The Moscow Times
30 YEARS
INDEPENDENT NEWS FROM RUSSIA

New Details Surface on Raised Boat

By Andrew McChesney

July 24, 2011



The upper deck of the Bulgaria riverboat coming into view as the vessel is raised from the Volga River on Friday. **Tatyana Makeyeva**

The captain of the Bulgaria riverboat, whose sinking killed at least 120 people, tried desperately to steer toward shallow waters in a bid to save lives as the vessel went down, a senior emergency official said Sunday.

The riverboat was raised from the Volga riverbed Friday and towed to shallow waters, where emergency workers on Sunday were pumping out water for an investigation into why it sank.

Six more bodies were found inside the twin-deck ship Sunday, bringing the confirmed death toll to 120 and leaving two people unaccounted for, Interfax said.

The Investigative Committee on Friday revised the count of passengers and crew downward to 201, from an initial 208. Seventy-nine people were rescued from the ship, which listed to one side and sank in three minutes during a storm on July 10.

An initial inspection of the 79-meter boat provided no clue to why it sank, said senior Emergency Situations Ministry official Igor Panshin. But he said the steering wheel was pulled hard right and engine set to full speed in an indication that the captain had tried to reach shallow waters.

“The ship had about 40 meters left until shallow waters,” he said in remarks carried by Interfax. “If the captain had managed to run the Bulgaria aground, there would have been far fewer victims, for sure.”

Television footage showed that a wall clock inside the captain's cabin stopped at 12:30 p.m.

The Bulgaria was raised from a depth of 22 meters Friday, and it arrived in shallow waters near the Tatarstan village of Kuibyshev late Saturday.

The 56-year-old Bulgaria had suffered engine trouble when it embarked on its last voyage with more passengers than it was supposed to carry.

On Friday, two people were charged in connection with the sinking: Svetlana Inyakina, head of the company that rented the Bulgaria, and Yakov Ivashov, a federal inspector who checked the Bulgaria before its departure and certified it fit to sail, RIA-Novosti reported, citing the Investigative Committee.

“At the request of investigators, the court ruled that the suspects be taken into custody,” committee spokesman Vladimir Markin was quoted as saying.

The two are charged with providing unsafe services causing multiple deaths and face up to 10 years in prison if found guilty.

Original url: https://www.themoscowtimes.com/2011/07/24/new-details-surface-on-raised-boat-a8435