The Moscow Times
30 YEARS
INDEPENDENT NEWS FROM RUSSIA

Russia Launches Probe Into Death of Total CEO at Moscow Airport

October 22, 2014



The snowplow's driver Vladimir Martynenko, right, pictured with his lawyer, who says his client is not to blame.

The Russian Prosecutor General's Office and security services have begun reviewing safety measures at Moscow's Vnukovo Airport, where Christophe de Margerie, the CEO of French energy giant Total, was killed Monday night.

The Russian Investigative Committee, the Interstate Aviation Committee and the country's federal aviation agency, Rosaviatsia, announced on Tuesday that they had begun an investigation into the accident, which saw De Margerie's private plane catch fire after it collided with a snowplow on the runway.

Three French investigators arrived in Moscow on Tuesday night to join the investigation, according to France's authority for investigating civil aviation accidents.

Citing an unidentified source, the Kommersant newspaper reported Wednesday that investigator Mikhail Gurevich, who led the probe into the 2010 plane crash that killed Polish

President Lech Kaczynski and other top officials, would lead efforts to elucidate the circumstances surrounding the accident that killed De Margerie and his three crew members.

Russian investigators said Tuesday that the snowplow driver was drunk at the time of the accident, an accusation his lawyer has denied.

The driver, Vladimir Martynenkov, told investigators that he had barely seen or heard De Margerie's aircraft, and did not know how he ended up in its takeoff path, the Interfax news agency reported Wednesday. Martynenkov's lawyer, Alexander Karabanov, said in a radio interview that his client had simply been following orders.

Total released a statement Tuesday saying its governance and ethics committee, as well as its board of directors, would be meeting “without delay.”

On Wednesday, the company's board of directors appointed Patrick Pouyanne, who heads the refining and chemicals division, as the new CEO, a position that De Margerie had held since 2007.

Since 2010, De Margerie had also taken on the additional role of chairman. Thierry Desmarest, who served as Total's CEO from 1995 to 2007, will now assume that role.

Original url:
https://www.themoscowtimes.com/2014/10/22/russia-launches-probe-into-death-of-total-ceo-at-moscow-airport-a40648