
Investigation into crash of Boeing 737-500 in Kazan referred to court



The Main Investigations Directorate of the Investigative Committee of Russia has finished the investigation into the crash of Boeing 737-500 in the Kazan International Airport in November 2013. The accident took away the lives of 50 persons including all crew members.

The investigation established that the airplane crash was caused by the erroneous actions of commander of the aircraft Rustem Salikhov and his second pilot Viktor Gutsul. According to the investigation, Salikhov did not have sufficient piloting skills and had been granted access to carrying out passenger flights due to his submission of forged documents. Thus, in 2009, Valery Portnov, holding the position of Deputy Director General of Tatarstan Airlines, had submitted to the Tatar Interregional Directorate of the Federal Air Transport Agency (Rosaviatsiya) documents on Salikhov containing false data. In his turn, in September 2009, Shavkat Umarov, being the Head of the Tatar Interregional Directorate of the Federal Air Transport Agency, had neglected his duties and failed to organize an authenticity and reliability assessment of Salikhov's commercial aviation pilot certificate that could have enabled him to detect the fact that such a certificate had never been issued. As a result, Salikhov had started performing passenger flights as a pilot without basic knowledge, skills,

and experience.

Apart from that, Valery Portnov and Chief Pilot of the Airlines Viktor Fomin did not provide for proper training for Salikhov; instead, they referred the untrained pilot to receive the statute of the commander of an aircraft. Salikhov commenced conducting passenger flights as the commander of an aircraft in March 2012.

On November 17, 2013, Salikhov, piloting a flight from Moscow to Kazan, put the aircraft at the complex spatial position; Gutsul refused to take the controls. As a result, Salikhov committed piloting violations in emergency circumstances and through his actions allowed the plane to crash.

Numerous long-term expert examinations were required to collect and prove the evidence. During the preliminary investigation, investigators conducted large-scale complex forensic, molecular DNA, chemical, technical, and other examinations, interrogated over 200 witnesses, and carried out a significant volume of other investigative actions that in conjunction confirmed the version of the investigation.

The probe into Salikhov and Gutsul was closed due to their death. Upon the collected evidence, charges were pressed against Portnov and Fomin under Part 1 Article 263 of the Criminal Code of Russia (breach of safety standards for operation and traffic of aircraft entailing the death of two or more persons); Umarov was charged under Article 293 of the Criminal Code of Russia (neglect of duty entailing by negligence the death of two or more persons).

The investigation gathered enough evidence; therefore, the criminal case with the approved indictment has been referred to the court to be tried on the merits.

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