

# Crashed Jet's Flight Recorder Found

By [The Moscow Times](#)

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ALMATY, Kazakhstan — Rescue teams recovered a flight recorder from a plane which crashed in Kazakhstan on Tuesday, killing all 27 people on board in the country's worst military air disaster since independence.

The twin-engine Antonov An-72 transport jet disappeared from radar screens about 7 p.m. local time as it was circling in a raging blizzard, trying to land in Shymkent, the capital of the South Kazakhstan region.

It crashed into an open-cast mine, littering the area with mangled, burning fragments.

The plane belonged to the border troops of Kazakhstan's KNB security service. Those killed included the commander of the country's border guards, Turganbek Stambekov, and his wife.

President Nursultan Nazarbayev ordered a national day of mourning Thursday, his press service said.

"Most probably, the black box [flight recorder] will give us a clue about what caused this

catastrophe,” KNB chief Nurtai Abykayev said at a news conference, according to local media.

“Special commissions that are investigating will look into various possible causes. These can include weather conditions, the human factor or the plane’s technical condition. Anything.”

The Soviet-designed plane, which can take off from rough gravel runways just 800 meters long, is widely considered to be a reliable and sturdy workhorse of the air forces of several former Soviet states.

The one that crashed near Shymkent was made in 1990, and in November it underwent maintenance at the factory in Ukraine that built it, after which it had accumulated just 40 hours of flight time, including 30 takeoffs and landings, local media said.

The plane was carrying officers from Kazakhstan’s southern border protection district who had attended an annual meeting in the capital Astana.

Oil-producer Kazakhstan, Central Asia’s largest economy, has seen accidents with smaller military aircraft and helicopters during the 21 years of its independence since the collapse of the Soviet Union.

Kazakhstan is predominantly Muslim, and according to Islamic tradition the first funerals of those killed in the crash should have been held Wednesday.

But this was not possible because medical experts still had to identify badly mutilated bodies, Abykayev said.

Several distraught relatives could be seen near the cordoned-off crash site Wednesday. They did not try to conceal their anger and frustration.

“They should have allowed us to take away the remains and bury them,” a middle-aged woman, whose brother was among the killed officers, told Kazakhstan’s Channel 7 television.

“My brother left four children. They must know where their father died so they can bring flowers here,” she said. “He had great plans that will never be realized. He aspired to rise to the rank of general.”

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