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19 Bodies Found From Plane Crash in Far Eastern Russia

By AFP

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Russian Emergencies Ministry / TASS

A search team found the remains of 19 people Wednesday after a passenger plane crashed in Russia's remote far eastern Kamchatka peninsula and the governor promised relatives "all necessary help."

The An-26 plane flying from Kamchatka's main city of Petropavlovsk-Kamchatsky to the coastal town of Palana with 28 people on board disappeared and crashed on Tuesday.

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Search teams later found wreckage of the plane near Palana after it was believed to have flown into a cliff.

"Fragments of 19 bodies have been found," the regional branch of the emergencies ministry

said in a statement.

The 28 people on board included six crew and 22 passengers, including two minors. All were presumed dead.

More than 50 people combed the coast of the Okhotsk Sea, officials said.

The search operation — complicated by fog, strong winds and waves — was halted for the night.

Kamchatka is a vast peninsula popular with adventure tourists for its abundant wildlife, live volcanoes and black sand beaches.

Governor Vladimir Solodov declared a three-day mourning period beginning Wednesday and said families of the victims would receive 3.5 million rubles ($47,000).

In Palana, Solodov also met with relatives of those killed in the crash and promised them "all necessary help."

He said authorities would "do everything to help them live through this tragedy," his office quoted him as saying.

In a telegram to the Kamchatka governor, President Vladimir Putin expressed his condolences.

Officials have said the plane — built in 1982 — was in good condition and passed safety checks.

Russia's Investigative Committee, which probes major crimes and incidents, said it was looking at three potential causes of the accident: poor weather conditions, technical malfunctions, or pilot error.

An-26 planes, which were manufactured from 1969 until 1986 during the Soviet era and are still used throughout the former USSR for civilian and military transport, have been involved in a number of accidents in recent years.

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