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## In Sakha (Yakutia) investigation in M-8T Polar Airlines helicopter crash finished



The investigating bodies of the East Siberian Transport Investigations Directorate of the Russia's Investigative Committee have finished an investigation against Mikhail Belkov, captain of the helicopter. He is charged with a crime under part 3 of article 263 of the RF Criminal Code (violation of traffic and operation rules of air transport inflicting by negligence death of two or more persons).

On 2 July 2013, a Mi-8T helicopter operated by Polar Airlines crashed in Ust-Yana District in the Republic of Sakha (Yakutia). 24 people were killed in the crash, 2 more sustained bad injuries. A woman and her baby that survived the accident died later at hospital of their injuries and hypothermia. The airlines suffered large losses.

Investigators have found that the helicopter was not overloaded, the weather in the village of Deputatsky was fine for flying. The Mi-8T was in good technical order and had been prepared for the flight in accordance with the requirements of operation and maintenance regulations. The Mi-8T

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captain Mikhail Belkov had the technical opportunity to provide a safe flight. Both the captain and crew were prepared for the flight and had enough expertise to transfer passengers.

During the probe the investigators questioned over 40 witnesses and ran over 20 forensic medical, DNA, fire, technical, chemical, flight tests.

The evidence gathered by the investigators, including the results of the tests made it possible to conclude that the direct cause of the crash was collision with the ground while performing a flight in mountainous area on the altitude lower than the safe one caused by breach by the captain requirements of the Federal Aviation Rules, namely not making timely decision to fly back, to fly to a reserve airfield or flying according to instrument flight rules after the weather worsened to the unsafe point.

According to the crew, when the helicopter flew 40-50 km away from the village of Deputatsky the weather worsened sharply. There was a thick fog, it was sleeting, the visibility was extremely low, about 5 km. The crew decided to go back to Deputatsky. During the maneuver the helicopter touched the ground with its rear steering column, fell and caught fire. The crewmembers could not save the passengers as the door to the passengers' compartment was blocked. The crew left the helicopter through side windows of the cockpit.

By now the criminal case with the approved indictment has been sent to court to be tried on the merits.

The investigators have filed with the competent authorities papers on the violations revealed that contributed to the crash, but were not its cause.

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