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Negligence Trial Over Krymsk Flooding Opens

By The Moscow Times

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Court proceedings began Tuesday in the trial of former officials accused of negligence in last year's flooding in the Krasnodar region town of Krymsk that left more than 150 people dead and thousands of homes destroyed.

A local Kransodar court granted a request by state prosecutor Andrei Stepanyan to recuse all the court's judges from the trial. Stepanyan told Interfax on Tuesday that the request was made because the wife of one of the accused, Vladimir Ulyanovsky, is employed by the court.

Three former officials stand accused of negligence and forgery, and one of negligence, forgery and attempted fraud in last year's flooding.

Prosecutors say the officials knew about the threat of a flood but did nothing to ensure that residents of the Krymsk district were notified of the dangers, and did not take evacuation measures.

"The officials weren't concerned with how to minimize the damage, but how to find justification for their criminal negligence," Investigative Committee spokesman Vladimir Markin told Channel One on Tuesday.

"After the fact, once they realized that they'd have to answer for their inaction by law, they slapped together documents about a meeting of the commission on emergency situations and public announcements, containing a list of the events supposedly held just before the tragedy," he said. "This meeting, as you all understand, never took place."

The defendants include Vasily Krutko, the former Krymsk district chief; Krymsk mayor Vladimir Ulanovsky; former Nizhnebakansk head Irina Ryabchenko; and Viktor Zhdanov, acting head of the Krymsk district emergency situations department.

Zhdanov is also suspected of attempted fraud. Prosecutors say he included his home address on the list of homes damaged by flooding in an attempt to receive 50,000 rubles in compensation.

If convicted, Ulanovsky, Krutko and Ryabchenko face up to 11 years behind bars on negligence and forgery charges. Zhdanov faces up to 17 years if convicted of negligence, forgery and fraud.

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