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CORRECTIONS OFFICER LOSES TIP OF THUMB AFTER TUSSELE WITH RIKERS ISLAND INMATE

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A Rikers Island inmate bit off part of a correction officer's thumb after a tussle in the jail Thursday night, officials said. Joseph Vilsaint, 30, chomped down on the guard's right thumb and severed it at the base of the nail during the incident in the Anna M. Kross facility, the Correction Department said yesterday. The guard, who lives in Queens but has not been named, was trying to wake Vilsaint, who had been involved in a fight with another inmate earlier in the day and was due to be transported to the jail clinic for examination, officials said. When the correction officer entered his cell about

10:45 p.m., Vilsaint appeared to be sleeping but then grabbed the officer by the arm and bit into his hand. He was subdued with pepper spray. Vilsaint has a long rap sheet and has been in custody since Oct. 31 on two felony assault charges. He will now face additional assault charges, Correction Department spokesman Stephen Morello said. The guard, a five-year veteran, was taken to Bellevue Hospital, but the tip of his thumb could not be reattached. Another correction officer was treated for palpitations, and a third suffered lacerations to his hand in connection with the incident, according to the New York City Correction Officers' Benevolent Association.