

Air Search for Missing Plane Discontinued

By [The Moscow Times](#)

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Authorities have called off an airborne search operation for a biplane that went missing more than a month ago in the Sverdlovsk region and will rely on volunteer crews on the ground to keep up the efforts, local media reported.

The active phase of the rescue effort is ending, and the search will most likely be carried on by rangers, hunters, fishermen, forest fire monitors and volunteers, according to the Globus newspaper.

Twelve people were on board the missing An-2, including the head of the local traffic police, and members of the group were thought to have been drinking before the June 11 trip.

The plane took off without authorization from an airstrip near Serov for an unknown destination.

The last helicopter taking part in the search left for Tyumen on Monday, while another departed for Perm earlier, Globus said, adding that the helicopters would return to the area only if authorities receive credible information about the missing plane's location.

The rescue operation has been dogged by false leads in the past week.

On Monday, a "satellite" photo showing the clear outline of an airplane appeared online.

Rescuers believed the tipoff to be genuine, but when relatives of the missing passengers arrived on the scene, they were confronted by an empty expanse of land, Globus reported.

Authorities followed up on another dead end on July 20, when rescuers tracked down a man believed to be one of the missing passengers. He turned out to be a former convict who had lost contact with his relatives.

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