

Tajik Security Chiefs Fired After Jailbreak

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Men dressed as World War II Soviet soldiers, and a girl, taking part in a military parade in Tiraspol on Thursday. **Gleb Garanich**

DUSHANBE, Tajikistan — Tajikistan's president fired almost the entire leadership of his security services Thursday as the first of 25 Islamist militants was recaptured more than a week after an armed jailbreak in the country.

The armed prisoners, including Russian and Afghan nationals accused of plotting a coup, killed five guards in a shootout when they escaped from a detention center in the capital, Dushanbe, last week.

A source in the security services said one prisoner, a former inmate of the U.S. military prison in Guantanamo Bay, had been apprehended as the result of a special operation in the town of Vakhdat, 20 kilometers east of Dushanbe.

The source said Tajik authorities suspected Ibrahim Nasriddinov of helping to organize the escape. He said a second armed suspect was surrounded in a house in a nearby village.

President Emomali Rakhmon's press service said Thursday that Saimumin Yatimov, a former ambassador to Belgium, had been appointed head of the State Committee for National Security, Tajikistan's successor to the KGB.

Yatimov was the only senior security official to escape the cull. He joined the security service several months ago as its deputy head.

His predecessor, Khairidin Abdurakhimov, had served in the position for 11 years. Rakhmon's press service said he had asked to be relieved of his duties.

Authorities in Tajikistan, which shares a porous 1,340-kilometer border with Afghanistan, ordered a manhunt for the fugitives when they escaped on Aug. 23 and requested assistance from Interpol, as well as Afghan and Russian security forces.

The escaped prisoners were among the 46 people to whom Tajikistan's Supreme Court in August handed down long jail terms on accusations that they had planned to overthrow the authorities.

They included four Afghan citizens and six Russians from Dagestan and Chechnya. All were arrested in July 2009 in eastern Tajikistan, the scene of fierce civil war battles in the 1990s.

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