

5 Detained Over Total CEO's Deadly Accident at Moscow Airport

October 23, 2014



Vladimir Martynenko, the driver of a snow plow, involved in the recent plane crash at Vnukovo airport, sits in a defendants' cage as he attends a court hearing in Moscow, Oct. 23, 2014.

Investigators said Thursday that four more people had been detained over the crash that killed Total CEO Christophe de Margerie at a Moscow airport this week, and that alcohol had been found in the blood of a snowplow driver involved in the accident.

Four more airport employees were detained Thursday on suspicion of failing to ensure flight safety ahead of the crash, which saw De Margerie's business jet collide with a snowplow on the runway while attempting to take off.

Moscow's Vnukovo Airport, where the accident took place, said Thursday in a statement that it had accepted the resignations of its CEO Andrei Dyakov and his deputy Sergei Solntsev, who have chosen to step down following the crash.

The same day, a court ruled that the snowplow's driver, Vladimir Martynenko, could be kept in detention until Dec. 21.

Martynenko, 60, was detained after the crash, and investigators swiftly claimed he was drunk when the incident occurred — an accusation that his lawyer denies, citing relatives as saying his client is teetotal due to a chronic heart disease.

An online statement issued by the Investigative Committee on Thursday said Martynenko's blood alcohol test had revealed a level of 0.06, a low level that would have made him under the limit in the U.S. or U.K. but not in Russia, where it is illegal to consume any alcohol before driving.

The new suspects arrested Thursday include senior engineer Vladimir Ledenev, who was in charge of snow removal; flight control chief Roman Dunayev; traffic controller Alexander Kruglov, who was in charge of the control tower at the time of the accident; and Svetlana Krivsun, a traffic control trainee, Investigative Committee spokesman Vladimir Markin said in an online statement.

"The detainees have been questioned as suspects," Markin added.

Three crew members on De Margerie's Falcon 50 private jet were also killed in the accident, during which a fire erupted aboard the plane.

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