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### **SWS Mountain Guides Media Release**

With regards the tragic events unfolding on Mt. Cook in New Zealand.

On Sunday, December 1, 2024, Silverton Avalanche School (SAS) was informed of a climbing party of three who were reported overdue while attempting to summit Mt. Cook. Among the group were Kurt Blair, an avalanche educator, mountain guide, and SAS professional instructor; Carlos 'Kique' Romero, an AMGA/IFMGA guide and the technical director of SWS Mountain Guides; and a third individual. SAS administrators coordinated closely with New Zealand Search and Rescue Operations through communication with a family member of one of the climbers.

Authorities requested information about the climbing party and whether SAS had any means of contacting them on the mountain. Efforts to reach the climbers via satellite messaging and to determine if Kurt's inReach device was enabled for real-time tracking were unsuccessful, as the device's tracking feature was inactive.



SAS also reached out to Kurt's local employer, San Juan Mountain Guides (SJMG), and collaborated with members of the American Mountain Guides Association (AMGA) training team. This coordination confirmed that Kique Romero was also part of the climbing team. Attempts to contact Kique via satellite messaging and locate him using his inReach tracker were similarly unsuccessful.

Kique was an integral part of our guiding team, and his loss is deeply felt. This is an unimaginably difficult time for the climbing and guiding communities, and our hearts are with all who are affected by this tragedy.

Kique was widely regarded as a dedicated and skilled mountain guide, admired for his technical expertise, kindness, humility, and passion for teaching others. He built strong relationships with his colleagues and clients, leaving an indelible impact on all who knew him.

The events on Mt. Cook are truly heartbreaking. While details remain limited, reports indicate that Kique and his climbing partners likely fell while attempting to climb the Zubriggen Ridge. Their pre-arranged pick-up was missed, prompting an extensive search and rescue effort hindered by severe weather and challenging conditions. Following an aerial search, authorities discovered climbing gear and other items on the ridge, leading to the conclusion that the climbers suffered a fatal fall.



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As climbers, guides, and members of a tightly knit global community, this tragedy weighs heavily on all of us. It serves as a stark reminder of the inherent risks in the mountains, even for the most skilled and experienced among us.

In addition to our own grief, we are managing an overwhelming volume of questions, support, and media inquiries. Kique's family, who are deeply private, is understandably grieving during this unimaginable time. At SWS Mountain Guides, we are doing everything we can to shield them from unnecessary stress while balancing this responsibility with the demands of our ongoing operations. This has been one of the most challenging experiences our organization has ever faced, and we deeply appreciate your understanding and respect for everyone involved.

While Kique's expedition to Mt. Cook was not connected to SWS Mountain Guides, we have shared all the information available to us. We have no updates beyond what has been provided by New Zealand Search and Rescue authorities and the media. For the latest developments, we encourage you to follow updates directly from New Zealand Search and Rescue or other reliable sources. A few links to accurate and sensitive coverage are available below.

The entire SWS Mountain Guides community is grieving this tragedy alongside so many others. Kique and his climbing partners remain in our thoughts, as do their families and everyone impacted by this loss. Kique's contributions to the guiding world and our team are immeasurable, and his presence is profoundly missed.

We are deeply moved by the outpouring of support and kindness from friends, clients, and colleagues. The strength of our shared bonds in the mountains has been a source of solace during this time.

We respectfully request that all media inquiries and questions refer to this statement, which reflects our position and the extent of the information we have. Protecting the privacy of Kique's family while honoring his legacy is our highest priority as we navigate this difficult time.

Thank you for your understanding, patience, and continued support. As we begin the difficult journey of acceptance and healing, we remain profoundly grateful to everyone who has reached out. It has been an honor to share Kique's story and stand in support of his family. Please feel free to share these words, photos, and links we've provided.

With heavy hearts,

Tim Keating, David Cressman, & Caleb Burns

CEO, COO, CMO  
SWS Mountain Guides

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