The Moscow Times
30 YEARS
INDEPENDENT NEWS FROM RUSSIA

Woman Charged Over 2013 Russian Proton Rocket Crash

By The Moscow Times

March 12, 2015



A quality control official at the Russian space company that builds Proton rockets has been charged with criminal violations of construction safety codes that resulted in the spectacular crash of a Proton rocket in 2013, the Izvestia newspaper reported Thursday.

The rocket crashed after turning itself 180 degrees in midair within seconds of liftoff from the Baikonur Cosmodrome because its guidance sensors were installed upside down.

"The sensors fit in special slots, and thanks to this they can only be installed in one position," an unidentified law enforcement source told Izvestia. "However, if you apply force, a sensor can be put into the space upside down," he said.

Diana Gudkova, a 30 year veteran of Khrunichev, the Russian company that builds the Proton rocket, has according to the newspaper been charged with violating safety rules during a construction project — a violation of Russia's criminal code. Gudkova was the senior

assembly manager that signed off on the rocket's quality control inspections. She insisted that the sensors were installed in their proper position, the paper said.

Two other assembly workers are being investigated for violating safety rules.

The Proton rocket was carrying three Russian Glonass navigation satellites when it crashed in July 2013.

The incident, one of five failed Proton rocket launches since 2010, highlighted serious flaws in Khrunichev's quality control procedures.

An accident investigation commission shortly after the 2013 crash found that the inspection process could not have detected a faulty installation of the sensors, Izvestia reported.

Original url:
https://www.themoscowtimes.com/2015/03/12/woman-charged-over-2013-russian-proton-rocket-crash-a44705