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EX-HOSTAGES FILE SUIT IN COURT OF CLAIMS

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Former hostages in the Lucasville prison riot and their wives filed a wrongful-death and injury lawsuit in the Ohio Court of Claims yesterday, charging that several state agencies failed to protect them during the 11-day siege.

The suit says the agencies ignored procedures for riots and failed to reinforce walls in the Southern Ohio Correctional Facility. The former hostages and their wives are seeking unspecified damages.

It is the second lawsuit filed by the former hostages. The other, also seeking unspecified damages, is pending in Scioto County Common Pleas Court.

"The focus is not only for my clients to be fully compensated, but for the true story to be told on Lucasville," said **Keith M. Karr**, one of the attorneys for the plaintiffs.

The plaintiffs are:

Peggy Vallandingham, whose husband, Robert, 40, was taken hostage, then strangled by prisoners April 15.

Officers John Kemper, Harold Fraley Jr., Conrad Nagel and Robert Schroeder, who were beaten, then released a few hours after the riot erupted.

Officers Richard Buffington, Kenneth Daniels, Larry Dotson and Jeffrey Ratcliff, who were held throughout the ordeal.

Officer Darrold Clark, who was released April 15 after prisoners were allowed to air their demands on a commercial radio broadcast.

Officers Michael Stump and Rodney Pennington, who were injured but escaped when the mayhem broke out.

Lisa Kemper, Reda Buffington, Kristi Clark, Karalee Daniels, Barbara Stump, Sarah

Pennington and Emma J. Dotson, wives of the officers.

Named as defendants are the Department of Rehabilitation and Correction, the Department of Administrative Services and the Ohio Building Authority.

Joe Edwards, spokesman for the prison department, said the agency would not comment.

The hostages and their wives charge that the state allowed the release of false information, knowing it would be communicated to the inmate captors and "which was highly probable or foreseeable to result in serious bodily injury or death to the hostages."

They also charge the state with failing to maintain a safe structure. Several guards sought refuge in stairwells that they had been told were safe with reinforced steel bars, but there was no reinforcement and prisoners broke through, the suit says.

The hostages and their wives "have permanently suffered injuries to their person, causing them physical pain, mental distress, anxiety, physical impairment, loss of enjoyment of life and inability to perform everyday activities," the suit says.

Karr said the latest suit was filed in the Court of Claims because only that court can award compensatory damages in cases involving state agencies.

It has two more plaintiffs than in the Scioto County suit, which makes nearly identical claims. However, rather than seeking damages from agencies, the Scioto County suit names state prisons director Reginald A. Wilkinson, former Lucasville warden Arthur Tate Jr., two of Tate's deputy wardens, the duty officer who worked Easter Sunday 1993 and 14 others referred to as "John Doe."

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