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## **Investigation into accident in Severnaya mine of the Republic of Komi finished**



The Main Investigations Directorate of the Investigative Committee of Russia finished investigation of a probe into explosions at mine workings of Severnaya mine in Vorkuta, Republic of Komi. Totally the accident took away lives of 36 persons; 17 persons received injuries of varying severity. Among the killed were workers of Vorkutaugol JSC and mine rescuers.

Investigators brought to justice 14 persons responsible for the accident. This includes Deputy Director General of Vorkutaugol JSC Denis Paikin; aide for labor protection of the Executive Office of Vorkutaugol JSC Oleg Babichenko; employees of Severnaya Mine of Vorkutaugol JSC: Mine Director Michail Timofeev, his Deputy Vitaliy Lavrov, Chief Technology Officer Viktor Titkov, site No.12 supervisor Oleg Kondratuk, aerological safety supervisor Vladislav Akinchev, his Deputies Andrey Plahov and Alexander Khalichenko, site mechanic Leonid Frolov, electrical mechanic Denis Fedukov, Chief of militarized mine rescue team Leonid Lobkov and his Deputy Oleg Budaev. They are all accused of committing an offence under Part 3 of Article 217 of the Criminal Code of Russia (violations of the industrial safety requirements for hazardous production facilities entailing by negligence infliction of severe health damage, large scale damage and death of two or more persons).

Moreover, the Chief State Inspector of Vorkuta Regional Division of Pechorsky Directorate of Rostekhnadzor Pavel Malslov is accused of committing an offence under Part 3 of Article 293 of the

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Criminal Code of Russia (neglect of duty entailing by negligence death of two or more persons and infliction of large scale damage).

According to the investigation, on February 25 and 28, 2016, several explosions of methane-air mixture occurred at mine workings of Severnaya coal mine. Violations of the industrial safety requirements for hazardous production facilities that caused the tragedy were systematical and lasted for several years.

As it was established by the investigation, the accident was a consequence of the intent of the direction of the enterprise to implement the coal production plan to avoid sanctions from higher authorities. Upon instruction or with knowledge of Timofeev, Lavrov, Titkov, Babichenko, Akinchev, Kondratuk, Plahov and Khalichenko safety requirements related to airing of mine workings have been systematically violated. The coal mining works were never suspended, which led to gas contamination of mine goafs. The function of automatic electricity cut-off in case of increasing goaf methane level was disabled due to Fedukov's intended intervention in the air-gas control system. Necessity of forced roof unsealing was also ignored, which led to its collapse with subsequent damage of mining equipment, short circuit, ignition and explosion of methane-air mixture. Maslov was responsible for supervision over fulfilment of industrial safety of Severnaya mine which in fact was never carried out. The first explosion that caused the death of 30 persons occurred as a result of systematical violations of safety rules.

On February 27, 2016, after mine rescue operation, Titkov and Budaev in Lobkov presence sent mine rescuers and workers of Vorkutaugol JSC to mine workings to eliminate the consequences of the accident. In this, they were aware that the presence of people in the mine is dangerous and a new explosion is possible. Paikin, being a technical director of a coal mining organization, seeing such safety violations, failed to suspend the chief of elimination and to assign a new one and, in fact, removed himself from his duties. At night of February 28, a new explosion occurred causing the death of 6 persons; 6 persons were injured.

During the investigation, Khalichenko admitted his guilt and gave testimony on systematical violations of mine safety rules. The other accused deny their involvement in committing of the offence.

The investigation collected enough evidence for the criminal case amounting to 392 volumes to be referred to the Prosecutor's Office to approve an indictment.

Official spokesperson for the Investigative Committee of Russia S. Petrenko

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