

150 Russian Pilots Detained for Invalid Licenses

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The Federal Air Transportation Agency (Rosaviatsia) has detained 150 pilots, both amateurs and professionals, who were flying passenger and cargo airplanes without valid licenses, the M24 television channel reported Thursday.

An enquiry was launched by Rosaviatsia following the Aug. 8 tragedy over the Istra reservoir in the Moscow region in which a helicopter and light aircraft collided in mid-air, killing nine people, including two children. An investigation revealed that the aircraft pilot's license was invalid, the Interfax news agency reported Wednesday.

Most of the detained pilots had been granted licenses after submitting forged medical documents or lying about their flying experience, M24 reported.

Some invalid licenses were issued by unauthorized organizations such as the Russian Aviation Federation, an organization that was prohibited from issuing licenses five years ago by

Russian courts. A valid pilot's license can only be obtained at state-run facilities or accredited centers, Rosaviatsia officials said.

A complete list of accredited centers is available on Rosaviatsia's website.

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