

Governor Faces Inquiry for Delaying Jet

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Prosecutors have opened a check into whether Irkutsk Governor Dmitry Mezentsev broke the law by ordering an Aeroflot plane filled with passengers to wait for him for more than an hour.

Regional transportation prosecutors will decide within 10 days whether Mezentsev should be charged with violating a law on consumer rights when he delayed the regular flight from Irkutsk to Moscow because he was running late on June 8, regional news agency Teleinform [reported](#) Tuesday.

Such delays are illegal but happen frequently, the head of the air traffic controllers union told Ekho Moskvyy radio on Sunday. He said he has faced similar delays on Rostov-Moscow flights when Rostov's governor was running late.

But Mezentsev is unlikely to be punished, said two senior State Duma deputies, Andrei Vorobyov and Alexander Khinstein. Both criticized Mezentsev's actions in [interviews](#) with Kommersant published Tuesday.

Mezentsev is a United Russia supporter but not a member.

The fact that a check has been opened indicates that the "irritation" of Itkutsk residents with Mezentsev "has reached a high degree" and the Kremlin may soon replace him, said Nikolai Petrov, an analyst with the Carnegie Moscow Center.

Mezentsev, 51, a native of St. Petersburg, was appointed in June 2009 and his term expires in June 2014, according to his office's [web site](#).

Local discontent with Mezentsev stems from his lack of governing experience, his outsider status as a St. Petersburg resident, and the disappointment of local residents with the two previous governors, Petrov said. Those factors resulted in a poor showing for United Russia in regional elections last year, he said.

Mezentsev, meanwhile, said he would not lease a private plane because of its high cost, Izvestia [reported](#) Tuesday.

The pilot of the delayed Aeroflot flight, who was outraged by being forced to wait for the governor last week, has accepted an invitation from him to a meal, the report said.

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