



# United Nations Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS)

Media & Spokesperson Unit  
Communications & Public Information Office

## PRESS RELEASE

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### UNMISS pays tribute to deceased Russian helicopter crewmen

Friends and colleagues of the three Russian crew members who died in last Tuesday's crash of an UNMISS-contracted Mi-8 helicopter attended a memorial ceremony at the Mission's Tomping compound this morning to pay tribute to the deceased.

"It is with a deep sense of shared sadness that we gather today to commemorate the crew of UN flight 537," said the acting Head of UNMISS Toby Lanzer, adding in Russian that "they came here to help us to implement the mission, and we extend our heartfelt condolences."

Mr. Lanzer read out the names of the deceased crew members led by Captain Andrei Berdnikov, aged 50, Flight Engineer Tuktasyn Ishmetov, 57, and Flight Attendant Alexey Sazontov, 33.

The helicopter crashed near the Unity State capital of Bentiu on Tuesday afternoon as it was about to complete a routine cargo flight. A fourth crew member, Co-pilot Alexander Lobkov, survived the incident and was present at today's memorial ceremony.

The remains of the fallen airmen were flown to a UN regional support base in Entebbe, Uganda today from where they will be sent home to Russia.


The airmen were employed by UTAir Aviation, and the company's chief pilot in South Sudan, Oleg Belevikin, conveyed his sympathies to his late colleagues' families.

"We lost people who had plans for a bright future, people who came here to support peace," said Mr. Belevikin. "Each of your comrades had a family and children who were waiting for their return home; let's hope their families can cope with this."

In their honour, the United Nations is doing everything possible to resume its flights to Bentiu at the earliest opportunity.

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