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Russia's Aviation Body Allegedly Allowed Aircraft Export to Ukraine – Izvestia

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A Russian Mi-8 helicopter. **National Guard of Ukraine**

Officials from Russia's state civil aviation agency Rosaviatsia have been accused of de-registering aircraft that were later used by the Ukrainian military, the pro-Kremlin tabloid Izvestia reported Monday, citing anonymous law enforcement and Transportation Ministry sources.

A Transport Ministry inspection in July revealed that 59 planes and helicopters had been illegally removed from Russia's civil aircraft register between March 2022 and June 2023, according to the publication.

Izvestia said 36 of the aircraft had been sold abroad, eight of which ended up in countries deemed "unfriendly" by Moscow.

Three Mi-8 transport helicopters were allegedly used by Kyiv in its ongoing defense against invading Russian forces, according to one of the publication's sources, while an Il-76 transport plane had made cargo deliveries.

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Russia's Federal Security Service (FSB) pressed criminal charges against three Rosaviatsia officials.

The first charge of negligence carries a maximum punishment of three months in jail, while the second charge of abuse of power is punishable by up to seven years in prison.

Police officers and FSB agents reportedly raided Rosaviatsia's Moscow headquarters on Feb. 7, with law enforcement seizing documents belonging to flight safety inspection chief Kristina Byvalina, her former deputy Anna Zhiltsova and civil aircraft registration deputy chief Pyotr Kozyrev.

It was not clear whether the officials were taken into custody.

Izvestia's sources claimed the aircraft de-registration scandal led to the dismissal of former Rosaviatsia chief Alexander Neradko in September.

Neradko worked at the agency for 14 years and could face criminal prosecution.

Rosaviatsia, the Transport Ministry, the FSB and the Interior Ministry did not respond to Izvestia's requests for comment.

The reported civil aircraft de-registration took place as the Russian aviation sector was hit hard by Western sanctions following the February 2022 invasion of Ukraine.

In response, Russia has seized $10 billion worth of aircraft leased from Western companies and limited flights to so-called "friendly countries" to avoid the planes from being impounded.

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