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Russian Priests Fight River Flooding With Prayer From Above

By AFP

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Russian Orthodox Priests onboard the Soviet-era AN-2 plane. **kurganvera.ru**

A group of Russian Orthodox priests flew over a swelling river on Friday, taking with them a religious icon as they prayed for an end to unprecedented flooding that has gripped several regions over the past week.

Rising rivers in Russia's southern Urals and western Siberia, as well as northern Kazakhstan, have inundated scores of towns and cities and forced thousands of people to evacuate.

In the Kurgan region, priests boarded a small Soviet-era AN-2 plane with an icon of the "Mother of God Chimeyevskaya" for what they called a "procession in the air." The priests recited prayers as their plane swooped over Tobol the river, which has submerged entire fields.

The flight came ahead of peak flooding in the Kurgan region, which is expected in the second

half of April.

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The Kurgan eparchy of the Russian Orthodox Church said the clergy had joined a monitoring flight with emergency services.

"During the flight, the clergymen read out a prayer to the Mother of God and performed a prayer service to overcome the natural disaster," it said in a statement.

Local Orthodox head Metropolitan Daniil said believers had asked him to fly over the flood zone and pray.

The priest said icons had traditionally helped Russia in times of trouble and will now help it deal with the worst floods in decades. He has instructed churches along the Tobol River to pray for the water to recede.

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