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What Caused the Deadly Plane Crash Outside Moscow?

February 12, 2018

Maxim Grigoryev / TASS

Russian investigators have said they are considering several causes for Sunday's deadly plane crash outside Moscow, including bad weather, human error and poor maintenance of the plane.

All 65 passengers and 6 crew members on board the Saratov Airlines jet died when it crashed in the Moscow region minutes after taking off from Domodedovo Airport. On Sunday, President Vladimir Putin expressed his condolences to the victims' families and ordered a special commission to investigate the incident.

Various theories were circulating in Russian media about the causes of Sunday's crash.

The Kommersant business daily reported on Monday that the leading theories to explain the crash of the Antonov An-148 include a fire in the plane's engine, a faulty speedometer or possible ice buildup.

According to experts interviewed by the newspaper, a sudden engine breakdown was the most likely cause of the airliner's crash. Security camera footage published on social media late on Sunday showed what looked like an explosion close to the ground, followed by a ball of fire crossing the sky.

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Another An-148 plane was involved in a deadly accident in 2011 when it accelerated above the speed limit and broke up in mid-air in western Russia, claiming the lives of six crew members during a test flight.

Emergency crews have reportedly recovered two "black box" flight recorders at the crash site on Monday, the Interfax news agency reported.

The passenger jet did not issue distress signals to air traffic control after takeoff and its demise four minutes later, according to a recording published on YouTube by the Ura.ru news agency.

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Saratov Airlines, meanwhile, has grounded its fleet of six An-148s until an investigation uncovers the causes of Sunday's deadly crash.

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