

Kabardino-Balkaria Avalanche Death toll Climbs to 13 as Rescue Efforts Continue

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Emergency personnel board a helicopter. **Russian Emergencies Ministry**

At least 13 people are now confirmed to have died after an avalanche struck a group of climbers in the North Caucasus republic of Kabardino-Balkaria, Russian emergency services said Wednesday.

The avalanche swept down Mount Mizhirgi, one of the highest peaks in the North Caucasus, at around 5 p.m. local time on Sunday, hitting a group of 33 climbers. Ten climbers had made their own way down the mountain by Monday morning.

Russia's Emergency Situations Ministry [said](#) 12 bodies had been lowered to the Bezengi base camp on Tuesday evening, with the fate of five climbers still unknown. By Wednesday morning, the ministry said rescuers [found](#) the body of the 13th climber.

Russia's National Guard [said](#) some of its servicemen were among the dead. It also denied [reports](#) that the victims included members of its elite Vityaz formation, which specializes in high-risk law enforcement operations.

One of those killed was a professional climber involved in training “representatives of law enforcement agencies,” Alexander Yakovenko, a member of the Russian Mountaineering Federation, [told](#) the newspaper Kommersant.

Search and rescue efforts have been hampered by difficult terrain and a high risk of further avalanches, officials said.

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