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Airstrikes, Mortar Blasts on Mount Elbrus

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Law enforcement agencies carried out airstrikes and mortar bombings in a hunt for militants on the slopes of Europe's highest peak, but it remained unclear Wednesday whether any insurgents were killed, Interfax reported.

An Investigative Committee representative said one officer was killed and six others were injured during a clash in Kabardino-Balkaria but denied earlier reports that three to five militants were killed, saying no information was available on militant casualties.

A shelter stocked with food, firearms, explosives and police uniforms and capable of housing eight people was found on the slopes of Mount Elbrus, a spokesman for the National Anti-Terrorism Committee said.

Earlier reports said Interior Troops encountered a group of seven militants in the woodland area and engaged them in a gunfight, killing at least three. A law enforcement source told Interfax that the militants were the first to attack, firing at an Interior Troops checkpoint not far from the village of Bylym.

A search was ongoing in the area late Wednesday.

The National Anti-Terrorism Committee spokesman said the militants sought on Elbrus might be the same people who gunned down three Moscow tourists at a local ski resort last week.

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