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TV Journalist Slain in North Caucasus

By The Moscow Times

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A TV journalist shot dead on Wednesday night in the North Caucasus republic of Kabardino-Balkaria was likely slain in connection with his work, investigators said in a statement Thursday.

Kazbek Gekkiyev, 28, a correspondent and host for state-owned Vesti KBR, was shot three times in the head at about 9 p.m. in Nalchik, the region's capital, and died on the spot, media reports said.

"Are you the host Kazbek Gekkiyev?" the killers asked. "Yes," Gekkiyev said, and they fired, Vesti reported, a detail that led investigators to suspect a link to Gekkiyev's journalistic work.

The killing is a threat against all journalists who "cover the fight against the criminal underground in the republic," investigators said.

But Gekkiyev did not cover any "acute, criminal topics" or counter-terrorism operations in the North Caucasus, Vesti.ru reported, adding that other TV newscasters in Nalchik have

received threats in the past.

Russia is consistently ranked among the most dangerous countries for journalists, 53 of whom have been killed since 1992, according to the Committee to Protect Journalists.

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