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Spate of Deadly Bear Attacks in Russia Has Left 35 People Dead

By Reuters

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A spate of deadly bear attacks has left 35 people dead across Russia since the start of the spring, with the latest victim a security guard at a holiday camp in the Kamchatka region, the state-run RIA Novosti news agency reported Wednesday.

The number of deaths has risen sharply in recent weeks, rising to 35 from 22 as of early October, according to RIA Novosti.

Russia's population of brown bears has more than doubled in the last three decades to 308,000, in part due to shorter and milder winters. Some regions have struggled to control bear numbers and the government said in September it was drawing up measures to make it easier to cull them.

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Alexei Tsydenov, the head of the republic of Buryatia where at least two people have been killed by bears so far this year, told state TV this month that rising bear numbers and the spike in attacks on humans was partly linked to hunters enlisting in the army at a time when Russia's forces are fighting in Ukraine.

Tsydenov, who said there had been an unusual number of bear-related incidents this years, cited other factors too, including a poor harvest, forest fires and a drop in Chinese demand for bear products such as bile and paws.

Russia is only using around 27% of its quota limit for bear cullings, zoologist Mikhail Krechmar told the state-run TASS agency in an interview.

Russia's hunting and fishing union did not immediately respond to a Reuters request for comment.

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