

## Tear gas breaks up prison brawl

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COMSTOCK -- Three inmates at the maximum security Geat Meadow state prison were injured Friday night in a 10-person brawl that had to be suppressed with tear gas, officials said.

Michael Fraser, a spokesman for the state Department of Correctional Services, said a utility razor knife was used in the fracas, and one inmate suffered cuts that required facial stitches. The other injuries were not serious, and no prison guards were injured, he said.

The fight took place at about 8 p.m. Friday in a large outdoor yard at the prison on Route 22 in Comstock.

"One of our corrections officers gave verbal orders to cease fighting," Fraser said. "The inmates ignored the warning and one of the officers fired a chemical agent."

Fraser identified 10 men, including three serving time for murder, who were involved in the fight. He said charges, ranging from fighting to creating a disturbance, were pending.

"We're going to sort it all out," he said.

Fraser said the corrections officers acted appropriately to quell the fighting.

An officer noticed the melee and fired tear gas from a tower overlooking the yard, according to Dennis Fitzpatrick, a spokesman for the New York State Corrections Officers and Police Benevolent Association, the union that represents correction officers.

Fitzpatrick said it was his understanding that the fight started out as a dispute between two members of the gang known as the Bloods, and escalated from there.

"The officer did an excellent job dispersing the crowd. It could have gotten worse," Fitzpatrick said. "The gas did its job by dispersing everyone and keeping other inmates away that could have been involved."

The prison was not locked down as a result of the fight. Fraser said the inmates involved were confined to their cells and the yard stayed open.

He said an investigation with State Police into the brawl is ongoing.