its blatant support for terrorism.