

Lokomotiv Pilot Confused Brakes With Footrest

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The pilot of the chartered Yak-42 that crashed in September, killing most of the Yaroslavl Lokomotiv hockey team, confused the plane's brakes with footrests during takeoff, precipitating the tragedy, Kommersant [reported](#) Monday.

Having trained on a Yak-40, pilot Andrei Solomentsev thought he was putting his feet on footrests when he was actually slowing the plane down. Then, as he tried to lift off, he jammed on the brakes even harder, investigators said.

As a result, the Yak-42 failed to gain enough speed on the runway. It began to fall moments after takeoff, clipping a navigation beacon before slamming into the ground and bursting into flames.

Forty-four passengers and crew — including nearly the entire Lokomotiv team and Canadian head coach Brad McCrimmon — died in the crash. Only mechanic Alexander Sizov survived.

Investigators say it is not uncommon for Yak-40 pilots to confuse the pedals on the newer

Yak-42s, but in most cases, the errors are quickly recognized and corrected. The Interstate Aviation Committee, which is running the investigation, has ordered airlines to conduct additional pilot training.

Solomentsev's decision not to abort the flight after the Yak-42 failed to take off has been more difficult to explain. Investigators believe he was afraid that he and his company, Yak-Service, would be punished if Lokomotiv was late for its season-opener in Minsk. He also might have worried that braking at 185 kilometers per hour — the plane had already rolled off the runway — was dangerous.

The results of the investigation into the crash would be made public on Wednesday, the committee said.

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