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Diplomat Held Hostage Over Firm's Debt

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A Russian diplomat and the head of a Russian bathroom fixture company have been freed after being taken captive over a $500,000 debt by angry factory workers in the Chinese city of Hangzhou, officials and news reports said Sunday.

Vitaly Rudykh, general director of the Irkutsk-based Advento company, and his translator Olga Borisevich were seized last Monday when they arrived to terminate a partnership with the shower cabin factory because of financial difficulties, Itar-Tass reported.

Yevgeny Gryaznov, a diplomat from the Russian Consulate in Shanghai, was detained when he arrived at the factory on Friday afternoon to negotiate their release.

The three were held in a tiny room by unknown captors and not given food or water, Rudykh told Interfax. He complained that local police did nothing to help.

After Gryaznov arrived, the irate Chinese workers ratcheted up the drama — dousing the hostages with water and throwing a flowerpot, news reports said. One tearful Chinese

woman fell in front of Gryaznov, crying that she had been hit by one of the captives, Consul General Andrei Smorodin told Lenta.ru.

The Chinese partners and factory workers were demanding that Advento repay a nearly $500,000 debt, Interfax reported.

Rudykh said he paid the factory workers last week and was preparing to pay his Chinese partners. His translator put the repaid debt to the factory workers at $39,000, Lenta.ru said.

The trio was released Friday night and arrived at the consulate in Shanghai around 1 a.m. Saturday, a consulate official said by phone Sunday. Rudykh and Borisevich flew back to Russia that afternoon.

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