



RUSSIAN INVESTIGATORS BLAME AIR TRAFFIC CONTROLLERS FOR FALCON JET CRASH IN OCTOBER 2014

News / Business aviation



Investigators in the case of the crash of the Falcon jet of CEO of France's Total oil company Christophe de Margerie at Moscow's Vnukovo airport in October 2014 believe that the air traffic controllers are to blame for failing to warn the pilots about a snowplough on the runway, which caused the tragedy, the Russian Investigative Committee said on Tuesday in connection with the case referral to court.

"Additional factors that caused the jet crash were the violation of the aviation regulations by (the flight supervisor and air traffic controllers) Dunayev, Arkhipova and Kruglov. Having the data from the airfield scanner on their desk displays, the defendants improperly performed their duties, violated the aviation regulations and as a result failed to inform the pilots of the jet performing a takeoff of a special purpose vehicle that was moving towards the runway and crossed the jet's path," the Investigative Committee said.

According to investigators, the air traffic controllers could have prevented the plane's collision with the snowplough, but failed to take the necessary measures.

Case defendants

The defendants in the case - personnel members of the Vnukovo airdrome maintenance and traffic control services - Nadezhda Arkhipova, Roman Dunayev, Alexander Kruglov, Vladimir Ledenyov and Vladimir Martynenko, have been charged under Article 263, part 3 of the Russian Criminal Code, with violation of the rules for safe air traffic and aircraft operation that resulted in the death of two or more people.

The defendants are facing a prison term of up to seven years under this article.

"According to investigators, the snowplough had no malfunctions," the Investigative Committee said.

The criminal case has been referred to Moscow's Solntsevo District Court for the examination on its merits.

According to investigators, a snowplough driven by Martynenko entered a runway at Vnukovo airport on October 20, 2014 due to the lack of proper coordination between the air traffic control and airdrome maintenance services that was to be ensured by flight operations director Dunayev, due to negligence of air traffic controllers Arkhipova and Kruglov, as well as because chief engineer Ledenyov lost control over his subordinates.

As a result, the snowplough collided with the four-seat French Falcon 50EX jet that caught fire and crashed on the runway, killing all the four people on board, including Total CEO Christophe de Margerie. As a result, the French air company UniJet suffered material damage worth in excess of 741 million rubles (\$11.53 million), and Vnukovo JSC - some 1.2 million rubles (\$18, 674), due to the snowplough damage.

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