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Airline Official Swiftly Amnestied Over Yaroslavl Plane Crash That Killed Hockey Team

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Prime Minister Dmitry Medvedev laying flowers on the site of the Yak-42 crash.

Four years after a plane crash in the Russian city of Yaroslavl claimed 44 lives — the entire local hockey team Lokomotiv and several crew members — a guilty verdict was handed down to the deputy head of Yak-Service, the airline that had operated the flight.

Vadim Timofeyev was found guilty Wednesday by a district court in Yaroslavl of violating airplane regulations that led to severe consequences, the Kommersant newspaper reported.

He was convicted to five years in a penal colony, but was immediately released and his conviction expunged under an amnesty declared by the State Duma in honor of the 70th anniversary of victory in World War II.

On Sept. 7, 2011, a Yak-42 plane with the Lokomotiv Yaroslavl hockey team on board crashed near Yaroslavl. Only flight engineer Alexander Sizov survived the crash.

According to the prosecution, Timofeyev, who was responsible for organizing flight operations, knew the two pilots were not qualified to operate Yak-42 aircraft, but approved the flight using falsified documents, the report said.

During his final speech before the sentencing, Timofeyev refused to plead guilty, but expressed his condolences to the families of the deceased and said he would have preferred to have died in the plane crash rather than standing trial.

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