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Polish Smolensk Crash Commission to Meet Russian Officials

By The Moscow Times

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Wreckage of Polish presidential plane in Smolensk, Russia. **Sergey Ponomarev / AP**

A Polish commission is ready to meet with Russian aviation officials to discuss the 2010 Smolensk plane crash, the country's Vice Defense Minister, Wojciech Fałkowski, announced Wednesday.

Russia's official civil aviation authority, the Interstate Aviation Committee, said on Tuesday that it had accepted a request to meet with new Polish crash investigators. In a post on its website, the organization said it was "replying to an official request from Wacław Berczyński [the head of the commission]."

Polish investigators deny asking to meet the Russians, but say that they are ready for such a meeting.

When asked by journalists if Berczyński had asked to meet the Russians, Vice Defense

Minister Fałkowski maintained that “it was the Russian side that changed its stance and wants to meet with the Polish commission.”

“Of course we are interested in getting all the materials that the Russian side has," he said. "We want to seek the truth and we need all the material and the evidence that is available."

“If the Russian side has changed its minds and wants to give ⊠us these materials, then we are ready to meet — whether in Moscow ⊠or in Warsaw — in order to get them,” he told Polish ⊠journalists on Wednesday.

The crash, ⊠which killed Polish president Lech Kaczyński along with 95 others, has ⊠been a major point of contention between the two countries over the past⊠ six years.
The⊠ new
Polish commission was set up by Defense Minister Antoni ⊠Macierewicz, who has long dismissed previous independent investigations and⊠ blamed Russia for the crash. Earlier this⊠ month, the head of the commission Wacław Berczyński said that evidence ⊠provided by Russia had been “manipulated.”

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