

Bodies of 2 U.S. Crew Found at Kyrgyzstan Crash Site

By [The Moscow Times](#)

May 04, 2013

The  Moscow Times

BISHKEK — Search teams on Saturday found the bodies of two American crew members near where their military refueling plane crashed in the rugged mountains of Kyrgyzstan, while the third crew member was still missing, the emergency situations minister of the Central Asian nation said.

The U.S. plane exploded in midair on its way to Afghanistan and crashed in Kyrgyzstan on Friday when its cargo of fuel ignited, the Kyrgyz Emergency Situations Ministry said.

The aircraft took off from the U.S. military transit center at Kyrgyzstan's international Manas airport, which U.S. forces maintain for operations in Afghanistan, with about 70 tons of fuel on board, a local ministry official said.

Emergency Situations Minister Kubatbek Boronov said Kyrgyz search teams found the two fragmented bodies Saturday morning and they had not yet been identified. He said the Kyrgyz

rescuers were working with U.S. military personnel from Manas to search for the third crewman and the flight recorders.

Dozens of U.S. military personnel scoured the area Saturday and set up a security cordon around the crash site.

The plane, used for inflight refueling, disappeared from radar screens at 3:10 p.m. as it flew near the Kyrgyz village of Chaldovar, the ministry said.

The ministry said witnesses saw the plane explode in the air, and a local government official said debris was scattered over a 4 to 5 kilometer area in a nearby mountainous area.

"The chassis, the fuselage have all been extinguished," ministry official Bolot Sharshenaliyev said.

"According to preliminary information it flew from Bishkek and was on its way to Afghanistan, with approximately 70 tons of fuel on board."

Officials at the U.S. Transit Center at the Manas base have released no information yet on the cause of the crash and could not immediately be reached Saturday for any further information.

Mobile video footage showed an armed guard around the crash site where burning debris had scorched the ground.

A Kyrgyz civil aviation official, speaking on condition of anonymity, said storm clouds over the region could have caused the explosion, Interfax reported.

Material from The Associated Press is included in this report.

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