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Russian Swimmer Missing After Bosphorus Race in Turkey

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Nikolai Svechnikov. **Social media**

A Russian swimmer went missing during an annual open-water competition in Turkey on Sunday, relatives and friends told state news agency RIA Novosti.

Nikolai Svechnikov, 29, reportedly failed to reach the finish line of the 6.5-kilometer (4 miles) Bosphorus Cross-Continental Swim, which drew more than 2,800 athletes from 81 countries, including some 450 Russians.

Fellow swimmers said they last saw Svechnikov mid-race. Organizers told RIA Novosti he may have suffered fatigue, a cramp or been carried off by currents, while relatives insisted he was in good health and had trained for months.

Search efforts began two hours after the competition ended, though Istanbul police reportedly declined to open a missing person case until 24 hours later. Witnesses also claimed they did not see rescue boats at night, despite organizers insisting the search was underway.

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“The coast guard told me verbally: Be assured, all services are searching for Nikolai. I cried and begged them to show me video footage or a search point. They just took my number and repeated: ‘Don’t worry, we’re looking for him,’” a relative, identified as Alyona, told RIA Novosti.

Russia’s Consulate General in Istanbul said it was in contact with the Turkish authorities about Svechnikov’s disappearance. The organizer of the swimming event, the Turkish Olympic Committee, said it was working with the police and coast guard to help find the Russian swimmer.

According to the official competition website, swimmers were given two hours to complete the course. Anyone who did not finish the race within that time frame was supposed to be picked up by the Turkish coast guard, it added.

Some of the swimmers criticized what they described as poor monitoring and a lack of rescue boats along the course. The competition was followed by a naval parade through the Bosphorus as part of an event overseen by President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan.

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