The Moscow Times
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INDEPENDENT NEWS FROM RUSSIA

Plane Crashes Outside Moscow, 71 Believed Dead

February 11, 2018



Relatives of the victims gathered at the airport in Orsk, hoping for more information. **Sergei Nikiforov / TASS**

A passenger plane crashed in the Moscow region on Sunday afternoon shortly after taking off from Domodedovo Airport.

All 65 passengers and 6 crew members on board the Saratov Airlines jet died in the crash, Russia's Transport Minister Maxim Sokolov has said. Among the victims was a five-year-old child, media reports.

“The crew and passengers had no chance of surviving,” an unnamed source in the emergency services was reported as saying by Interfax.

Embed: https://twitter.com/martin_camera/status/962674194994663424

The plane crashed close to Stepanovskoye in the Ramensky district minutes after departing

for Orsk in southern Russia.

Video footage shown on Russian state television and social media showed debris of the An-148 plane scattered across snowy fields. Five hours after the crash, two bodies had been recovered.

The national Investigative Committee said on its website that it had opened a criminal case over alleged breach of aviation safety. Investigators will examine all possible causes, including weather conditions, human factors and technical conditions of the plane, the committee said in the statement on its website.

Russian President Vladimir Putin has been informed about the crash and expresses his "deep condolences" to the relatives of the victims, Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov was cited as saying by the state-run TASS news agency.

Putin re-scheduled a planned trip to Sochi because of the crash, Interfax said, citing Peskov.

A day of mourning has been declared on Monday in the Orenburg region where most of the victims are from, and there were emotional scenes at the airport in Orsk. At Moscow's Domodedovo Airport, however, there was no sign of disruption.

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Russians have been involved in at least three deadly plane crashes in the past three years. A military Tu-154 crashed in December 2016, killing 92, including musicians flying to a concert in Syria, and a jet operated by Middle Eastern budget carrier FlyDubai broke apart while trying to land in high winds in the southern Russian city of Rostov-on-Don in March 2016, killing all 62 people on board.

An EgyptAir Airbus SE plane with Russian tourists returning from Egypt to St. Petersburg was blown up over the Sinai in October 2015, killing 224.

(Includes reporting by Bloomberg.)

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