

Sentence passed in Ulyanovskaya mine explosion in Kemerovo Region



A court has recognized the evidence gathered by the Main Investigations Directorate of the Russia's Investigative Committee sufficient to convict director of Ulyanovskaya coal mine Andrey Funk, shiftman Yuri Pimenov, mechanic of ventilation part and safety engineering Gennady Krasko, foreman and electricians of this part Oleg Kozyavin, Denis But and Oleg Sobakin. They were found guilty of a crime under part 3 of article 217 of the RF Criminal Code (violation of safety rules in explosive facilities or in explosives shops involving by negligence death of two or more persons).

The court and investigators have revealed that in the afternoon of 19 March 2007, a methane explosion occurred at a coal mine in Novokuznetsk district, Kemerovo Region. 110 miners, who were underground at the time, died of wounds, thermal scolds and carbon monoxide inhalation, 7 more were wounded. The accident was caused by the fact that the CEOs of the mine in the period between June 2006 and the moment of explosion ignored the safety requirements for mine works in order to fulfill the program. Despite the every-day dangerous concentration of methane and coal dust, the miners continued their job under the threat of being sacked or have reduced bonuses. It was found that the mine used air and gas control equipment bought in Great Britain which in case of

methane concentration was too high automatically shut down electric mechanisms to avoid an explosion. To prevent emergency shut down following orders of Funk and other managers who wanted to mine more coal their subordinates made failures to wireline networks of the protection system setting their different devices which prevented automatic shut downs of equipment under the ground, made changes to software of the equipment to conceal the gas content, did not put in the journal records on dangerous concentration of methane and did not inform mine surveillance authorities about those violations. The explosion and such serious consequences took place due to the fact that head and staff of Kuybyshev mine technical department of Kemerovo Region Office of Federal Service for Environmental, Technological and Atomic Supervision Sleptsov, Kostromin and Dmitriyev did not carried out proper state mine supervision over observance of safety requirements at this dangerous enterprise, did not timely prevent the abovementioned violations of safety requirements and rules to fight coal dust, concentration of which was so high that allowed explosions to spread through a net of mines in places where there was no dangerous amount of methane making the accident worse and the number of victims even higher. The criminal investigation against Sleptsov, Kostromin, Dmitriyev and 19 engineering and technical workers of the mine was dismissed by statute of limitations. The mentioned workers had finished their job before the accident and their violations were not an immediate cause of the explosion. Orders were also made to dismiss criminal complaints against 5 more managers of the mine, who had been killed in the accident. During the probe the investigators ran commission comprehensive mine technical examination involving leading specialists in the area, computer and other examinations, questioned over 450 witnesses. There are 234 volumes of criminal records. To prevent such tragedies in future the investigators took measures to identify the reasons and conditions that contributed to the crime.

The court has sentenced Funk to 6 years in prison, Pimenov to 4 years and 9 months, Kraskov to 5 years, Kozyavin to 4 years, But and Sobakin to 3 years. All of them will serve their sentenced in a minimum-security penal colony.

10 April 2015

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