The Moscow Times
30 YEARS
INDEPENDENT NEWS FROM RUSSIA

Last Surviving Lokomotiv Player Galimov Dies in Hospital

By Alexandra Odynova

September 12, 2011



Galimov in Lokomotiv's team shirt.

Alexander Galimov, the sole surviving player from the Yak-42 crash that wiped out the Lokomotiv Yaroslavl ice hockey team last week, died on Monday after five days in the hospital.

His death brings the death toll from the incident to 44. But doctors said the last survivor, flight attendant Alexander Sizov, released from an intensive care ward Monday, was expected to pull through.

Meanwhile, officials continued to rule out various technical malfunctions as the cause of the crash but offered no alternative explanations.

The Yak-42, chartered to take Lokomotiv to Minsk for the opening game of the Kontinental Hockey League, hit a navigation beacon at the end of the runway on takeoff Wednesday

and slammed into the ground, falling apart and bursting into flames.

Galimov, 26, was thrown out of the plane and into the small Tunoshonka River nearby, his first coach, Nikolai Kazakevich, told the Sovietsky Sport daily on Friday.

The winger actually jumped back into the water, trying to save the others, Kazakevich said, citing the rescuers. He added that Galimov stayed conscious in the ambulance.

But the player sustained burns to 90 percent of his body and numerous other injuries, one of which required a trachea transplant.

The country rooted for him, with the doors of Moscow's Vishnevsky Surgical Institute plastered with posters reading, "Hang in there, Sasha." But on Monday morning, the institute's blog announced that he had died of "fatal burns."

Galimov, a Muslim, will be buried in the Islamic custom at a cemetery outside Yaroslavl on Tuesday, Yaroslavl-based Imam Ramzan-Khazrat Rashidov said, Interfax reported.

Galimov had played for Lokomotiv, previously known as Torpedo, since he was 5. He won the 2005 World Junior Ice Hockey Championships in the United States with the Russian squad, and was a two-time runner-up for the KHL title with Lokomotiv. He is survived by a wife and young daughter.

The other survivor, Sizov, has numerous broken bones and burns to 15 percent of his body. His life is not in danger, and he was moved into a regular ward, Interfax said.

The Investigative Committee plans to question him about the accident as soon as doctors allow, a spokesman said Monday. No time frame was given.

Nineteen Yaroslavl-born players killed in the crash were laid to rest in the city on Saturday after a funeral attended by 100,000 people, including Prime Minister Vladimir Putin.

The team's roster included players from Belarus, the Czech Republic, Germany, Lithuania, Slovakia, Sweden and Ukraine, as well as Canadian coach Brad McCrimmon. Their bodies were sent for funerals to their home countries.

Two of the 44 victims remained unidentified Monday, pending DNA tests.

President Dmitry Medvedev personally took up the matter of refilling the ranks of three-time Russian champions Lokomotiv at a Monday meeting with government members and club officials.

The team, which has a strong junior squad, will miss the 2011-12 season of the Kontinental Hockey League and will be guaranteed a slot in the play-offs next season, Interfax reported. It will also boost its ranks with volunteers from other teams and be exempt from the draft until 2017, sparing it from losing players to other clubs.

The cause of the crash remained unclear Monday. Flight recorders, recovered last week, were still being analyzed, and the Interstate Aviation Committee was preparing a simulation of the incident, committee chairwoman Tatyana Anodina said. She did not elaborate.

The flight recorders have yielded no information pointing to any malfunctions, Anodina told Putin at a meeting on aviation safety Monday.

"The plane's load was within acceptable limits, a pre-flight check by the crew of all controls showed all functions were normal, and the [plane's] elevator also worked fine," Anodina said, according to a transcript on the prime minister's web site.

Putin asked investigators to find out why the pilot did not use the emergency brakes when the plane had rolled off the end of the runway.

Officials also sought to disprove once more a persistent rumor that the plane had failed to gain enough speed because it did not have enough runway. Most of the takeoff strip was occupied by private jets bringing guests to the Global Political Forum that took place in Yaroslavl on Wednesday and Thursday.

The plane used 2.8 kilometers of the three-kilometer runway for takeoff, Oleg Kochanov, head of Yaroslavl's Tunoshna Airport, told Interfax.

The three-engine jet, built in 1993, underwent repairs, including an engine replacement, at Kazan's Tulpar Tekhnik hangers last month, but no "irregularities" were reported during or after the repair work, prosecutors said Monday.

Albert Safin, a senior official with the Federal Air Transportation Agency, described Tulpar as one of the best jet maintenance companies in the business, Interfax said.

Original url:
https://www.themoscowtimes.com/2011/09/12/last-surviving-lokomotiv-player-galimov-dies-in-hospital-a9497