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Police Refuse to Open Case Into Kommersant Reporter's Beating

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At least five people, including a Kommersant journalist, were severely beaten at gunpoint in the Moscow region by ex-convicts — but police saw nothing wrong with the incident and closed an investigation.

The story was first broken late Monday by another Kommersant journalist, Yelena Chernenko, on her LiveJournal blog, kwasa-kwasa. She said the attack happened on Aug. 14 in the village of Bogoyavleniye, 50 kilometers south of Moscow.

The attackers were stealing firewood from the home of one of the victims and started a brawl when caught in the act, Chernenko wrote.

One of the victims scared them off with an air gun, but the ex-convicts returned an hour later with reinforcements, driving two cars, including one equipped with a flashing blue light — a sign of road privileges reserved exclusively for officials but often abused.

The attackers, now six in number, all referred to in the blog as "young thugs," beat up several

village residents, among them Kommersant staffer Gennady Sysoyev and his wife, Serbian reporter Zorana Boich-Sysoyeva, as well as two other women, the blog said. One of the attackers also had an air gun.

At least three villagers suffered concussions, one fractured a facial bone and another was badly bruised and suffered a neck injury, Chernenko wrote.

"We'll burn you all!" the attackers shouted, according to the blog. They fled after they thought they heard a police car coming, though in fact police only arrived about 20 minutes later, despite being contacted some time earlier.

Five people filed complaints with the police, but an officer in the nearby town of Podolsk only classified the attack as "petty hooliganism," and an officer in the village refused to open a criminal case.

At least three of the attackers were identified by the license plates of their cars. Two had previous convictions for illegal drug possession and robbery, respectively, while a third had his driver's license revoked previously, Chernenko wrote.

Repeated calls to village and Podolsk police went unanswered Tuesday.

Regional police said on their web site Tuesday that they had opened a criminal case on hooliganism charges following Chernenko's report.

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