
Investigating operations in Kolskaya oil rig case finished



The Far Eastern Transport Investigations Directorate of the Russia's Investigative Committee has finished investigating operations in the criminal case over the wreck of the Kolskaya floating oil rig in the Sea of Okhotsk killing 53 people.

Final charges have been brought against the acting chief engineer of OAO Arcticmorneftegazrazvedka (OJSC) and the acting deputy general director for safety of navigation. Leonid Bordzilovsky and Boris Likhvan are charged with crimes under part 3 of article 263 of the RF Penal Code (violation of safety rules for traffic and operation of sea transport by a person, who by virtue of their official position was obliged to observe those rules, entailing by negligence death of two or more people).

Investigators have managed to restore the picture of the wreck: The Kolskaya oil rig started to be

towed away from the western section of Kamchatka shelf to Sakhalin island on 11 December 2011. Acting chief engineer Bordzilovsky having ignored repeated demands of his inferior – chief of the Kolskaya oil rig that it was necessary to evacuate 28 people not involved in towing, by his oral order forbade organizing evacuation of the crew and the oil platform was towed with 67 people aboard. During 5 days the towing went on normally in good weather. At night of 16 December the weather suddenly worsened. Tersin, who was responsible for the towing operation, wanting to outrun the cyclone and made an unauthorized decision to rise the speed up to 4.8 knots, which he reported to Likhvan and Bordzilovsky by email. The latter did nothing to stop the violation of allowed speed limits and did not give orders to drop the speed to the allowed limits. During the next day with the excess of the maximum speed allowed for towing the plating of the oil rig got deformed and then got cracks in it. Water started coming inside the platform. By the end of the day the oil rig was brought down by the bow. The weather forecast for the next day was unfavorable. Bordzilovsky and Likhvan received several reports through satellite communication that it was necessary to lower the leg chords to make the rig drift. The two men, however, hoping on the favorable outcome, ignored these alarmed signals and did not take any timely measures to lower the leg chords. On 17 and 18 December 2011, up to 25 m/sec squalls of wind and 4-5m waves tore away the pod of the bow. The damaged plating started to let the water in ballast tanks and the oil rig got a trim. Leaktightness of water-proof shutoffs at the top deck was broken. The water kept going into the machine room, while the pumps could not manage, which caused further draught and trim and subsequent progressing flood of not damaged compartments of the oil rig.

Almost 24 hours later Bordzilovsky and Likhvan gave a belated order to lower the leg chords to make the platform stable. It was too late already, as because of the trim (list) the leg chords could not be lowered. At that moment Likhvan and Bordzilovsky had information that there were no vessels capable of providing urgent help to the crew anywhere near the disaster area. Realizing that the situation was critical they did not however take any measures to organize a rescue operation. Moreover, by oral order Bordzilovsky forbade the responsible for the towing operation to send an SOS before his special order.

Despite the prohibition, on 18 December 2011, at 9:45 AM, due to the critical situation the captain sent an SOS, but, unfortunately, too late. On 18 December 2011, at 12:46 PM, the Kolskaya oil rig capsized and sank in the Sea of Okhotsk at the depth of over 1,000 meters killing 53 crew members and injuring 3.

This way, the accident and its consequences were caused by not one violation of traffic and operation safety rules and requirements, improper discharge by Bordzilovsky and Likhvan of their duties, but by a complex of violations, each of which jointly with others created a real threat of harmful consequences and was a necessary condition for them.

At present investigators have fulfilled the requirements of article 215 of the RF Criminal Procedure Code connected with notifying the accused on the end of the preliminary investigation and making them aware of their rights to study all the materials of the criminal case, the victims are being

notified as well. In the near future the materials will be given to the participants of the legal procedure to study.

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