Sudan’s destroyed plane was piloted by Russian national

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August 20, 2012 (KHARTOUM) - The Sudanese plane that crashed in South Kordofan state on Sunday was driven by a Russian pilot, the Russian embassy in Khartoum said.

An Antonov AN-26, belonging to Alfa Airlines, crashed in an accident near Talodi airport, killing 26 people including six high ranking Sudanese government officials, military personnel and a politician.

The aircraft went down into a mountain near the airport due to limited visibility caused by a dust storm. Initial reports spoke about rains.

"Russian pilot Gennady Semyonov was commander of the aircraft," said Yuri Vidakas, First Secretary of the Russian Embassy in Khartoum, in statements to Tass news agency on Monday.

He further said the crew of the Russian-made plane included Armenian and Tajik nationals. "Unfortunately, all people on board were killed," he further said.

Sudanese authorities said the crew was composed of six people.

The ministerial delegation was heading to Talodi, 650 km southwest of Khartoum, to celebrate the Eid al-Fitr festival marking the end of the Muslim holy month of Ramadan with the Sudanese soldiers mobilised to fight a rebellion in South Kordofan.

UN agencies UNAMID and United Nations Resident and Humanitarian Coordinators expressed, in different statements, their condolences to the Sudanese government for the tragic plane crash.

First Vice-President, Ali Osman Taha, paid a visit to the families of the victims in Khartoum state to offer the condolences of the government. Other ministers and governors did the same for those whose families are living in other states.

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