

Inmate fatally shot, 16 guards hospitalized in Calipatria riot

By DON THOMPSON, Associated Press Writer

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SACRAMENTO (AP) - One inmate was fatally shot in the abdomen and a second was taken by helicopter to a hospital with a head wound as guards quieted a major riot at Calipatria State Prison on Thursday, officials said.

Sixteen correctional officers were taken to outside hospitals, including the initial subject of the attack who was slashed in the head as he tried to search an inmate he suspected of concealing a weapon, said Terry Thornton, a spokeswoman for the California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation.

A second officer was struck in the head from behind in the initial struggle. Lance Corcoran, executive vice president of the California Correctional Peace Officers Association, said that officer was undergoing a CT scan for "significant injuries," but he and Thornton said the officer was lucid.

All 16 officers were released from the hospital Thursday night, including the two most seriously injured, Corcoran said. Four other officers suffered lesser injuries.

Five inmates were taken to outside hospitals, including the inmate with the head injury, said prison spokesman Lt. Ray Madden. Six more inmates were taken to the prison infirmary and a total of 25 inmates were treated at the prison, he said.

Corcoran said the inmates "attempted to take the unit over. They attempted to breach the control booth. They were throwing brooms and shoving sticks in." He quoted a sergeant saying a tower guard "literally saved their lives today" by firing from a Mini-14 semiautomatic rifle.

Authorities initially said the inmate who was airlifted to a San Diego hospital suffered a gunshot wound, but it was later learned that he suffered a blunt force trauma injury to the head, Madden said. No information was immediately available on his condition.

The fight began shortly before 3 p.m. in a maximum security prison exercise yard, Thornton said. The first officer was stabbed in the head, then kicked on the ground. The second officer in the yard was struck from behind.

The rioting, which involved only Hispanic inmates, took place over a span of about 45 minutes, Madden said. After the initial incident was under control, another group of inmates about 20 minutes later jumped up in the yard and attacked the staff.

"That was under control and then another group attacked staff as they entered the building," Madden said.

The prison in Imperial County east of San Diego houses more than 4,000 inmates of whom more than 3,850 are maximum security. The remainder are minimum security inmates who work around the prison, and were not involved in Thursday's incident.

Ninety inmates were placed in administrative segregation, which means they'll be locked up for 23 hours a day until they have an administrative hearing, Madden said.