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Cops in Hot Pursuit as Vladivostok Fugitive Continues Crime Spree

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Vladimir Bespalov

A fugitive who fatally shot one policeman and injured another before stealing clothing from a pensioner in Vladivostok earlier this week has struck again, first threatening to kill a bus driver and then robbing a young woman in her home, the Interfax news agency reported Wednesday.

The man, identified by the Emergency Situations Ministry as local inmate Vladimir Bespalov, has been on the run since opening fire against the policemen as they attempted to escort him back to his prison colony on Tuesday. Bespalov had snatched one of the officers' pistols while riding in their vehicle, the Interior Ministry said in a statement.

A few hours after escaping, Bespalov threatened a local bus driver at gunpoint, Interfax reported, citing the regional branch of the Investigative Committee. The fugitive later broke into a young woman's home and robbed her. Bespalov ordered the woman to call him a taxi and accompany him on the ride, Interfax reported.

The woman later managed to escape, Interfax reported. Both she and the bus driver have been questioned by investigators.

Bespalov will also face additional charges for robbery and murder threats, according to Interfax. Investigators said Tuesday he could face charges for attacking law enforcement officials, stealing weapons and escaping police custody.

Citing an unnamed law enforcement source on Tuesday, the TASS news agency reported that Bespalov had also broken into the apartment of a female pensioner to steal a change of clothes.

Security measures have been tightened throughout Vladivostok and the surrounding region since Bespalov's escape, police said Wednesday. Police note that he walks with a limp, as one of his legs was amputated below the knee, and uses a prosthetic limb.

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