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Airline Denies Its Crew Was High

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Yakutia Airlines on Wednesday denied reports that its crew was banned from a Magadan-Moscow flight because the chief pilot and a flight attendant smoked marijuana before takeoff.

The two crew members were suspended from the Oct. 21 flight because of high blood pressure, the carrier said in a statement on its web site. It did not elaborate on the causes of their simultaneous hypertension.

But Alexander Bugakov of the Federal Air Transportation Agency, who first reported the incident Tuesday, said the explanation was only technically correct.

The crew members were diagnosed with "high blood pressure" before the flight, while subsequent medical testing showed it was caused by drug intoxication, Bugakov told Rossiiskaya Gazeta.

Far East transportation prosecutors have begun a probe into charges that safety rules were violated, Rusnovosti.ru reported, citing an investigative spokeswoman. The suspects, whose names remain withheld, face up to two years in prison if charged and convicted.

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