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## Afghan prison's warden, other officials arrested in wake of mass escape

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Afghan authorities have arrested the warden and other officials at the Kandahar prison where nearly 500 insurgents managed to escape this week through a tunnel built by the Taliban, officials said Thursday.

Ghulam Dastagher Mayar was among 10 officials arrested at Sarposha prison, about half of those on duty at the time of the prison break that began late Sunday, according to Gen. Amir Mohammad Jamshidi, the country's chief director of prisons.

Jamshidi and other Afghan officials declined to identify the other arrested officials or detail the charges against those held.

"The investigation into the prison break is ongoing. I can only say that a number of security force members have been arrested during the past few days for interrogation purposes," Kandahar Gov. Tooryalai Wesa told reporters at the prison Thursday.

Wesa referred questions to the attorney general's office, but officials there declined to release any information, citing the ongoing investigation.

Afghanistan's justice minister has said the Taliban must have received inside help from prison officials to pull off the spectacular escape, a 4 1/2-hour operation that failed to raise any alarms among guards. Escapees' accounts have varied. Some claimed to have received help from "special friends" to obtain keys to their cells. Others have said the cells were routinely left unlocked at night by their guards, who generally gathered at the main gate, out of sight of the

cellblocks.

It was the second escape at the prison in three years. In 2008, about 1,000 prisoners — nearly half of them Taliban insurgents — escaped from Sarposa after insurgents outside the prison detonated a truck bomb against the side of the compound.

Afghan authorities said they had recaptured 74 of the latest escapees as of Thursday and two more had been killed when they fled recapture earlier this week. The search was still underway late Thursday, officials said.

The Taliban have claimed 541 prisoners escaped, including 106 military commanders.