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Mass Brawl in Russian Hospital Prompts Firing of Government Officials

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The brawl at the hospital in Mineralniye Vody.

Three dozen people have been detained and a range of police and government officials have lost their jobs over a massive fight inside a southern Russian hospital that left at least one person dead, news reports said.

The brawl at the hospital in Mineralniye Vody, a resort in the North Caucasus region of Stavropol, developed out of an alleged conflict between two groups of men, including local officials, who were all drinking at a local cafe earlier that same night in late September, the Interfax news agency reported Tuesday.

It remained unclear what prompted the brawl, but two men from the group — Cossack leader Yevgeny Smirnov and his friend Andranik Tsakanyan — are accused of taking turns hitting one of their opponents on the head with a bottle, the report said.

The injured man was accompanied to a nearby hospital by friends, but Tsakanyan reportedly summoned three dozen of his cronies to pursue them, and a massive fight ensued. One man was killed and at least two other people, including a nurse, were injured in the brawl, Interfax reported.

Police have detained 32 people over the incident, and arrest warrants have been issued for the remaining 11 suspected participants in the brawl, the deputy chief of the regional Investigative Committee branch Igor Ivanov was quoted as saying Tuesday.

The incident has also set off a flurry of firings and resignations.

Those who have lost their jobs include Nikolai Bondarenko, a deputy chief of the municipal administration of the town of Zheleznovodsk in the Stavropol region, who was sharing the cafe table with the suspected attackers, Interfax reported.

The Stavropol regional administration has also fired the head of its ethnic and Cossack affairs department, Alexander Yakushev, whom the Stavropol governor blamed for presiding over the selection of Smirnov as regional Cossack leader, the administration said in a statement. Smirnov was arrested after the fight, the statement said.

The head of the Mineralniye Vody municipal administration has also resigned, and the medical chief of the hospital has been suspended until the investigation has been completed, Interfax reported.

Also out of their jobs are the head of the regional Interior Ministry branch and three of his deputies, and on Tuesday the ministry announced that it would fire an unspecified number of local police officers accused of neglecting their duties by failing to prevent the fight, news agency TASS reported.

Amid tensions in the volatile and ethnically diverse North Caucasus region, Yury Skvortsov the deputy chief of the Stavropol regional administration, said the mother of the murdered man had asked a rally of local residents not to view the fight as ethnically based and asked them not to seek retribution, TASS reported.

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