

Charges Filed in Hockey Jet Tragedy

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September 06, 2012



Then-President Dmitry Medvedev laying flowers near the wreckage of the Yak-42 that carried the Lokomotiv hockey team the day on Sept. 8, 2011, the day after the crash.

On the eve of the anniversary of the plane crash that devastated Yaroslavl's Lokomotiv hockey team, investigators have charged an airline official with causing the tragedy.

Vadim Timofeyev, a former deputy director at Yak-Service, which operated the Yak-42 charter jet, allowed pilots to fly without proper training or documentation, making him directly responsible for the crash, an Investigative Committee spokesman said Thursday.

"If Timofeyev had conscientiously carried out his professional responsibilities ... the tragedy wouldn't have occurred," Vladimir Markin said in a [video](#) posted on the committee's website.

Timofeyev will face up to seven years in prison if convicted of violating transportation safety rules.

Forty-four people, including most of Lokomotiv's roster and coaching staff, were killed when

their Yak-42 crashed on takeoff in Yaroslavl on Sept. 7, 2011.

The dead included several foreign sport stars, including the team's Canadian coach, Brad McCrimmon, 52, a former blue liner for the Detroit Red Wings, as well as Kazakh-born German Robert Dietrich, and Slovak legend Pavol Demitra.

Aviation investigators blamed the crash on multiple pilot errors, including sedatives in a pilot's blood and inadequate training that led to a crucial instrument mix-up.

Having trained on a different airplane, at least one of the two pilots mistakenly placed his feet on the brakes as the plane thrust down the runway, preventing it from gathering enough speed.

The crew had been scheduled to undergo re-training Sept. 5-17 but instead were flying, investigators said Thursday.

Locals and relatives have expressed skepticism about the official explanation. Speculation has swirled that the plane's takeoff was rushed to make way for officials arriving for a forum hosted by then-President Dmitry Medvedev.

Last year a small group of victims' relatives hired prominent Moscow lawyer Igor Trunov to challenge the official version.

The crash sent shockwaves through the hockey world and sparked a new round of soul-searching and finger-pointing about Russia's dismal aviation safety record. Eight fatal crashes last year killed 120, with Russia surpassing even the Democratic Republic of Congo in the number of aircraft-related fatalities.

Analysts blamed deep-running problems such as poor aircraft maintenance, a lack of pilots, poor flight training, aging production facilities and negligent state supervision.

Victims' relatives and loved ones will mark the anniversary in a private ceremony at a local church, followed by a gathering at the crash site on Friday, the team said in a statement on its website.

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