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50 Killed in Plane Crash in Kazan

By The Moscow Times

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Firemen working at the crash site of the Boeing 737 in Kazan after extinguishing a fire.

Fifty people were killed as a passenger jet crashed on landing in the city of Kazan in the republic of Tatarstan, a spokeswoman for the Emergency Situations Ministry said Sunday.

Irina Rossius said the jet, a Boeing 737, bound from Moscow to Kazan with 50 people on board, crashed at 7:30 p.m. Moscow time, adding that there was an explosion. According to preliminary data, all those on board died, including Tatarstan President Rustam Minnikhanov's son Irek and regional Federal Security Service department chief Lieutenant General Alexander Antonov, officials said.

Investigative Committee spokesman Vladimir Markin said a criminal case has been opened on charges of violating safety rules in the operation of air transportation, Interfax reported.

The pilot tried to make a second landing attempt and the jet lost altitude, hitting the ground, according to reports. The airport in Kazan is now closed, a spokesman for Federal Air Transport Agency Rosaviatsiya said.

The Rossia-24 television channel reported that there were 44 passengers and six crew on board. The Interior Ministry said the plane belonged to Tatarstan Airlines.

Crew error is believed to be one of the possible reasons for the crash, a law enforcement official said.

An investigation is under way, with Investigative Committee head Alexander Bastrykin due to arrive at the crash site on Monday. President Vladimir Putin has ordered the government to establish a commission to investigate the crash.

The fire on the crash site has been extinguished, a local law enforcement source said.

Relatives of the crash victims will receive about 2 million rubles ($61,360) from insurance company Sogaz for each killed passenger, a Sogaz official said.

Monday has been declared a day of mourning for the crash victims in Tatarstan.

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