

Search Intensifies for Hijacked Plane

June 18, 2012

The  Moscow Times

More than 1,000 emergency situations staff, police, hunters, fisherman and tourists are scouring a broad swath of land in the Sverdlovsk region as the search for a hijacked biplane with 13 revelers on board enters its second week.

Six aircraft are monitoring the situation from above, while walking teams are hunting on the ground for the missing An-2 plane, the Emergency Situations Ministry said in a statement Monday.

In total, search teams have now covered an area of 160,000 square meters, the statement said.

Regional police suspect that the plane's passengers had been drinking prior to takeoff from an airstrip near the Urals city of Serov on June 11.

Among possible explanations, a police spokesman told Interfax that those on board may have decided to go on a fishing trip or to a sauna in a neighboring district.

Investigators believe that the head of the local traffic police and at least one of his subordinates were traveling on the missing plane.

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