

Reported Ethnic Clashes in Russia's Caucasus Prompt Investigation

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Screenshot Youtube

Investigators have opened a probe into reports of violent ethnic clashes this week in the Caucasus republic of Kabardino-Balkaria over a disputed 18th-century battle.

The Battle of Kanzhal of 1708 is celebrated by modern Kabardins as a victory of local tribes over the Crimean Khanate, a claim that has been [disputed](#) in the past by members of the Balkar ethnic group. On the 310-year anniversary of the battle this week, groups of Balkars tried to prevent Kabardins from crossing their village on horseback to mark the anniversary, local media [reported](#).

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Subsequent reports said the violence spread from the Balkar village of Kendelen to two nearby

villages on Wednesday. Sounds of gunfire were heard in social media footage [shared](#) by several local outlets, and the Kommersant business daily [cited](#) residents saying several people had been injured.

The regional Investigative Committee said local police and National Guard troops were deployed to prevent clashes between the Kabardins and Balkars.

“Unidentified persons used physical violence against government officials and also tried to provoke a confrontation,” Kabardino-Balkaria investigators [said](#) in an online statement Wednesday.

They accused the same provocateurs of spreading “misleading information on social media and inciting ethnic hatred.”

Former regional head and current Senator Arsen Kanokov appealed for calm and blamed outside forces for trying to “drive a wedge” between the Kabardins and Balkars.

“It’s sad that our Kabardino-Balkar youth, perhaps inflamed by some imaginary patriots, easily bought into this,” he [wrote](#) on the Vkontakte social media website.

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