

Inmates kill six, take eight hostages in prison siege

LUCASVILLE, Ohio (AP) — Part of Ohio's only maximum-security prison remained under siege Monday after hundreds of prisoners rioted, killing six inmates and taking eight guards hostage.

The state prison chief said the disturbance Sunday afternoon that preceded the hostage-taking may have been a ruse. "It appears as if there was a staged fight," said Reginald Wilkinson, director of the Department of Rehabilitation and Correction.

Guards were called to break up the apparent fight, which involved a few prisoners. "That's when several hostages were taken. But a number of officers also were able to break away from that situation," Wilkinson said at a news conference in Columbus. He wouldn't elaborate.

Negotiators tried to work out a deal with some of the state's most dangerous prisoners, asking them to free one hostage in exchange for a chance to outline their demands to the media.

About 450 prisoners were barricaded inside one cellblock of the prison, located about 70 miles south of Columbus in

south-central Ohio. The rest of the prison's 1,819 inmates, including death-row inmates, were confined to cells away from the affected area.

Ten guards and eight inmates were injured. Authorities said the eight hostages were alive.

Late Monday afternoon, prisoners hung four sheets out windows of the cellblock. One sheet said, "We want to talk to the FBI." Another said, "The state is not negotiating." Reporters were kept too far away to be able to read the other two signs.

Negotiations were continuing Monday evening, said Sharron Kornegay, a spokeswoman for the Ohio Department of Rehabilitation and Correction.

The prisoners "are tired and hungry. ... We are at a very sensitive stage," she told reporters outside the 69-acre prison.

Officials cut off electricity and water to the cellblock and refused to deliver food. Prisoners were last fed at about noon Sunday, but they may have stored some food in their lockers, she said. They didn't ask for food or medicine by Monday evening.

Kornegay said prisoners who took 24-inch batons from guards during the riots killed the six convicts.

"I think it's probably pretty obvious who killed them," she said. "Our staff wouldn't do that."

The bodies of five inmates, all severely beaten, were released early Monday. The sixth body, also beaten, was thrown through a cellblock door later in the morning. Kornegay said he had been dead for many hours.

The inmates had presented 19 demands, most of them dealing with prison rules. They also asked to talk to the media. Late Monday afternoon, prisoners hung a sheet out a window that said, "We want to talk to the FBI."

David Morris, a prisons spokesman, said he didn't know if state officials had summoned federal agents.

Negotiators told a pool reporter, Michael Sangiacomo of The (Cleveland) Plain Dealer, that prisoners could speak to the media only after releasing a guard.

Sangiacomo was allowed to speak to a prisoner by phone once, but authorities cut off the call when the inmate began

talking about the demands.

Although crowding is a problem, conditions are worse elsewhere. The Lucasville population is 120 percent over design capacity, while systemwide the figure is 175 percent. It has four convicts to each guard, while the statewide average is eight convicts per guard.

Sunday's riot was the first since the prison opened in 1972, although there was at least one hostage situation that ended after 15 hours.

All of the state's 23 prisons were under lockdown — confining prisoners to their cells — Monday.

One disturbance was reported at the nearby Scioto County Jail Sunday night. Inmates set fire to mattresses and knocked down security cameras after hearing a radio report about the riot, said sheriff's Maj. Delbert Slusher. None of 68 prisoners in the cellblock where the disturbance occurred was injured.

All Lucasville schools were closed Monday. Families of the hostages gathered at a high school across the street from the prison; prison officials refused to let reporters talk to them.

Document cites POW discrepancy

WASHINGTON (AP) — The Clinton administration will ask Vietnam to explain a secret document alleging that Hanoi held 837 more American prisoners of war in 1972 than authorities acknowledged, U.S. officials said Monday.

The officials said they had some questions about the authenticity of the document, which Russian authorities turned over to American POW researchers.

During negotiations on ending American military involvement in Vietnam, North Vietnamese officials said in September 1972 that they held 368 American POWs, according to the document.

But State Department spokesman Richard Boucher said the Russian translation of the Vietnamese document indicated that Hanoi held 1,205 prisoners. As part of a peace agreement signed in January 1973, Vietnam agreed to release all Americans held prisoner and 591 were subsequently returned to U.S. custody. The last of the POWs came home April 1, 1973.

The Clinton administration, following the lead of the Bush administration, has linked establishment of normal relations to Vietnamese cooperation on the POW issue.

"The POW-MIA issue continues to be of great concern to the president," said White House spokeswoman Dee Dee Myers. "There can be no normalization of relations with Vietnam until we're sure the Vietnamese are doing all they can."

The document raises questions that must be answered, said Sen. John Kerry, D-Mass., chairman of the Senate Select Committee on POW-MIA Affairs.

A committee report released this year "indicated that further information could be found in the former Soviet Union — in documents or in personal testimony," Kerry said in a written statement.

"My understanding is that this new document was only very recently provided to U.S. officials and that it is still being analyzed," the statement said. "Meanwhile, our government should continue to press the Vietnamese government to cooperate fully on the POW-MIA issue."

The document was uncovered in January by Stephen J. Morris, a researcher for the Harvard Center for International Affairs. It purportedly was written by Gen. Tran Van Quang, deputy chief of staff of the North Vietnamese Army.

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— Dee Dee Myers, White House spokeswoman

Boucher said officials of the National Security Council have had several conversations with Morris.

Last Thursday, the Russian government turned over a copy of the document to U.S. officials, who are evaluating it on an expedited basis, Boucher said.

He added that Gen. John W. Vessey, who has been working with the Vietnamese on the POW issue since 1987, will raise the issue with Hanoi when he travels there next weekend.

Boucher said the document will be Vessey's "first order of business." Myers told reporters at the White House, "We need to know that the Vietnamese are doing all they can on the MIA-POW issue (before) we can move forward."

Wing damage forces Bush's plane to land

HOUSTON (AP) — A Kuwait Airways jet taking former President Bush and his family to Kuwait made an emergency landing shortly after takeoff Monday because of wing damage.

No injuries were reported and the Bushes returned to their Houston home without incident. They will try to fly again to the emirate Tuesday morning on a new plane, said Andrew Maner, a Bush spokesman.

The Boeing 747 took off from Ellington Field 20 miles south of Houston and was in the air for about one hour when it was forced to land at Houston Intercontinental Airport, airport spokeswoman Tina Ceppi said.

The plane had wing damage, Ceppi said, but she had no further details.

Local broadcasts reported that a gash was visible between the left wing and fuselage.

Bush, his wife Barbara and several other family members were traveling to Kuwait for a three-day visit.

The government-run Kuwait News Agency carried a statement issued by the office of the emir, Sheik Jaber al-Ahmed al-Sabah, announcing that Kuwait was "making arrangements for another plane."

Kuwaitis have prepared an extravagant welcome for Bush, a national hero for his leadership in the Desert Storm campaign that liberated the emirate from Iraqi occupation.

One merchant donated 96 bottles of imported perfume, asking that it be sprayed along the route of Bush's motorcade. A Kuwaiti Bedouin has offered a prize racing camel as a gift, and another businessman has volunteered to pay for shipping the beast to the states.

The wife of a former prisoner of war wants to give Bush a key chain and worry beads her husband made in captivity.

"It is going to be festive and, if security will let them, I think Kuwaitis will carry his car," said Fuad al-Hashem, a columnist for a Kuwaiti newspaper.

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