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Pilot Error Blamed for Deadly Kamchatka Plane Crash

By The Moscow Times

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The remains of the An-28 that crashed Wednesday on Pyatibratka Mountain in Kamchatka.

The crash of an An-28 propeller plane in Kamchatka this week was likely caused by a pilot error in difficult weather conditions, a crash investigator said Thursday.

The plane, which was carrying 14 people, 10 of whom died in the crash, likely tried to land while still too far from the runway, the unidentified Kamchatka region investigator told Interfax.

He said that the plane wreckage was found on the side of the 500-meter-high Pyatibratka Mountain near the town of Palana and that the pilot might not have seen the slope.

Search and rescue workers retrieved the plane's two flight recorders on Thursday and planned to send them to Moscow for examination on the circumstances surrounding the crash, Interfax said.

The An-28, flying from the regional capital, Petropavlovsk-Kamchatsky, to Palana, crashed about 10 kilometers from Palana during heavy rain showers Wednesday afternoon.

The investigator said the plane, operated by Petropavlovsk-Kamchatsky Airlines, had lacked a ground proximity warning system, which he said all An-28s and similar aircraft have to install by Oct. 1 under aviation regulations. He did not specify which other aircraft fell under the regulations.

Meanwhile, three of the four survivors of the crash remained in critical condition Thursday and were flown from Palana to Petropavlovsk-Kamchatsky, the Kamchatka administration said in a statement.

One of the survivors, Palana chief firefighter Vladimir Shabalkov, said he and the other three had lived through the crash only because they had been thrown from the plane shortly before it slammed into the mountainside, according to the statement. Shabalkov said the four survivors had been seated in the tail-area of the plane.

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