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Amur Region Court Jails Gold Mine Employees Over Deadly Collapse

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The Pioneer Mine. **Russian Emergencies Ministry / TASS**

A court in Far East Russia on Friday sentenced two former gold mine employees to five and a half years in prison each over a deadly mining accident last year.

Thirteen miners were buried alive at the Pioneer Mine in the Amur region in March 2024 after a torrent of water and mud led to the collapse of the underground shaft where they were working. Rescuers were never able to reach the men, and a search for their bodies was eventually abandoned.

A monument honoring the miners was unveiled near the site earlier this year.

The Zeisky District Court in the Amur region found Pioneer Mine's former managing director Alexei Biryukov and chief engineer Denis Chernikov guilty of involuntary manslaughter due to safety violations. Both men had pleaded guilty to the charges.

According to investigators, the two men failed to have water pumped out of a quarry that had

gradually filled with rainwater despite knowing about the problem. Biryukov and Chernikov were also said to have allowed the mine to operate without the necessary permits since 2019.

Authorities said their inaction played a key role in the disaster.

The Pioneer mine is owned by Atlas Mining, which was sanctioned by the EU in May for its role in supporting Russia's war economy.

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