

Investigators Identify Village Attackers

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Investigators have identified 31 men who attacked a Sverdlovsk region village last month, sparking a brawl that killed at least one, the Investigative Committee said in a statement Thursday.

Residents of the village of Sagra said they had to fight thugs, who arrived July 1 in a column of 10 to 15 cars, armed with knives, chains and guns, to punish them for forcing a family of Gypsy drug dealers to move to the village outskirts, RIA-Novosti reported at the time.

Although most of the attackers were purportedly Caucasus natives, investigators last month denied that ethnic tensions were behind the mass brawl. They said the fight was provoked when a man hired by the alleged drug dealer, known to residents as “Sergei the Gypsy,” stole from a local resident, as well as by competition between local loggers.

Eighteen suspects have been detained, while four are still at large. Twenty-one have been charged with banditry and disturbing the peace. The Investigative Committee did not identify the suspects, but news reports said last month that the attackers included policemen from Yekaterinburg and a martial arts master who worked as a driver for United Russia.

Farid Musayev, a Yekaterinburg-based ethnic Azeri, was shot dead in the brawl.

The Sagra incident caused much discussion across blogs and media, drawing comparisons to a 2010 incident in the Krasnodar region's Kushchyovskaya village where the murder of 12 exposed a gang that had terrorized locals for years.

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