

Beat: Miscellaneous

Death toll rises to 17 after landslide in Tibet; 66 still missing

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USPA News - Chinese rescue workers have recovered sixteen more bodies after a massive landslide buried more than 80 workers at a polymetal mining site in Tibet, raising the overall death toll to at least seventeen, state-run media reported on Sunday. Dozens more remain missing.

The accident happened at 6 a.m. local time on Friday when the landslide hit a workers' camp belonging to the Jiamia Copper Polymetallic Mine in Maizhokunggar County, located about 68 kilometers (42 miles) east of Lhasa, the capital of Tibet. The landslide, with some 2 million cubic meters (2.6 million cubic yards) of mud, rock and debris, covered an area approximately 3 kilometers (1.86 mile) long. Rescue workers recovered the first body at 5:35 p.m. local time on Saturday, nearly 36 hours after the landslide buried 83 mine workers at the camp. Search-and-rescue operations continued on Sunday when rescuers found sixteen additional bodies in two locations, raising the confirmed death toll to seventeen. The state-run Xinhua news agency said officials believe more miners could be buried near those two locations because rescuers found a number of items such as tents, clothes and kitchen knives. A total of 66 miners remained missing Sunday night and officials do not expect to find survivors. Xinhua said the only survivor is a man who had left the camp on Wednesday but returned on Friday morning, just after the landslide happened. "Large swathes of rocks suddenly fell down from the mountaintop and the huge sound could be heard in the whole valley. It was a terrible scene," said a villager who lives near the camp, according to the news agency. More than 3,500 rescue workers and 300 large-scale machineries were continuing to work at the scene throughout Sunday, but the difficult terrain, in combination with snow and small-scale secondary landslides, have hampered rescue efforts. Many of the rescue workers are using their bare hands in their efforts to find the victims. "The on-site rescue work which is being carried out is intense but orderly," Liu Sen, of the State Administration of Work Safety, said on Saturday. The Ministry of Civil Affairs earlier identified two of the buried workers as local Tibetans while the others are from neighboring provinces such as Yunnan, Guizhou and Sichuan.

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