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Putin Should Be Fined for Pilot Stunt, Bloggers Say

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Bloggers took issue with Prime Minister Vladimir Putin's decision to pilot a firefighting aircraft this week, saying he should be fined for operating a plane without a license.

Without a pilot's license, which can require years of training to obtain, Putin faces a fine of 2,000 to 2,500 rubles ($66 to $82), blogger viking_nord wrote on his LiveJournal blog.

News reports said Putin took the co-pilot's seat after receiving brief instructions but did not mention him having a license.

Putin helped dump water onto two fires in the Ryazan region in what political analysts called a publicity stunt to show the nation that he was at the forefront of efforts to extinguish the wildfires that have ravaged central Russia this summer.

Lawyer and activist Andrei Navalny pointed out on his blog that Putin was actually seated in the captain's, not the co-pilot's, seat.

Putin, who also sat in the pilot's seat of a Tu-160 bomber in 2005 and a Su-27 fighter in 2000, made no public comment about the bloggers' complaints Wednesday.

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