

Security Forces Kill 7 Suspected Militants in North Caucasus, Report Says

By [The Moscow Times](#)

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Security forces killed seven suspected Islamist militants in the restive North Caucasus republic of Kabardino-Balkaria on Tuesday, Interfax reported.

Three suspected militants were killed when security forces fired on two cars whose drivers did not respond to demands to show identification documents, unidentified law enforcement officials told the news agency.

Separately, Interfax also quoted Russia's federal anti-terrorist committee as saying four more alleged militants, suspected of illegal arms sales, were killed in the same republic on Tuesday and another eight people were arrested.

The reports made no mention of any casualties among security forces. Police could not immediately be reached for comment, and the Interfax account of the violence could not be independently confirmed.

Deadly exchanges of gunfire between police and suspected militants are common at road checkpoints and elsewhere in the North Caucasus, an area hit by an Islamist insurgency rooted in two separatist wars in Chechnya.

Kabardino-Balkaria, west of Chechnya, is mostly Muslim but has a sizable Christian minority.

The region is in the spotlight ahead of the 2014 Winter Olympics, which Russia will host in the Black Sea resort of Sochi, at the western end of the Caucasus mountain range.

Russia is trying to ensure security at the games, which Putin hopes will help improve Russia's image abroad. But the games have also become a declared target of the Islamist umbrella group Caucasus Emirate, which has in the past claimed responsibility for bloody attacks in the country.

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