
Investigation against 6 defendants accused of Falcon crash at Moscow Vnukovo airport finished



The Major Investigations Directorate of the Russia's Investigative Committee has finished investigation in the French Valcon-50EX plane which happened on 20 October 2014 at Vnukovo airport and claimed lives of 4 crew members and one passenger, CEO of TOTAL oil and gas company Christophe de Margerie.

The charges of a crime under part 3 of article 263 of the RF Penal Code (violation of safety standards for operation and traffic of an aircraft involving death of two or more people by negligence) were pressed against employees of Vnukovo flight organization center, affiliate of Moscow Center of Automated Flight Control of the State Corporation of Flight Control: control tower operator Roman Dunayev, flight controller Alexander Kruglov, taxiing controller Nadezhda Arkhipova, trainee flight controller Svetlana Krivsun, who managed the French plane crew under the control of an instructor, and workers of Vnukovo: driver of a snow plow Vladimir Martynenko and chief of shift of airdrome operation department Vladimir Ledenev.

The investigation revealed that the reason for the crash was the collision of the plane with a snow plow driven by Martynenko, which had come out to the runway while not controlled by chief of shift Ledenev.

Additional factors of the crash were violations of flight rules made by flight controllers Dunayev, Arkhipova, Krivsun and Kruglova. They had the data from the runway locator on their monitors, but the accused improperly discharged their duties, breached flight rules and failed to inform the pilots, who were taking off, about the snow plow that was moving in their direction and posed danger. This way, the pilots had no time to do anything to prevent the collision. However, the flight controllers could have prevented the collision, but failed to take necessary measures.

It should be especially mentioned that the case was solved in the shortest time – 5 months, which is a record not only in the Russian Federation, but in the world practice of investigations in air crashes, which usually take from 3 to 10 years.

The main complication in the investigation was participation of foreign representatives, implementation of international requests of legal assistance, and work with French victims, who live in other countries.

The main evidence against the defendants is their own statements, those of the victims, investigators, experts, specialists, numerous investigative protocols, conclusions of aviation forensic inquiries.

At the present time the 6 accused and their 14 lawyers have finished reading the criminal records, which includes 68 volumes, over 400 pieces material evidence and annexes to investigative protocols.

The investigators have enough evidence, so the criminal case has been sent to the Russian Prosecutor General's Office for the indictment to be approved and then sent to court to be tried on the merits.

To eliminate the conditions that contributed to the crime, a request has been sent to the Minister of Transportation, which according to investigators if considered will help to avoid air crashes and deaths in case of similar circumstances.

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