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Leader of Caucasus Militant Group and 3 Others Killed, Committee Says

By The Moscow Times

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Russian security forces have killed four alleged militants including the leader of a group suspected of carrying out attacks on tourists and ski facilities in the North Caucasus, a government agency said Monday.

The suspects were killed by FSB security service officers who besieged a home in the Kabardino-Balkaria republic near Mount Elbrus, Europe's highest peak and a destination for skiers and climbers, the National Anti-Terrorist Committee said.

It said the dead men included Arsen Khandokhov, whom it described as the leader of a militant cell suspected of crimes including the killing of two tourists and attacks on a ski lift.

According to the website Caucasian Knot, Khandokhov fought in the breakaway Georgian province of Abkhazia two decades ago and later in Chechnya joined militants in the Elbrus area after his release from jail and had recently become their leader.

President Vladimir Putin has tightened laws aimed at curbing Islamist militants ahead of the Winter Olympics in nearby Sochi and ordered the authorities to ensure security at the Games.

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