

# Russian cosmonauts at fault in Mir crash

MOSCOW (AP) — Russia may fine two of its own cosmonauts for history's worst space collision, rejecting the veteran crew members' claim that Mir's worn-out equipment was to blame, an overseer of the space station said Tuesday.

A space commission concluded "beyond any doubt" that Vasily Tsibliyev and Alexander Lazutkin caused the damaging June 25 crash, which occurred during the practice docking of an unmanned robot spacecraft to the aging space station.

"Personally, we felt pity for the boys, but the facts remain," Valery Ryumin, the Russian coordinator of the Mir-NASA program, told the ITAR-Tass news agency. "Most likely we will have to fine them."

American astronaut Michael Foale, who remains aboard Mir, was the third member of the crew at the time of the accident. However, he — like other visiting astronauts — is not usually involved in operating or maintaining Mir.

Lazutkin and Tsibliyev returned to Earth after the crash, which bashed one of Mir's modules and cost the space station about half of its power.

The conclusions of the commission, which Ryumin said signed off on its report Tuesday, are unlikely to put all questions about the collision to rest.

Skeptics could argue that Russia has a vested interest in finding that technical problems aboard Mir — a cash cow for their struggling space program — did not cause the collision.

"It has been a longtime tradition here in Russia to look for scapegoats," Tsibliyev, the Mir commander, said after returning to Earth on Aug. 14.

A news anchor for Russian Television noted that the Mir was plagued by breakdowns throughout the crew's six-month mission. "Such a categorical conclusion that the

crew is to blame sounds rather strange," he said in a brief commentary after the finding Tuesday.

Ryumin, who also is deputy director of Energia — the company that built the Mir and oversees it — said the finding was reached after a thorough examination of flight data. But he would not specify in the interview what error the crew made.

It's not even certain the decision will stand. The head of the Russian Space Agency's manned flights program, Mikhail Sinelshchikov, told ITAR-Tass later that the commission has yet to make a final decision and another panel could still overturn it.

A spokesman at Russian Mission Control said ground controllers were unaware of the decision. A call to

Ryumin went unanswered.

Russia's space program has an elaborate bonus system that includes not only hazardous-duty pay, but specific payments for such tasks as spacewalks and manual dockings.

There is also precedent for financial penalties, with cosmonaut Gennady Strekalov saying he was stripped of some benefits for refusing to make an extra space walk from Mir in 1995.

This summer's near-calamitous Mir accident occurred during a practice manual docking. Tsibliyev was guiding a 7-ton supply ship toward its port by remote control when it started coming in too fast, banging into the Spektr laboratory module and puncturing its aluminum hull.

The Spektr had to be sealed off, causing the Mir to lose nearly half its power.

Some theorized that the Mir crew accidentally stuffed too much garbage into the cargo ship. One Russian newspaper, citing an unidentified source, claimed Tsibliyev failed to properly record in Mir's computer the extra weight on the cargo ship.

Reports in other Russian papers seemed to exonerate the crew.

Officials at the Russian Space Agency had said an inquiry couldn't determine what happened until the men came back to Earth. But a week before their return, President Boris Yeltsin — presumably briefed by space officials — said it looked like a

case of human error.

Tsibliyev and flight engineer Lazutkin apparently anticipated such a verdict. Following their return, they blamed the collision on the 11-year-old Mir's run-down equipment and expressed bitterness at being found at fault by Yeltsin and the media.

He said he couldn't explain why the cargo ship spun out of control, only that "there is no specific person to blame."

The Mir's current crew was busy Tuesday preparing for a spacewalk this weekend in which they will try to find and patch holes in the damaged Spektr.

The mission is expected to be the first in a series of spacewalks needed to spot and patch holes in the Spektr.

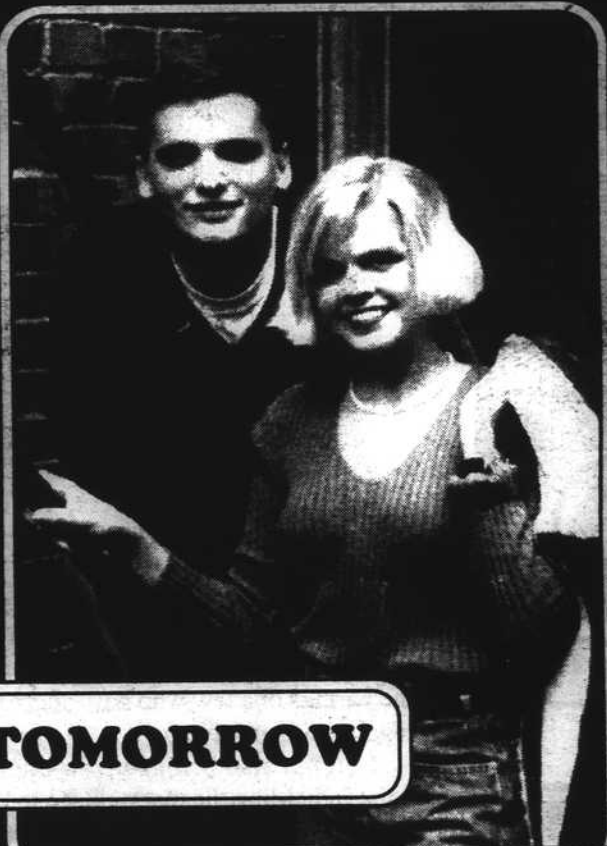
# FALL Sidewalk Sale

**Our Big Fall Extravaganza!**

**Great Sale Prices on New Fall Fashions**

**4 DAYS ONLY**

**Thursday 10-9 • Friday 10-6  
Saturday 10-6 • Sunday 12-6**



**STARTS TOMORROW**

**Drastic Reductions on Remaining Summer Merchandise!**

**Save 50-60-70%**

**Many New Fall Specials For Men & Women**

- |                 |                  |               |
|-----------------|------------------|---------------|
| <b>Sweaters</b> | <b>Outerwear</b> | <b>Skirts</b> |
| <b>Blouses</b>  | <b>Leathers</b>  | <b>Pants</b>  |
| <b>Shirts</b>   | <b>Flannels</b>  | <b>Boots</b>  |
| <b>Knits</b>    | <b>Blouses</b>   | <b>Suits</b>  |
| <b>Jeans</b>    | <b>Shoes</b>     | <b>Ties</b>   |



**the Post and Nickel**

**Men's & Women's Clothing, Sportswear, and Footwear  
Downtown at 14th & P**

**Credit Cards & Layaways  
Welcome**

**CORRECTION**

In Friday's Daily Nebraskan, Charles Zidko of Spencer was quoted as saying "I will fight all the way to the pen to see that money and safety are never substituted." Zidko said that he would fight all the way to the end, not the pen.

**Daily Nebraskan**

Questions? Comments? Ask for the appropriate section editor at (402) 472-2588 or e-mail dn@unlinfo.unl.edu.

- Editor: Paula Lavigne
- Managing Editor: Julie Sobczyk
- Associate News Editor: Rebecca Stone
- Assistant News Editor: Jeff Randall
- Assignment Editor: Chad Lorenz
- Opinion Editor: Jessica Kennedy
- Sports Editor: Mike Kluck
- A&E Editor: Jim Goodwin
- Copy Desk Chief: Nancy Zywiw
- Photo Director: Ryan Soderlin
- Design Director: Joshua Gillin
- Art Director: Aaron Steckelberg
- Online Editor: MaryAnn Meggy
- Asst. Online Editor: Amy Pemberton

- General Manager: Dan Shattil
- Publications Board Chairwoman: Melissa Myles, (402) 476-2446
- Professional Adviser: Don Walton, (402) 473-7301
- Advertising Manager: Nick Patsch, (402) 472-2589
- Assistant Ad Manager: Daniel Lam
- Classified Ad Manager: Tiffany Clifton

Fax number: (402) 472-1761  
World Wide Web: www.unl.edu/DailyNeb  
The Daily Nebraskan (USPS 144-080) is published by the UNL Publications Board, Nebraska Union 34, 1400 R St., Lincoln, NE 68588-0448, Monday through Friday during the academic year; weekly during the summer sessions. The public has access to the Publications Board.  
Readers are encouraged to submit story ideas and comments to the Daily Nebraskan by calling (402) 472-2588.  
Subscriptions are \$55 for one year.  
Postmaster: Send address changes to the Daily Nebraskan, Nebraska Union 34, 1400 R St., Lincoln NE 68588-0448. Periodical postage paid at Lincoln, NE.  
ALL MATERIAL COPYRIGHT 1997 THE DAILY NEBRASKAN