

Prosecutors Admit Envoy Poached

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Law enforcement agencies publicly admitted for the first time that the late presidential envoy to the State Duma who died in a helicopter crash in the Altai mountains in 2009 was poaching endangered species during the trip.

Alexander Kosopkin ordered his subordinates to hire the helicopter for the trip and "himself took part in the illegal hunt," a prosecutor told an Altai district court Wednesday, RIA-Novosti [reported](#).

The helicopter crashed in the mountains, killing seven of 11 people on board. Three survivors, two high-level officials and a businessman, were accused of poaching, punishable with up to two years in prison. The fourth, a pilot, escaped charges.

The incident was thrust into the media spotlight after environmental activists spotted corpses of argali sheep, a local endangered species, in photos from the crash site. The investigation proceeded slowly, which spectators blamed on officials' reluctance to sue fellow bureaucrats, but led to a trial that began Wednesday.

The suspects pleaded not guilty.

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