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Historians Discover Plane of Soviet War Hero Viktor Talalikhin

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Viktor Talalikhin

As Russia commemorated the 73rd anniversary of the Nazi invasion of the Soviet Union on Sunday, historians confirmed the discovery of the plane of revered war hero Viktor Talalikhin in a forest outside Moscow.

Talalikhin, a flight commander with the Soviet Air Force, made history when he became one of the first pilots to deliberately ram an enemy plane at night, after finding himself under attack with no ammunition left to spare during a World War II aerial battle.

"I took a decision to ram into the plane, to sacrifice myself," Talalikhin was quoted as saying in a report aired Sunday on Russian television channel Pervy Kanal.

After colliding with the German bomber, which was advancing on Moscow, Talalikhin's plane went into a spin. He managed to eject himself and release his parachute, before landing safely

in a nearby lake.

While Talalikhin managed to escape from the battle unharmed, little was known about the final resting place of his aircraft until a local resident recently alerted a group of historians to the site of a Soviet plane wreckage in a forest 20 kilometers outside of Moscow.

After checking the serial numbers printed on the plane's body and engine, historians found the aircraft had been registered on official documents as a write-off following its involvement in an air-ramming in August 1941, Pervy Kanal reported, citing group member Sergei Katkov.

The historians received official confirmation that the plane belonged to Talalikhin when they checked their data with the Defense Ministry's central archives and found the numbers printed on the aircraft's frame and engine were a match.

Talalikhin, who was awarded the Order of Lenin for his actions, died just a month after the infamous collision when he received a fatal shot to the head upon his return to battle.

He was given a hero's burial at Moscow's Novodevichy Convent, which — in terms of prestige during Soviet times— was second only to being buried at the Kremlin.

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