The Moscow Times
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Russia Recovers Black Boxes of Downed Military Plane

January 25, 2024



Investigators at the crash site of the Il-76 transport plane in the Belgorod region. **Pavel Kolyadin / TASS**

Two black boxes have been recovered from the crash site of a Russian Il-76 military transport plane that crashed Wednesday, state-run news agencies reported Thursday, citing anonymous sources in Russia's emergency services.

Moscow accuses Ukraine of shooting down the aircraft in the western Belgorod region, killing all 74 people on board, including 65 Ukrainian prisoners of war who were said to be en route to a scheduled exchange.

Kyiv has neither confirmed nor denied Moscow's claims about captured soldiers being on board the aircraft.

According to sources cited by the state news agencies RIA Novosti and TASS, the Il-76's flight data and voice recorders were found at the aircraft's tail end and were given to investigators.

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A Defense Ministry lab is reportedly expected to receive the black boxes for decoding on Friday.

Russia's Defense Ministry claimed Ukrainian forces stationed in the Kharkiv region, which borders Russia, had fired two missiles at the plane over the Belgorod region, describing the incident as a "terrorist act."

The Kremlin earlier on Thursday called the incident a "monstrous act."

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky said Wednesday that Russia was "playing with the lives of Ukrainian prisoners" and called for an international investigation into the downing of the plane.

"We need to establish all the clear facts. As much as possible, given that the downing of the plane occurred on Russian territory, which is beyond our control," Zelensky said in a video published on social media.

AFP contributed reporting.

Original url:
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