

Claim of Lost An-2 Signal Prompts New Search

By [Natalya Krainova](#)

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A radio enthusiast in Sverdlovsk region recorded messages on his cell phone that he thought had come from a missing An-2 plane. **Henryk Kotowski**

A radio hobbyist's claim to have recently captured distress signals from an An-2 biplane that went missing in the Ural Mountains three months ago prompted authorities on Tuesday to resume the search for survivors.

Valentin Degteryov, who captured the signals via the radio function on his cell phone, to which he had affixed a sizable antenna, said the static-laden messages came from the lost An-2, which took off from an airstrip near Serov on an unauthorized flight on June 11.

The messages state "two policemen are dead" and "death from starvation," which Degteryov believes is evidence that they came from the lost An-2, which had two police officials among its party of 13.

The Sverdlovsk region branch of the Emergency Situations Ministry took the messages very seriously and on Tuesday dispatched two rescue teams to search the area and asked municipalities to list all the locations whose names end in "revolution," which Degteryov said was audible in one of the messages.

The initial rescue effort ended in late July after being hampered by false leads.

Degteryov, who has been assembling radio equipment since he was 10, told The Moscow Times on Tuesday that he used special equipment to decipher the messages, recorded between 1 and 3 a.m. last Tuesday and Wednesday at his home in Nizhny Tagil.

He told the Komsomolskaya Pravda newspaper that his home is on a mountain and that because of the elevation he often catches far-off signals.

A voice in the messages said the distressed group was about 30 kilometers from a place that had the word "revolution" in its name, Globus, a newspaper in Serov, reported Sunday.

Degteryov said he remembered that a Serov traffic police officer and another police official were on board the An-2, and he hadn't heard of any other police in the region disappearing lately.

He said the voice in the radio calls indicated the flight angle of the plane, which has allowed a group of civil pilots to figure out where the An-2 could have landed: 120 kilometers southwest of Serov.

On Wednesday, rescuers are supposed to reach the presumed landing site, Degteryov said.

A team of 10 rescuers was "ready to react to the latest information" about the missing An-2, the Emergency Situations Ministry said in an online statement. Natalya Zyryanova, a spokeswoman for the ministry, refused to comment on the report.

Many commentators on the Globus article and at ForumAvia.ru were skeptical about Degteryov's claims, saying the An-2's pilot and passengers would not have been able to survive in the taiga for three months or would have reached Serov on foot by that time.

They also argued that the radio signals would have been received earlier and that a cell phone could not intercept aviation radio frequencies.

But some commentators said that the frequency on which the radio calls were recorded was a mirror frequency for pilots and that sometimes they intercept pilot messages on their cell phones in Nizhny Tagil.

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