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Report: Pilot Error Caused Lokomotiv Crash

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Pilot error was to blame for the plane crash that devastated Yaroslavl's elite Lokomotiv ice hockey team last month, Kommersant reported on Wednesday, citing anonymous sources within the investigation.

After a series of tests designed to reproduce conditions aboard the Yak-42 prior to the Sept. 7 crash, specialists at the Gromov Test Flight Institute confirmed that the plane failed to gain enough speed at takeoff because one of the pilots was applying the brakes.

Forty-four were killed when the chartered jet, operated by Yak Service and carrying Lokomotiv to Minsk for its first regular-season game, crashed shortly after takeoff.

The investigators did not speculate why the pilot applied the brakes during takeoff. Others have hypothesized that he was tired, distracted or possibly suicidal.

The only survivor, mechanic Alexander Sizov, said in an interview last week with Channel One that the plane was slow to take off, but he did not feel any jerky motions, as might be expected

if the pilot had slammed on the brakes.

Mechanical failure and bad fuel were other early theories, but these have been ruled out by investigators from the Interstate Aviation Committee.

Last month, investigators ruled that pilot error was mostly to blame for a June plane crash in Petrozavodsk that killed 47.

Fourteen plane crashes have killed 120 in Russia this year, more aviation fatalities than in any other country, according to a database maintained by Aviation-safety.net.

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