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Transport Plane Crashes in Siberia, Killing 9

By The Moscow Times

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Rescue workers standing at the wreckage site in Irkutsk.

Investigators are still unsure whether poor weather conditions, pilot error or a technical malfunction is to blame for the crash of a cargo plane in Siberia on Thursday that killed all nine passengers on board.

The nine crew members' remains were recovered early Friday from the wreckage site and are being identified, Interfax said. An inquiry into the cause of the crash is still under way.

The An-12 cargo plane, carrying aircraft parts from a plant in Novosibirsk, disappeared off the radar at 9:40 p.m.on Thursday, a kilometer short of its final destination.

The plane then crashed into a military base in Irkutsk, causing minor damage to two warehouses on site. No ground staff members were injured in the crash, news reports said.

Among the casualties were six employees of the Irkutsk aviation plant, Gazeta.ru reported.

The mayor of Irkutsk, Viktor Kondrashev, on Friday expressed his condolences to the victims' relatives.

Regional governor Sergei Yeroshchenko also said 1 million rubles ($30,600) would be allocated to each of the victims' families, Interfax reported.

The cargo plane, manufactured in 1964, had been in service for 50 years, and had used up 91 percent of its service life at the time of the crash, aviation site Russianplanes.net reported.

Russia no longer manufactures An-12 cargo planes, but the aircraft are still in wide use in Russia as well as in CIS and developing countries.

In late November head of the Federal Aviation Agency Alexander Neradko asked transport head Maxim Sokolov to limit the service life of planes to 15 years, Interfax said.

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