

2 Prisoners, Wielding Scissors, Seize 6 Nurses

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Two inmates armed with scissors and knives seized six nurses at a maximum-security prison in an hours-long hostage drama that ended with the police opening fire on them as they headed toward their getaway car.

The inmates, both in their 20s and serving sentences of more than 20 years for murder and other felonies, took the six women hostage in the hospital of the Pskov region prison on Friday, news reports said.

They demanded a ransom of 40,000 rubles (\$1,400), alcohol and a getaway car, Interfax reported.

During the resulting standoff, psychologists managed to talk the unidentified attackers into releasing the oldest nurse, 71-year-old Nina Sidorova. But the duo refused to free the other hostages, whose names were not released.

The girlfriend of one captor pleaded with him by telephone to release the women, but he told her that he had "nothing to lose" because of his lengthy prison term, which would be extended over the incident, Sidorova said, Interfax reported.

The inmates were eventually given a car, but law enforcement officers opened fire at them as they walked toward it, Yulia Alyoshina, spokeswoman for the regional branch of the Federal Prison Service, told The Associated Press.

Initial reports said one of the inmates was killed, but local police said later that both were wounded and hospitalized in serious condition.

Fifteen years may be added to the sentences of both inmates for taking hostages.

The local branch of the Investigative Committee opened a mandatory check into the actions of Federal Prison Service officials involved in the storming.

Authorities praised the rescue operation as a success, with all the hostages freed and the only injury being a small stab wound behind the ear for one of them, Alyoshina [told](#) Gazeta.ru.

Separately, 18 prison officials were convicted Friday of beating to death four inmates in the Chelyabinsk region in 2008 and then trying to cover up the incident, Interfax said.

The Chelyabinsk Regional Court convicted eight officials of deadly assault and sentenced them to four to 12 years in a maximum-security prison. Six of the officials were arrested in the courtroom, while the other two did not attend the hearing.

Four former superiors of the jailed officials were handed five-year suspended sentences for trying to cover up the incident. Six other officials received suspended sentences of four to five years for beating but not killing another eight inmates.

The inmates were beaten for arguing with prison officials and refusing to obey orders, the report said.

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