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INDEPENDENT NEWS FROM RUSSIA

2 Britons Die in Murmansk Helicopter Crash

By The Moscow Times

July 22, 2013



Rescue workers surveying the crash site.

Two elderly British tourists and their guide died on a fishing trip in a northern Russian region when the helicopter that had brought them there lost control upon takeoff and slammed into them.

The helicopter tilted while attempting takeoff Sunday, and its rotor blades slammed into a nearby group of people that had just climbed out of the helicopter, the Emergency Situations Ministry said.

A security services source identified the two Britons as D. Rupert and M. Robinson, both born in 1944, while the guide, Alexander Tushnikov, was born in 1960, Interfax reported. The pilot of the private French-made Eurocopter suffered minor injuries.

The British embassy in Moscow was attempting to contact the victims' relatives Sunday, RIA

Novosti reported.

The accident took place by a riverside in the Murmansk region where the tourists intended to fish.

Pictures on the ministry's website showed the helicopter on its side, while scraps of the rotor blades appeared to be strewn nearby.

The helicopter company, St. Petersburg-based Alliance Avia, had no announcements of the incident on its website, where the latest news dates back to 2010.

The tour company that organized the fishing expedition, Murmansk-based Severniye Reki, or Northern Rivers, does not appear to have a website.

Russia had so many aircraft-related fatalities in 2011 that it was ranked as the world's most dangerous country for air travel that year.

This year, 10 helicopters have crashed, including the July 2 incident in the far eastern Sakha region, which killed 24 people, 11 of whom were children.

About 231,000 tourists from Britain visited Russia last year, 5 percent more than the year before, according to the Federal Migration Service.

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