

Envoy Says Missing Pilot Held by Sudanese Militia

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A Russian helicopter pilot who disappeared in Darfur while working for the United Nations was being held by a militia loyal to the Sudanese government, a Russian envoy said.

The pilot was transporting rebel commanders for peace talks with the government when his helicopter landed in the wrong place Monday in Sudan's volatile Darfur region.

After the helicopter was recovered, the UN said the crew and passengers were taken to a government military camp, but until now the location of the pilot was unknown.

Russia's special presidential representative on Sudan, Mikhail Margelov, told Kommersant that the pilot's life was not in danger.

The pilot, Yevgeny Mostovshchikov, was being held by the *janjaweed* militia, which is demanding that the Sudanese government pay overdue back wages before it will release him, Margelov said. The amount of money involved was believed to be in the tens of thousands of dollars, he said.

Margelov, who chairs the Federation Council's International Relations Committee, said talks were under way and he expected the pilot to be released soon.

The helicopter was carrying three rebel commanders from Darfur to Chad, from where they were to fly to Qatar for talks with Sudanese government officials. The helicopter was seized when it made a stopover in a mostly Arab tribal area of western Sudan.

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