

Smolensk Balks at Polish Request for Crash Memorial Site Bigger Than Red Square

By [The Moscow Times](#)

April 04, 2013

The  **Moscow Times**

Poland has asked a 100,000-square-meter plot of land — an area slightly larger than Red Square — to create a memorial in the Smolensk region to commemorate a plane crash that killed the country's president and 95 other people in 2010, a news report said Wednesday.

But the memorial, which was supposed to open next week to commemorate the third anniversary of the April 10 crash, remains on the drawing board amid a squabble over the size and where to place it, Izvestia said.

"It would be strange if we met this request" for 100,000 square meters of land, an Smolensk regional official told the newspaper.

"Residents won't understand why the memorial needs to take up so much space," said the official, who was not identified.

In comparison, Red Square occupies 90,000 square meters.

An agreement to establish the memorial was reached by Dmitry Medvedev and Bronislaw Komorowski of Poland in 2011. The Polish side wants to construct a 115-meter-tall memorial as well as a chapel, a museum and a parking lot, Izvestia said. The Poles would finance the project, while the Russians would provide the land.

Smolensk Governor Alexei Ostrovsky said steps should be taken not to offend locals with the memorial. But, he added, "We'll do everything in our power to realize this effort," Izvestia reported.

Polish President Lech Kaczynski and other senior government officials died when their Tu-154 jet crashed as it tried to land in heavy fog. Kaczynski's delegation was flying to Smolensk to attend a memorial service for thousands of Polish nationals killed by the Soviet secret police during the Katyn forest massacre in 1940.

Pilot error has been blamed for the crash, while the Poles have also said Russian air traffic controllers should bear some of the responsibility.

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