

4 Jailed Over Deadly Volga Shipwreck

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Four of the five people that were convicted last week of crimes connected with the biggest shipwreck in Russia's post-Soviet history were handed prison terms Monday by a Tatarstan court.

The 56-year-old Bulgaria river-cruise ship went down in 2011 in a storm on the Volga with 201 people on board.

Only 79 of those onboard at the time survived the disaster, for which a combination of neglected maintenance and crew error were blamed.

Svetlana Inyakina, 43, the head of the company that subleased the ship, was sentenced to 11 years in prison, Tatarstan prosecutors said.

The businesswoman was found guilty of numerous safety-rule violations in a verdict handed down last week.

The ship's first mate was given 6 1/2 years in prison, and two ex-officials with the Federal Sea and River Transportation agency were handed between five and six years.

Another official with the Russian River Register was also given a five-year term for abuse of office, but qualified for an ongoing amnesty and was released in the courtroom despite muttering from some 200 plaintiffs, Komsomolskaya Pravda reported.

The officials stood accused of certifying the Bulgaria fit to sail despite its decrepit condition.

The Bulgaria's captain went down with his ship and was spared a posthumous trial, which is permitted under Russian law.

The court also allocated 50 million rubles (\$1.4 million) in damages to victims and their families, Kazanfirst.ru local news website reported.

Only one of the defendants pleaded guilty to one of several charges against him. It was not immediately clear whether any of them planned to appeal.

Two captains of ships that passed the sinking Bulgaria were previously fined for ignoring the survivors' cries for help, leading to a further spike in the body count, investigators said earlier.

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