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State denies Attica to be location of Maxi-Maxi facility

ATTICA, N.Y. (AP) — Knowledgeable sources at Attica state prison have indicated that the prison's "Maxi-Maxi" special segregation unit now being moved away suggested leaders of the September Attica uprising will be converted into the "maximum-security, maximum-program" facility proposed by state officials.

Despite such reports from guards and local residents, a Correctional Services Department spokesman said Monday that it was "very premature" to speculate on where the inmates might be located. "We have a number of units, Attica and otherwise, to be resolved before it goes anyplace," he said. The so-called "maximum" unit was recommended by the department and proposed to the legislature by Gov. Rockefeller as part of a \$12-million prison reform appropriation bill. The legislature has not yet voted on the money. Correctional Services Commissioner Russell G. Oswald has said that the new facility would house no more than 125 inmates and that he hoped it would be opened by May 1. Department plans call for it to be part of an existing prison. Deputy Correctional Commissioner Walter Dabbar has described in a congressional committee the type of inmates that would be assigned to the "maximum" prison: "a person who reflects a consistent pattern of violation of rules, disrespect for the rights and responsibilities of both personnel and inmates, and a guilty or overt act contrary to rules and procedures and street acts that include, against and provoke other inmates in riotous, racial and antiracial activities."

"The Maxi" at Attica is a separate and highly secured building away from the main prison compound. Most of the 74 convicted prisoners housed there were assigned to segregation last Sept. 18 because they were believed to have been organizers of the four-day insurrection, which cost 43 lives. The Attica Defense Committee, a group of lawyers and lay students, filed suit in U.S. District Court Monday to prevent the state from transporting the 74 inmates to other prisons. The committee was acting on reports that would not be confirmed by the Correctional Services Department spokesman.

James Roger Champion, a leading figure in the uprising, said in an interview Monday that he and other inmates had been told they would be transferred beginning Tuesday. Michael Deutsch, a lawyer for the defense committee, said Monday that the opportunity for pending transfers are "a desperate attempt to hasten work these men's right to counsel." He explained that the incoming lawyers would have more difficulty representing the inmates if they were scattered throughout the state. The Correctional Department spokesman said Monday that the new "maximum" facility would actually be similar to the diagnostic and treatment center at Clinton state prison in Dannemora.

The center houses hard-core violent inmates and accounts for about 10 percent of the state's population. Commissioner Oswald has said that the "maximum" unit will not be merely a place for incarcerating troublemakers. He said the program would be designed to separate disruptive inmates from the general population so that special rehabilitation programs could be carried out. Some minority groups have contended that the "maximum" unit would be a place where "black revolutionaries" would be segregated under "maximum-security" conditions. But state officials have denied this.

Guards say Attica attack late

NEW YORK (AP) — Two teenage guards told state investigators Monday that authorities waited long enough—not too long—on their Attica prison and put down last September's riot. They had been further delayed, said Capt. Frank Wald, one of 28 inmates, "I think possibly we would have died right there."

As state troopers and others began their armed assault on the prison, Wald said an inmate held a knife to his throat and "I said a couple of prayers and waited." Another surviving inmate, Lt. Robert Curtis, went even further than Wald—saying that in his opinion the loss of life would have been less had authorities waited the previous summer. "I never expected to come out of that yard alive," Curtis said the state Special Commission on Attica. The rioting took 23 inmates lives, and close to 11 guards, virtually all of them during the morning of "D" yard, local point of the disturbance. Curtis recalled that as the rioting began he heard someone shout from prisoners, "Stand one, go to your area." Stand two, go to your area." Curtis said he took this to indicate the prisoners had organized in advance of the rioting.

Wald said he based on such strong commands but that on the heads of Curtis' testimony

"There must have been an organization and it must have been going on for some time," Wald said. But men across the riot area were light-headed at the outset, said the prisoners' friend of the local death, Capt. of guard William Quinn. He was hit hard when he was hit early in the riot. "If you have news . . . in Worcester, call Mrs. Walter Boardley, EX-7-6721."

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