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Military Transport Plane Vanishes Off Radars in Eastern Russia

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An-26 planes, still in use for civilian and military transport in post-Soviet countries despite its last production in 1986, have a long history of accidents. **aeroprints.com (CC BY-SA 3.0)**

A military transport plane with six people on board vanished from radars in Russia's Far Eastern Khabarovsk region, the Emergency Situations Ministry said Wednesday.

The An-26 was performing a "technical flight" when its communication systems stopped sending signals 38 kilometers from the Khabarovsk city airport, the ministry said. A Federal Air Transport Agency (Rosaviatsia) helicopter and a rescue team have been dispatched to find the missing aircraft.

"The search is complicated by the dark time of day and unfavorable weather conditions," the Emergency Situations Ministry said in a statement on its website.

Citing an unnamed source, Interfax reported that the plane is believed to have crashed in the Bolshekhekhtsirsky Nature Reserve outside Khabarovsk while performing a low-altitude flight at 600 meters.

It added that the An-26 has been in operation since 1979 and was used by the company Flight Inspections and Systems as an "air laboratory" for the past 15 years.

Emergency services cited by media said that the An-26 was due to test communication systems during the flight.

An-26 planes, still in use for civilian and military transport in post-Soviet countries despite its last production in 1986, have a long history of accidents.

In July, an An-26 passenger plane carrying 28 people disappeared in the remote Kamchatka peninsula neighboring the Khabarovsk region. Search teams later found wreckage of the plane and no survivors were found.

Three other recent fatal accidents, one in ex-Soviet Kazakhstan's military and two in the Russian military, involved An-26 aircraft.

Poor aircraft maintenance and lax safety standards still persist in Russia despite an improvement in its traffic safety record.

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