

# 3 Tourists Dead in North Caucasus Attacks

February 18, 2011

**The  Moscow Times**

ROSTOV-ON-DON — A group of camouflage-clad men claiming to be security forces killed three Russian tourists and wounded two others in an alpine resort area close to Mount Elbrus, police said Saturday.

The attack raises fresh questions about the government's plans for developing the area.

The tourists were attacked Friday night as they were taking a minivan from a regional airport to the winter sports resort area of Baksan in the republic of Kabardino-Balkaria, said regional police spokesman Maxim Ushanov. Baksan is near Mount Elbrus, Europe's highest mountain and a popular ski area.

Also Saturday, news reports said an explosion heavily damaged a ski lift on one of the slopes of Mount Elbrus. The reports cited local law enforcement officials, who couldn't be reached immediately for confirmation.

There was no immediate public claim of responsibility for either attack. The North Caucasus is

beset by violence by Islamic insurgents and criminal gangs, and attacks on police and other authorities occur almost daily.

The government last month unveiled a \$15 billion plan to build five major ski resorts in the North Caucasus, striving to address the poverty and high unemployment feeding violence in the region. Attacks on tourists and resort infrastructure have the potential to deter foreign investment in the projects.

"Programs for the development of tourism in the Northern Caucasus will not be changed, despite the obvious intention of these terrorist acts," Alexander Radykov, deputy head of the Federal Tourism Agency, was quoted as telling RIA-Novosti on Saturday.

The attacks also could contribute to anxiety about security at the 2014 Winter Olympics, which are to be held in the North Caucasus resort area of Sochi, about 250 kilometers west of the Elbrus area.

According to Ushanov, the tourists were riding in a van taking them to Baksan from the airport in Mineralnye Vody, a resort town, when men in masks and camouflage who said they were security officers stopped the vehicle. The men demanded that the tourists leave the vehicle, and when the tourists refused, the masked men opened fire, he said.

Original url:

<https://www.themoscowtimes.com/2011/02/18/3-tourists-dead-in-north-caucasus-attacks-a5105>