The First In-Flight Space Fatality

S P A C E   H I S T O R Y   C H A L L E N G E™

1. Which mission had the first in-flight space fatality?
   - A) *Soyuz-1*
   - B) Space Shuttle *Challenger*
   - C) *Apollo 13*

2. How old was Colonel Vladimir Komarov at the time of this mission?
   - A) 30
   - B) 35
   - C) 40

3. Why did the mission fail?
   - A) The oxygen tank exploded
   - B) The parachute did not open
   - C) The heat shield was damaged

4. What was the pilot doing minutes before the crash?
   - A) Screaming at mission control
   - B) Saying good-bye to his wife
   - C) Preparing for landing

5. What was the purpose of the flight?
   - A) Dock with another vehicle and exchange crew in flight
   - B) Take photographs of US missile sites
   - C) Test a lunar spacesuit

6. What was Col. Komarov's code name for this flight?
   - A) Rubin (ruby)
   - B) Izumrud (emerald)
   - C) Chayka (seagull)

7. Until its final moments, the spacecraft:
   - A) Operated flawlessly
   - B) Experienced usual/routine issues, which were easily overcome
   - C) Was beset by numerous technical problems

8. Which pilot was the mission backup?
   - A) Vladimir Titov
   - B) Yuri Gagarin
   - C) Sergei Gonchar

9. Where was Col. Komarov buried?
   - A) On a hill overlooking Moscow
   - B) In a wall at the Kremlin
   - C) At an undisclosed location

Answers:
1. (A) The mission took place April 23-24, 1967, and killed the pilot and only crew member, Colonel Vladimir Komarov.
2. (C)
3. (B) The main parachute did not release and the manually-deployed reserve chute tangled with the main's drogue. The *Soyuz-1* descent module hit the ground at around 40 meters per second (89mph).
4. (C)
5. (A) It was the first crewed flight of the Soyuz launch *7K-OK* spacecraft and Soyuz rocket. The *Soyuz-2* mission was aborted before launch, after the 13th orbit of *Soyuz-1*.
6. (A)
7. (C) There were numerous spacecraft design issues, but the flight proceeded due to political pressure.
8. (B)
9. (B) His ashes were interred in the Kremlin Wall Necropolis—the highest honor of the Soviet Union.

Learn more: "The Death of Vladimir Komarov: Pressure, Politics, and Parachutes" by Asif Siddiqi, PhD (Quest: Volume 27 #1)

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