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Bodies of Missing 12-Year-Old Girls Found in Siberia's Yenisei River

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A shoe belonging to one of the missing girls in the republic of Tyva. **Republic of Tyva Interior Ministry**

The bodies of two girls who went missing in Siberia's republic of Tyva earlier this month have been recovered from the Yenisei River, regional authorities said Thursday.

The 12-year-old girls left their homes in the regional capital of Kyzyl on July 1. Law enforcement launched a search operation shortly after the girls vanished, later discovering their cellphones and shoes on the riverbanks.

Vladislav Khovalyg, the head of Tyva, said Thursday that search teams recovered two bodies matching the description of the missing girls, adding that formal identification is underway.

"This is an incredibly heavy and painful moment for all of us," Khovalyg wrote in a Telegram post.

The regional branch of Russia's Emergency Situations Ministry said one of the bodies was found near a village southwest of Kyzyl, which lies 125 kilometers (78 miles) north of Russia's

border with Mongolia.

Earlier this week, investigators told state media they were looking into accidental drowning, suicide or foul play as potential explanations for the disappearances.

The Yenisei River, which originates in Mongolia, flows north through central Siberia to the Kara Sea and is one of the three major Siberian rivers emptying into the Arctic Ocean.

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