

MAZE PRISON ESCAPE REPORT

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CHAPTER 2

THE ESCAPE

The Takeover of H7

2.01 At 2.30 p.m. on 25 September 1983 the normal Sunday routine was being followed in H Block 7. Most of the 125 prisoners were engaged in recreational activities, moving comparatively freely within each wing. Twenty-four prisoners employed as orderlies were cleaning up and performing other tasks around the Block. The full complement of 24 H7 staff were on duty: 2 senior officers in charge, 16 officers supervising the inmates in the wings and 6 officers manning the fixed posts controlling movement around the Block. There was also a hospital officer, whose duties had taken him to the Block ⁽¹⁾. This pattern of activity would normally have continued until about 4 p.m. when the tea meal was served.

2.02 However, shortly after 2.30 p.m. five of the Block orderlies (Mead, McFarlane, Storey, G. Kelly and McAllister) who were working around the circle at the centre of H7, each secretly armed with a handgun, began concurrently to set in motion the carefully conceived plan that would enable them to seize the Block. First, they had to ensure that each member of staff in the circle area who might press an alarm button was shadowed by one of them.

Thus Mead approached Senior Officer ***, the second in charge, who was standing in the circle, and asked if he could discuss a personal problem with him in private. Senior Officer *** agreed and took Mead into the office where Acting Principal Officer *** was busy at his desk. Mead was now in a position to shadow both senior members of staff. Meanwhile, McFarlane approached Officer ***, who was standing in the locked and gated lobby at the entrance to H7, and asked to be admitted in order to sweep the lobby. Officer *** unlocked the gate and let him in. At the same time Kelly took up a position outside the gated entrance to the Block's communications room, where he could see Officer *** at work. Storey and McAllister entered the officers' tea room, where four members of the staff were having a tea-break.

2.03 Once they were all in position the prisoners held up the staff. The orderlies in the tea room produced guns and ordered the four members of staff to keep quiet, while McAllister called the officer patrolling the circle area to come to the tea room. Officer *** did so and was promptly made to join his colleagues. Kelly, at the doorway of the communications room, pointed a gun through the locked grille and ordered Officer *** to unlock it and lie on the floor. Meanwhile Mead, who was in the office with the Acting Principal Officer and Senior Officer, drew his gun and kept the officers covered. McFarlane, in the entrance lobby, ordered Officer *** at gunpoint to lie down on the floor, and took his keys. At the same time, Hospital Officer ***, seated at his desk in the treatment room, looked up to find Storey standing in the doorway with a gun. Storey ordered him to crawl across the circle to the tea room, where he was held with the other members of staff.

2.04 While the staff in the circle area were being taken captive similar action was being taken in the wings to overcome the staff there. Officers *** and ***, who were manning the gate locks leading from the wings to the circle, were overpowered by two orderlies whom they had just admitted. One of them produced a gun and the other a screwdriver. Officer ***, who was in C Wing, was clubbed down with a blow to the back of the head, while Officer *** in D Wing was stabbed with a handcraft knife. The remaining officers were also overcome. The only staff in the Block who were not then under the prisoners' control were Officers ***, *** and *** who were in the staff toilets. As each emerged, he was seized at gunpoint.

2.05 One member of staff who attempted to resist the takeover was Senior Officer ***. While he and Acting Principal Officer *** were being covered by Mead, he succeeded in knocking the gun away, but a blow to the jaw and a threat by Storey to shoot Mr. *** subdued him. Officer *** was another who tried to frustrate the takeover. Lying on the floor of the communications room, he surreptitiously raised himself up in an attempt to reach his stave when he thought Kelly's attention had been diverted. Before he could do so Kelly fired two shots at him: he collapsed on the floor with a bullet through the head.

2.06 The sound of the shots did not carry through the closed doors of the Block to Officer *** manning the gate lock at the entrance to the compound, so he was unaware of what was happening inside. But not for long. McFarlane, using the keys he had taken from Officer ***, let himself and two accomplices out of the Block, approached the gate lock and asked to be allowed in to sweep. Still suspecting nothing, Officer *** let him in. Once inside,

McFarlane produced a gun and relieved Officer *** of his keys. His two accomplices quickly escorted Officer *** back to the Block. It was then 2.50 p.m. The prisoners were in complete control of H7 and the alarm had not been raised.

Preparations for Departure

2.07 Once the prisoners had control of the Block they moved the staff into the two games rooms. Some of the officers were forced to hand over their car keys and explain exactly where their cars were parked in case the prisoners were to need them later. Others were required to remove their uniforms for use by the escapers. These officers were given "ponchos", fashioned from blankets, to cover themselves with, while their belongings were placed in pillow cases with their names on them. All officers were bound, had pillow cases placed over their heads and were kept under guard. Anyone who found himself struggling for breath had his pillow case pumped up and down to draw in air. They were not allowed to talk or move.

2.08 Hospital Officer *** was allowed to treat the wounded Officer *** under armed guard in the staff toilet, while Officer *** was taken to the communications room to replace Officer ***. Mr. *** was instructed at gunpoint to answer any telephone or radio calls as if all was normal. In the event there were no calls. Acting Principal Officer *** was obliged to sit facing the wall in his office with similar instructions about answering his telephone should it ring. In his case a colleague in the prison did ring on routine business; a gun was immediately put to his head and he was obliged to cut the conversation short.

2.09 A dozen prisoners then donned officers' uniforms. They included McFarlane and another prisoner who took Officer ***'s place at the vehicle entrance. These two then waited for the kitchen lorry bringing the food to arrive. Meanwhile documents in the communications room and office, including the photographs of the escapers, were removed in an attempt to hinder any follow up.

The Kitchen Lorry

2.10 At 3.25 p.m. the kitchen lorry, driven by Officer *** accompanied by prison orderly Armstrong, arrived at the outer gate to the compound with the food. McFarlane and his companions admitted the lorry without arousing the driver's suspicion and then, as Officer *** and Armstrong started to unload the food-containers at the entrance to the Block, seized them at gunpoint and took them inside. The driver was taken into the medical treatment room where he was told that the kitchen lorry was to be used in the escape and that he was to drive it. The prisoners gave him precise instructions about the route he was to follow and how he should behave if challenged. Armstrong was told to travel in the lorry in the normal way.

2.11 At 3.50 p.m., when the prisoners had been in control of H7 for about an hour, Officer *** and Armstrong were taken back to the lorry. The driver's left foot was tied to the clutch and his door lock was jammed. From beneath his seat a cord was attached to what he was told was a hand grenade - in fact it was tied to the frame of the seat. Kelly, in officer's

uniform, lay on the floor of the cab on the passenger side and trained his gun on Officer ***. Thirty-seven prisoners then climbed into the back of the lorry, the shutter was lowered and the vehicle drove off.

2.12 The escapers left behind a rear party, armed with chisels and screwdrivers, to guard the captured staff and prevent the alarm from being raised prematurely. They appear to have remained at their posts until they judged that the escapers were clear of the prison, then they returned quietly to their cells. Other inmates did not behave in such a disciplined manner: a number ran amuck, smashing furniture and fittings and setting fire to uniforms and papers before they too shut themselves into their cells. When all was quiet again the captured staff freed themselves from their bonds.

The Segment and Administration Gates

2.13 Having left the H7 forecourt at 3.55 p.m., the kitchen lorry followed its normal route to the vehicle lock at the segment gate. The officer manning this gate, recognising the driver of the lorry and his orderly, opened both sets of gates and allowed the lorry to proceed without searching it.

2.14 The lorry was then driven towards the administration gate, which is the last gate before the main gate is reached. This was a deviation from the lorry's normal route, though not an unusual one. It would have been unusual, however, for a prison orderly to accompany the lorry through the gate. So the lorry was stopped briefly to allow Armstrong to join Kelly on the cab floor. When the lorry reached the administration gate, the officer on duty, seeing nothing amiss, allowed the vehicle to pass through without a check.

The Main Gate

2.15 It was nearly 4 o'clock when the lorry drove along the final strip of road leading to the main gate. The driver had been told that the prisoners intended to take control of the gate and the lodge before the lorry was driven out of the prison on to the road leading to the external gate, where he was to bluff his way through. Some of the prisoners were to be left guarding the main gate until the lorry was clear, when they would follow in cars belonging to the staff. The first step in the plan was to park the lorry well to one side of the gate lodge, so that the prisoners who were in uniform could dismount without being seen, infiltrate the gate lodge and capture the staff. In an attempt to disrupt the plan, the driver told Kelly, who could not see out of the cab from his position on the floor, that he could not park out of sight of the main gate, as he had been instructed, because there was no room. Instead he parked the vehicle near the main gate.

2.16 Despite this ruse, ten of the prisoners in uniform were able to get out of the lorry without anything being noticed. Armed with guns and chisels nine made their way into the gate lodge (through the doors on both sides of the building) where they held up five members of the staff on duty and the half dozen or so officers who were passing through the building. Simultaneously, one of the prisoners approached the officer manning the inner vehicle gate, produced a gun and ordered him to open the gate. Officer *** was then told to

drive the lorry into the main gate lock while the gate officer was removed to the gate lodge. This left only one other officer at liberty in the entire gate complex. This was Officer *** on duty at the pedestrian gate who had seen none of these events and was continuing to admit staff to the prison.

2.17 The staff in the gate lodge were meanwhile beginning to show some resistance. At first, this amounted only to a refusal to comply with instructions, but at about 4.05 p.m. Officer ***, unnoticed by the prisoners, edged over to a nearby alarm button and pressed it. The alarm sounded in the prison's Emergency Control Room (ECR), but the only response of the staff was to check back with the gate lodge on the intercom. Senior Officer *** answered at gunpoint that the alarm had been set off accidentally. Although he attempted to convey that all was not well, the ECR were satisfied and rang off.

2.18 By now the staff in the gate lodge had been joined by an increasing number of officers returning to duty from outside the prison. Each officer as he entered was ordered at gunpoint to join the gate lodge staff, but this only added to the difficulties the prisoners had in maintaining control of the lodge.

2.19 At about this time Officer Ferris, chased by Finucane, ran from the gate lodge shouting to the officer at the pedestrian gate to secure it and sound the alarm. He had been stabbed three times in the chest. Before he was able to reach the gate, he collapsed and later died. Finucane continued on to the pedestrian gate where he stabbed two officers who had just entered the prison. Officer ***, the officer on gate duty, had no time to sound the alarm or secure the gate before he too was stabbed.

2.20 Meanwhile, the disturbance at the pedestrian gate had been seen by the soldier manning the watch-tower at the main gate. He reported to the Army operations room that he had seen prison officers fighting in the gate area. The operations room thereupon telephoned the ECR to ask if they "had any trouble". The officer in the ECR replied that an alarm had been set off accidentally and everything was all right. Shortly afterwards Officer ***, who was being held captive in a back room of the gate lodge, managed to bundle the gunman holding him out of the door. He quickly dialled the emergency number to tell the ECR of the escape. This time the ECR raised the alarm, alerting senior staff and warning the Army and RUC. It was 4.12 p.m. - just too late to prevent the escape.

2.21 After several unsuccessful attempts a prisoner had succeeded in opening the main gate, clearing the way for the lorry to leave. As some of the prisoners who were to travel in it were still in the gate lodge, however, the lorry waited at the entrance - long enough for a passing officer to see what was going on. This officer, Mr. ***, directed two members of staff, Officers *** and *** who were passing by in their private cars, to drive into the vehicle entrance and block the path of the lorry. This they did, thus sealing the entrance.

The Break Out

2.22 It was now apparent to the escaping prisoners that they would have to abandon their plan to drive out of the prison in the lorry. Those prisoners who were still in the back of the

lorry jumped out and began to stream through the main gate towards the outer fence, some 25 yards away. Meanwhile, staff from the gate lodge, having regained control of the main gate mechanism, ordered Officers *** and *** to move their cars out of the way so that the gate could be closed again. No sooner had they done so than four prisoners outside the gate advanced on Officer ***, who had just locked his car, with the intention of hi-jacking it. Mr. *** quickly threw away his keys, whereupon the prisoners knocked him to the ground and gave him a severe kicking. One of the prisoners then retrieved the car keys and all four jumped into the car and drove off around the prison wall towards the external gate.

2.23 The hi-jacking was seen by Officer *** who had just arrived at the prison and was getting out of his car. He immediately got back in again and drove off ahead of the prisoners' car sounding his horn and flashing his lights to warn the staff at the external gate. When he reached the gate he swerved to one side, whereupon the prisoners' car, travelling behind him at some speed, crashed into it, forcing it partly open against its hinges. The prisoners scrambled out of the car, two made good their escape, one was chased and caught by the soldier on guard duty and the fourth was arrested as he emerged from the car.

2.24 Back at the main gate, prison officers were chasing after the only two prisoners who had not already reached the outer fence. Officer *** was one of those engaged in the pursuit. He was shot in the leg by one of the prisoners who then ran on up the hill before he himself was shot in the leg by the soldier in the watch-tower, and recaptured. The other prisoner fell near the wire and was also recaptured. All the other prisoners got away over the wire. It was about 4.18 p.m. when the main gate was closed and the prison secured.

The Pursuit

2.25 Senior Officer *** left the gate lodge and called upon the group of staff outside the main gate to give chase. Only three officers responded; they were later joined by a police officer and a soldier. After searching for some time they found four of the escaped prisoners, including Storey, hiding in the River Lagan, about half a mile from the prison. All were captured. At the external gate the Prison Guard Force went in pursuit of the three prisoners who had escaped from the hi-jacked car.

2.26 At the same time the Army and the RUC activated a joint contingency plan, which resulted in the establishment of a cordon of vehicle check points (VCPs) around the prison, with Army patrols covering the ground between the prison and the cordon. These VCPs were in operation by 4.25 p.m. In the next few hours the Army and the RUC brought other contingency plans into effect, so that before long vehicle checks had been placed at strategic points throughout the Province.

2.27 These operations resulted in the recapture of three prisoners at vehicle check points in the next 24 hours. One prisoner was captured by an Army patrol at 11.00 p.m. that night. Two more prisoners were arrested by an RUC patrol near Castlewellan on 26 September, and two prisoners were captured in a nearby house the next day. In all 19 prisoners were recaptured - three in the gate lodge.

2.28 Of the prison staff who had been on duty in the prison on 25 September one, Officer James Ferris, died. Four others were stabbed, two were shot, thirteen were kicked about and beaten, and forty-two were subsequently off work with nervous disorders. Thirty-five prisoners succeeded in breaching the perimeter of the prison, of whom nineteen remain at large today.

⁽¹⁾ The deployment of staff and the position of prisoners in the central section of H7 at about 2.35pm. is shown at Figure 3.

CHAPTER 10

CONCLUSION

10.01 We described in Chapter 2 how the Maze grew from a small temporary internment centre at Long Kesh in 1971 into the huge modern maximum security prison it is today, holding the largest concentration of terrorists in Western Europe - a prison without parallel in the United Kingdom, unique in size, and in the continuity and tenacity of its protests and disturbances. In no other prison that we have seen have the problems faced by the authorities been so great. When terrorists are few in number they can be dispersed into small, secure pockets and absorbed into the general prison population. But when they are many the best solution is usually to be found in removing them from the area of conflict and incarcerating them in a fortress prison surrounded by armed guards. In Northern Ireland neither course is feasible.

10.02 The prison is unique, too, in its population, which is totally dissimilar to the usual criminal recidivist population to be found in the nearest equivalent establishment in England and Wales. It consists almost entirely of prisoners convicted of offences connected with terrorist activities, united in their determination to be treated as political prisoners, resisting prison discipline, even if it means starving themselves to death, and retaining their paramilitary structure and allegiances even when inside. Bent on escape and ready to murder to achieve their ends, they are able to call on the help of their associates and supporters in the local community and - though increasingly less frequently - to arouse the sympathy of the international community; they are able to manipulate staff and enlist the support of paramilitary organisations in the process of intimidation.

10.03 Against this background it is not hard to see that the Governor and his staff are faced with a singularly difficult and dangerous task, one that brings them into conflict with prisoners almost every day of the week. Nowhere else in the United Kingdom have there been such prolonged and wide scale protests of so horrendous a nature. Nowhere else has the media been so insistent, or international interest so widespread. And nowhere else have the prison authorities been more in the public eye, more engaged in satisfying public curiosity and consequently less able to concentrate on running the establishment.

10.04 Nor has their task been made any the easier by the determination of the government

not to give in to the terrorists' political demands; the determination to treat terrorists like all other prisoners - with all that that implies in terms of régime and privileges; and the determination to avoid, in the wider interests of peace, those measures which, although beneficial in security terms, might provoke further destruction, further protest or further conflict and loss of life.

10.05 And the task of the authorities has not been eased by the reaction of many ordinary prison officers to the government's decisions on, for instance, prisoners' clothing and prisoners' visits - decisions which many officers, despite clear statements of government policy, regarded as concessions to the terrorists; concessions which some appeared to think justified them in taking a laissez-faire attitude to prisoners.

10.06 Finally, the task of ensuring the security of the prison was not made easier for the authorities by the decision of the Northern Ireland Prison Officers' Association, shortly before the escape, to call on its members to abandon the prison in support of a claim for a travelling time allowance, leaving it to the police to man the prison. These difficulties in the prison had their effect on the work of the four divisions that go to make up Prison Department in the Northern Ireland Office. Instead of being able to get on with their task of supervising and inspecting establishments and of ensuring the necessary improvements to security following the rapid concentration of so many terrorists in so few prisons, they were forced to spend much of their time dealing with disturbances and protests and the Parliamentary and international interest that they aroused. Divisions had to be re-organised to deal with the ever mounting workload, and additional staff sought from the Northern Ireland Civil Service - not always with much success.

10.07 These pressures on the prison authorities, together with the troubles in the Province generally, provided the prisoners with the conditions they needed in which to lay their plans for escape - conditions where manipulation became possible, collusion could not be ruled out, intimidation could flourish, weapons could be smuggled in and messages passed out and orderlies could move freely about.

10.08 Had information of what was afoot been forthcoming, the authorities might have been able to take preventative action. But as H7 contained only a cohesive group of Provisional IRA prisoners, little or no information became available. However, even when there is no warning, a maximum security prison like the Maze with its system of self-contained H Blocks, segment fences, gates and a perimeter guarded by the Army, should be proof against the kind of breakout that took place on 25 September. The fact that the Provisional IRA prisoners accomplished it comparatively easily can only be ascribed to various weaknesses in security at the Maze. They included, firstly, deficiencies in the otherwise substantial physical security of the prison, in particular in the main gate complex and in the communications room in H7. Responsibility for these faults must lie in part with those who designed and built the prison, in part with Northern Ireland Office and in part with successive Governors of the Maze who failed to effect the improvements they could have made.

10.09 Secondly, these weaknesses were compounded by poor security procedures - failures

in the system designed to support and enhance the physical barriers. They included flaws in the system of searching prisoners, their accommodation, supplies and visitors; flaws in the system of controlling and escorting the movements of prisoners and orderlies in the H Block; and flaws in the arrangements for responding to alarms. It was the responsibility of the Governor and his senior staff to ensure that such procedures were both adequate and effective. This they failed to do.

10.10 Even where the security procedures were adequate staff often did not follow them. The human failures were many; they comprised the third kind of weakness in the security of the prison. Staff had become complacent about the dangers, and lazy practices had been allowed to develop. There were examples of security grilles being left unlocked, orderlies allowed over much freedom, vehicles unchecked, posts left unattended, alarms not properly answered - and so on, the list is long.

10.11 These faults should have been identified in the prison itself. They were not identified and checked partly because of the many difficulties that we have already referred to - the size and complexity of the prison, the immense pressures on the staff both at Headquarters and in the prison - and partly because of laxity, carelessness and negligence. Wherever possible we have identified those who should be held accountable. But in many cases the negligence of junior staff had been compounded by the acquiescence of their seniors over a long period.

10.12 In the circumstances we were reluctant to single out these officers for special blame, except where the fault was so glaring that we considered it necessary to recommend investigations with a view to disciplinary proceedings. For the rest, since the practices were so widespread, we must conclude that management must bear part of the responsibility for allowing such practices to continue unchecked. It is, of course, the Governor who carries the ultimate responsibility for the state of the prison and the general malaise that was apparent. In an establishment as large and as complex as the Maze he must, of necessity, delegate many of his responsibilities, and in some respects he was not well served. Nevertheless, the extent of the deficiencies in management and in the prison's physical defences amounted to a major failure in security for which the Governor must be held accountable. He should have been aware of the deficiencies and he should have taken action to remedy them. There were, of course, some areas, particularly those associated with the construction and design of the prison, that were beyond his authority and resources to correct, but he neither reported them nor sought authority to take the necessary remedial action. We have no doubt - and the Governor confirmed this - that had he done so, his request would have been sympathetically received and carefully considered.

10.13 The present Governor has been a member of the Prison Service for 34 years - and a Governor in charge for 10 of them. His public service deserves full acknowledgement. At the Maze much of his time has been taken up with the various crises that have struck the prison from time to time. He has shown sensitivity and understanding in his handling of them. He is conscientious and hard-working, and we believe that he did his best. His achievements should not be underestimated. His personal qualities are of a high order, but much of his training and experience relate to a time when the service was smaller and the

task less demanding. The command of such a large and complex prison requires a man of exceptional ability, who has the energy to inject new life into the establishment, and the skill and experience necessary to manage what is probably the most difficult and important prison in the United Kingdom.

10.14 Over and above the Governor and his staff there are those who direct the affairs of the Prison Service in Northern Ireland. It is they who decide policy and it is they who should ensure that it is implemented, issuing such guidance and instructions as may be necessary, and inspecting establishments to see that instructions are carried out. They, must, therefore bear some responsibility for the state in which we found the Maze.

10.15 We have described the organisation and responsibilities of the various divisions that go to make up the department which directs prison affairs in Northern Ireland. We noted that we had examined in particular the work of the Security and Operations Division. This Division did not, in our view, give sufficient direction, advice or guidance to the Governor; and there was a marked lack of awareness of the prison's security weaknesses. The head of the Division is a former governor of the Maze and he should therefore have been familiar with the situation and taken action to remedy the defects. Had he done so, and had the Division seen that the work on the main gate was completed, it is quite possible that the escape would not have succeeded. He should also have instituted a system of inspections of establishments. If he had, they might well have brought to light many of the weaknesses we identified at the prison.

10.16 The Director of Operations, who is responsible for the work of this Division, came to the post in June 1982. He is a dedicated, hard working, conscientious officer who is very well thought of by his Under-Secretary, and who enjoys a high reputation throughout the Northern Ireland Prison Service. He inherited a large backlog of work and found in existence working practices which had been shown to be less than adequate. He did a great deal to improve things at a time when he was heavily involved in the various crises at the Maze to which we have already referred, and when he lacked sufficient staff of the necessary calibre to do the job properly. However, even when account is taken of all these difficulties and the pressures to which we referred earlier, it must be said that he did not appear to appreciate the extent of the many security weaknesses we found at the Maze. To this extent at least, therefore, he must be held responsible for some of the shortcomings at the Maze.

10.17 General responsibility for supervising the work of the Security and Operations Division and for the other divisions that make up Prison Department within the Northern Ireland Office falls on the supervising Under-Secretary. Any shortcomings in the divisions under his control are therefore his concern. As we have said, he fills an exceptionally busy post and is required to spend much of his time responding to ministerial demands. These have grown considerably in recent years as the work of the Department has taken an increasingly important place in the affairs of Northern Ireland. He struck us as an able and conscientious officer, overworked and under resourced, who had done his best to see that his divisions had what they needed to undertake the tasks expected of them. We conclude, therefore, that no blame should attach to him personally for the deficiencies which

contributed to the escape.

10.18 If history is not to repeat itself, much work will be required to remedy the deficiencies. We have indicated in our report what needs to be done. There are four main areas. First, work on the physical deficiencies in the communications rooms and gate lodge should be put in hand immediately. Second, security procedures should be tightened up as a matter of urgency where we have indicated they are deficient. Third, staff need to be given a new lead now. A Governor of wide experience and much energy is required. He should be prepared to cut out the dead wood and encourage new growth. Fourth, the importance of the operational management of the Prison Service should be reflected in the management structure of Prison Department.

10.19 To carry forward this last proposal we recommend that a review of the management structure of Prison Department be instituted urgently. As a guide, we suggest that consideration should be given to the creation of a new post of Deputy Head of the Department who should hold a rank between that of Assistant Under-Secretary of State and Assistant Secretary. The holder of this post should also head the important Security and Operations Division. As the senior member of the Prison Service, he should provide the necessary support and professional advice to the Head of the Department to whom he should be accountable for the proper functioning of all Prison Service establishments. His responsibilities should extend beyond the functions of the Security and Operations Division and should include all matters concerned with the operational management of the Prison Service. As the professional Head of the Prison Service he should not only provide authoritative advice to the Under-Secretary and the Heads of Divisions, but should also provide the necessary point of reference for governors in the field who will look to him for advice, guidance and direction on all professional matters. We believe that our suggestions for the reinforcement and modification of the Headquarters organisation will improve the operational management of the service and will provide the professional leadership which is so necessary if the Prison Service is to do the job expected of it now and in the future. That it is capable of doing so we have little doubt. The Prison Service is fortunate to include in its ranks men of ability and courage who, given the right leadership, will provide a high level of service to the community.

10.20 This will not solve all the problems of the Maze: tensions can be expected to continue so long as the troubles in Northern Ireland continue. Nor will it guarantee security - no prison is ever more secure than the weakest member of its staff - and absolute security can never be guaranteed without resort to inhumane and unacceptable methods. But with inspired leadership and proper support, the prison should soon become again what it was always intended to be; the most secure prison in Northern Ireland.

JAMES HENNESSY
London
12 January 1984.

APPENDIX 1

MAIN CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The alarm was raised in the prison at 4.12 p.m. - just too late to prevent the escape. (2.20).

The escape plan appears to have been formulated by a small group of prisoners who contacted the Provisional IRA outside the prison for support and obtained from them five guns. (3.02).

The leaders appear to have kept details of the plan to themselves until close to the day of the escape. (3.03).

The takeover of H7 exploited human and design weaknesses and required extensive preparations. (3.03).

Although very careful thought appears to have been given to the early stages of the escape, the later stages had been poorly thought out. (3.04), (3.05).

Because physical security at the Maze was, with two exceptions, generally good, the prisoners had to break down the human contribution to security; they did so by adopting a deliberate policy of conditioning staff to reduce their alertness. (3.05).

Many officers in H7 were complacent and the Block had acquired the reputation of being "liberal". (3.06).

The Assistant Governor with managerial responsibility for H7, the Chief Officer II responsible for oversight of the staff and the Principal and Senior Officers with day-to-day responsibility for the Block must share responsibility for the many weaknesses in H7. (3.07).

More should be done to make staff aware of the dangers of conditioning and manipulation and more attention must be paid to the need for effective supervision and direction by all levels of management. (3.08).

The appointments of McFarlane, Storey and Mead as orderlies were serious errors of judgement for which the officers responsible should be held accountable. (3.09).

The Assistant Governor in charge of H7 should have exercised closer control over the selection of orderlies and should have ensured they were properly supervised and controlled. (3.10).

In future, prisoners should be selected to work as orderlies only after consideration and approval by the Labour Allocation Board which should take account of the views of the security staff and the staff of individual Blocks. (3.10).

Block orderlies should be subject to closer supervision and control and the need for unescorted movement on their part should be kept to a minimum.(3.10).

It would have been prudent for the Governor to have sought the advice of Prison Department before creating additional orderly posts in the H Blocks. (3.11).

The need for orderly posts, in the H Blocks and elsewhere in the prison, should be reviewed. (3.12).

Prisoners working as orderlies ought not to be permitted to acquire, in the course of their work, information about such places as the main gate complex and the external gate: the post of gate lodge orderly should not be reinstated. (3.17).

There were few positive signs to indicate that an escape was pending. (3.18).

The Staff in H7 were not alert to such indications as there were. (3.19).

A system for the collation and analysis of information in the prison should be introduced urgently under the day-to-day control of the security officer.(3.20).

The possession of guns and ammunition was central to the prisoners' plans. (4.01).

There were significant weaknesses in the measures adopted to prevent the entry of unauthorised articles by means of (1) supplies (2) vehicles (3) visitors and (4) staff. (4.03).

A new secure unloading area should be established close to the main gate. (4.05).

All supplies should be searched at the point of delivery, using metal detectors wherever possible. (4.06).

Prisoners should not have access to unsearched goods and should only open sealed goods under supervision. (4.06).

The kitchen stores, laundry, workshops etc. should be subject to frequent and rigorous searching. (4.06).

It is desirable to reduce to a minimum the number of vehicles entering the prison and procedures for searching those which do should be improved. (4.08).

Steps should be taken to improve the searching of visitors at the Maze.(4.15).

The security of the visiting rooms at the Maze falls below the required standard. (4.16).

The screens between cubicles in visiting Blocks A and B should be removed, raised platforms provided to improve overall observation and there should be a review of the minimum staffing levels required. (4.17).

We have serious reservations about the use made of the visiting rooms in C Block prior to the escape. (4.18).

The quality of the supervision of visits in C Block was seriously deficient. (4.19).

The top section of the doors and passage walls in C Block should be replaced by some transparent material to enable patrolling officers to see more easily into all the rooms. (4.20).

An investigation should be held into the circumstances in which visits were allowed to take place in C Block and into the supervision and conduct of these visits. (4.20).

Closed visits should continue to be the normal practice where there is evidence to show that a prisoner or his visitor cannot be trusted in open conditions. (4.21).

We believe that for several months before the escape prisoners had not been searched with a metal detector after receiving a visit. (4.22).

It would not have been difficult for a prisoner to take a weapon or ammunition from the visiting area back to his cell block undetected. (4.23).

All prisoners should be given a thorough rub-down search after a visit and metal detectors should always be used. Prisoners should be strip-searched on a random basis and whenever there is cause for suspicion. Facilities for strip-searching should be improved and consideration given to the use of metal detector portals. (4.23).

The huts in which prisoners were held before and after visits were insecure. (4.25).

The layout of the visiting complex should be reviewed. (4.25).

Professional visitors should always be thoroughly searched. (4.27).

Professional visits should continue to take place in C Block but, with certain exceptions, under closed conditions. (4.28).

Consideration should be given to the institution of an appointments system for professional visitors. (4.29).

The whole visiting complex and the visiting arrangements generally should be subjected to more frequent and more critical inspection and supervision by the Security Department and by members of senior management. (4.29).

The procedures used in searching staff at the Maze prior to the escape were both inadequate and not properly carried out. (4.31).

The random searching of staff should be introduced forthwith. (4.32).

There was no evidence or other information to indicate how the guns or the ammunition used in the escape were smuggled into the Maze, but several routes could have been used. (4.33).

The way in which tools were controlled at the Maze showed weaknesses which reflected badly on those responsible for supervising the discipline and workshop staff and on the oversight exercised by the Security Department; all tools should in future be marked and more closely controlled. (5.02).

There should be a review of the hobbies permitted in the Maze. (5.03).

The hobbies rooms were not properly supervised and should not be reopened until adequate safeguards have been introduced. (5.01) (5.03).

We identified a number of potential hiding places which were rarely, if ever, searched. (5.06).

The Governor should carry out a comprehensive review of the arrangements for searching the H Blocks. (5.08).

The communications room in each H Block should be made secure. (5.12).

A system of routine calls or codewords between individual H Blocks and the ECR should be introduced. (5.14).

There should be a full review of the siting of alarm buttons in the prison. (5.14).

There is a need to review the system of CCTV surveillance throughout the prison. (5.14).

The Governor should ensure that basic security procedures are adhered to, the number of officers on duty in the wings should not be allowed to fall dangerously low and the random searching and proper supervision of orderlies should be ensured. (5.14).

The officer who allowed the kitchen lorry to pass through the segment gate unchecked was negligent and his actions should be investigated. (6.02).

The manning levels at segment gates should be reconsidered. (6.04).

The construction of the double-gated vehicle lock should be modified. (6.04).

There is a need for better communication between the ECR and staff manning segment gates. (6.04).

The officer who allowed the kitchen lorry to pass through the administration gate unchecked was negligent and his actions should be investigated. (6.05).

A vehicle lock should be constructed at the administration gate. (6.06).

Before making physical improvements to the internal gates, the prison authorities should review the purpose and operation of the whole segment system and its long term future, taking account of the overriding need for a new purpose-built gate complex. (6.07).

The behaviour of officers in the gate lodge was both courageous and praiseworthy. (6.08).

The gate lodge provided no protection for the staff and presented no real barrier to the escaping prisoners. (6.10).

Northern Ireland Office did not give sufficient priority to proposals made in January 1982 to rectify weaknesses at the main gate, nor were successive Governors of the Maze sufficiently forceful in pressing for essential improvements. (6.15).

A purpose-built main gate complex is essential to ensure longer term security and plans to provide one should be drawn up now. (6.17).

The security of the armoury building should be improved as a matter of urgency. (6.18).

The ECR staff misinterpreted their written instructions and failed to appreciate the potential seriousness of an emergency in the gate lodge area. (7.03).

The Assistant Governor responsible for the ECR had paid too little attention to ensuring its efficiency. (7.06).

Urgent action should be taken to improve the effectiveness of the ECR and there should be a review of its alarm, communications and CCTV surveillance systems. (7.05), (7.07).

The need for a quick reaction force at the Maze should be reviewed. (7.08).

We accept the evidence of those witnesses who told us that the external gate was kept closed on the day of the escape except when traffic was passing through. (7.09).

It was not the purpose of the outer fence to prevent prisoners from escaping. (7.11).

Consideration should be given to reviewing the rules of engagement issued to soldiers guarding the perimeter of the Maze. (7.14).

So long as the Maze continues to hold so many of the most dangerous terrorists in Northern Ireland, there will be a need for an armed force to guard it. (7.16).

The role of the Prison Guard Force should be reviewed and that review should also consider the question of a more substantial boundary fence. (7.18).

The first ring of VCPs was in position by 4.25 p.m. and had some success. (7.20).

The Local Security Committee should consider in what way the present procedures for providing the police and the Army with photographs of escaped prisoners might be modified to ensure their speedier distribution. (7.21).

Army and RUC contingency plans were implemented at 4.14 p.m. - two minutes after the alarm had been raised. (7.22).

There appears to be a case for reviewing the siting of the first ring of VCPs. (7.24).

The Chief Officer I must bear some responsibility for the shortcomings of his subordinate staff and should take the lead in setting new standards. (8.03).

There is a need to broaden the range and depth of work of prison officers. (8.10).

There is a need for more training. (8.10) (8.11) (8.12).

A training committee should be established at the Maze. (8.12).

A system of attendance more suited to the prison's needs should be introduced as soon as possible. (8.13).

The system of allocating officers to tasks was unsatisfactory. (8.14).

The scale of absences from the external gate area on the day of the escape calls into question the judgement of the senior officer in charge. (8.16).

All members of senior management must set aside time when they will be out of their offices visiting the prison. (8.19).

Consideration should be given to the introduction of an additional post at Governor III level to be third in charge of the prison. (8.19).

The Governor should review his management structure and systems. (8.21).

The performance of the Security Principal Officer fell markedly below an acceptable standard. (8.23).

The Security Department was not up to the task it was required to perform and its failures allowed the poor security environment to develop unchecked. (8.23).

The Assistant Governor responsible for the Security Department should be redeployed to other duties. (8.24).

The Deputy Governor must carry some responsibility for the poor performance of the Security Department; he should be given more time to devote to this important aspect of his work. (8.25) (8.26).

The Security Department should be re-organised as soon as possible. (8.26).

The Security Principal Officer should be redeployed to other duties and the post of security officer should be held by a Chief Officer. (8.27).

The Maze (Cellular) prison should have its own dog section. (8.28).

The Governor should in future be the chairman of the Local Security Committee. (9.02).

There is a need for more guidance from the Security and Operations Division. (9.04).

Priority should be given to the production of a Security Manual. (9.05).

The introduction of a system of regular inspections of establishments should be given priority. (9.08).

Security and Operations Division should be strengthened. (9.10).

The post of Deputy Director of Operations should be upgraded and the existing Governor II post retained for the time being. (9.10).

Failures in the area of vetting were the result of human error and no recommendations are made for changes in the vetting system. (9.15).

The government's decision to allow prisoners to wear civilian clothes did not contribute significantly, if at all, to the success of the escape. (9.19).

Changes in the prison regime did not affect the security of the prison in any significant way or make the escape easier to accomplish; the lack of any corresponding increase in security precautions did, however, weaken the general security of the prison. (9.26).

Changes in the prison regime had considerable effect on staff morale. (9.27) (9.28).

The fact that H7 contained only Provisional IRA prisoners made it easier for them to plan and execute the escape. (9.29).

High risk prisoners should not be allowed to remain in the same cell or wing for too long. (9.30).

Maghaberry prison should be used to relieve pressure on the Maze. (9.30).

The type of work prisoners are required to undertake should be reviewed in the light of the risks to security which each particular industry or place of work presents. (9.32).

In terms of manpower and other resources the Northern Ireland Prison Service has been reasonably well treated. (9.34).

The Prison Department of the Northern Ireland Office should receive priority in the allocation of the most able staff. (9.36).

The extent of the deficiencies in management and in the prison's physical defences amounted to a major failure in security for which the Governor must be held accountable. (10.12).

There was a marked lack of awareness in the Security and Operations Division of the prison's security weaknesses. (10.15).

Any shortcomings in the divisions under his control are the concern of the supervising Assistant Under-Secretary of State. No blame should, however, attach to him personally for the deficiencies which contributed to the escape. (10.17).

A review of the management structure of Prison Department should be instituted urgently, with consideration being given to the creation of a new post of Deputy Head of the Department and professional Head of the Prison Service. (10.19).

APPENDIX 4

PRISONERS WHO ESCAPED

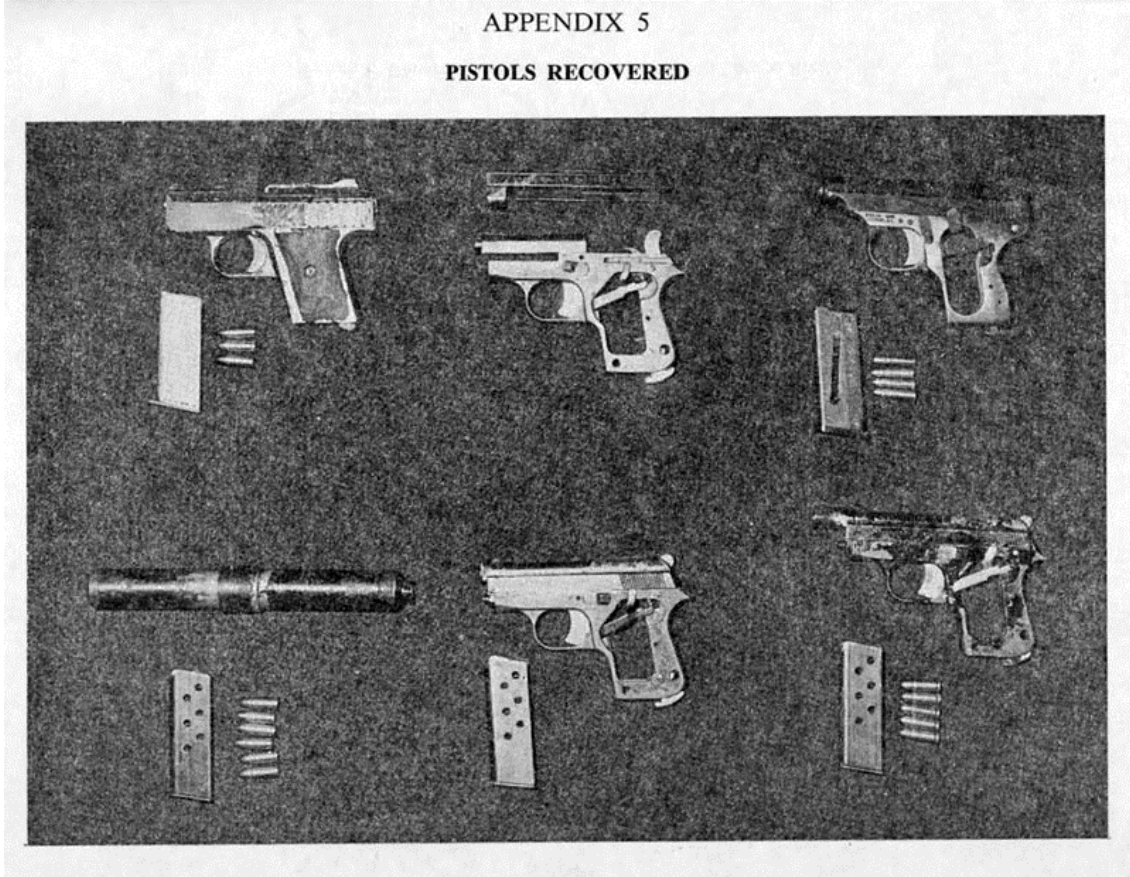
<i>Name</i>	<i>Offence(s)</i>	<i>Sentence(s)</i>
K.B.J. ARTT*	Murder	Life
P. BRENNAN*	Possessing Explosives	16 years
J.J. BURNS	Murder	Life
S. CAMPBELL*	Possessing Explosives	14 years
J.P. CLARKE*	Attempted Murder	18 years
S.J. CLARKE*	Murder	Life
H.J. COREY	Murder	Life
D. CUMMINGS	Murder	Life
J.G. DONNELLY	Conspiracy to Murder	15 years
D. FINUCANE*	Possessing Firearms and Ammunition	18 years
K.G. FLEMING*	Murder and Wounding with Intent	Secretary of State's Pleasure and Life
J.G. FRYERS*	Armed Robbery	20 years

W.G. GORMAN	Murder	Secretary of State's Pleasure
P.C. HAMILTON	Murder	Life
P.A. KANE	Attempted Murder	18 years
A. KELLY*	Murder	Secretary of State's Pleasure
G. KELLY*	Causing Explosion x 2	Life x 2
R. KERR	Murder x 2	Life x 2
T. KIRBY*	Murder	Life
A. McALLISTER*	Murder	Life
J. P. McCANN	Attempted Murder	25 years
G.P. McDONNELL*	Possessing Explosives	16 years
S.T. McELWAIN*	Murder	Life
B. J. McFARLANE*	Murder	Life
S. McGLINCHEY	Murder	Life
P.J. McINTYRE	Attempted Murder	15 years
P.O. McKEARNEY*	Possessing Firearms and Ammunition	14 years
M.G. McMANUS	Possessing Firearms with intent	15 years
D.J. McNALLY*	Causing Explosion	Life
B.J.P. MEAD	Murder	Life
H.H. MURRAY	Murder	Life
M.L. MURRAY	Conspiracy to Murder	20 years
E.J. O'CONNOR	Murder	Life
J.G. ROBERTS	Murder	Secretary of State's Pleasure
R.P. RUSSELL*	Attempted Murder	20 years
J. SIMPSON	Attempted Murder	20 years
J.J. SMYTH*	Attempted Murder	20 years
R. STOREY	Possessing Firearms and Ammunition	18 years

* Prisoners at large at the time of our visit

APPENDIX 5

PISTOLS RECOVERED



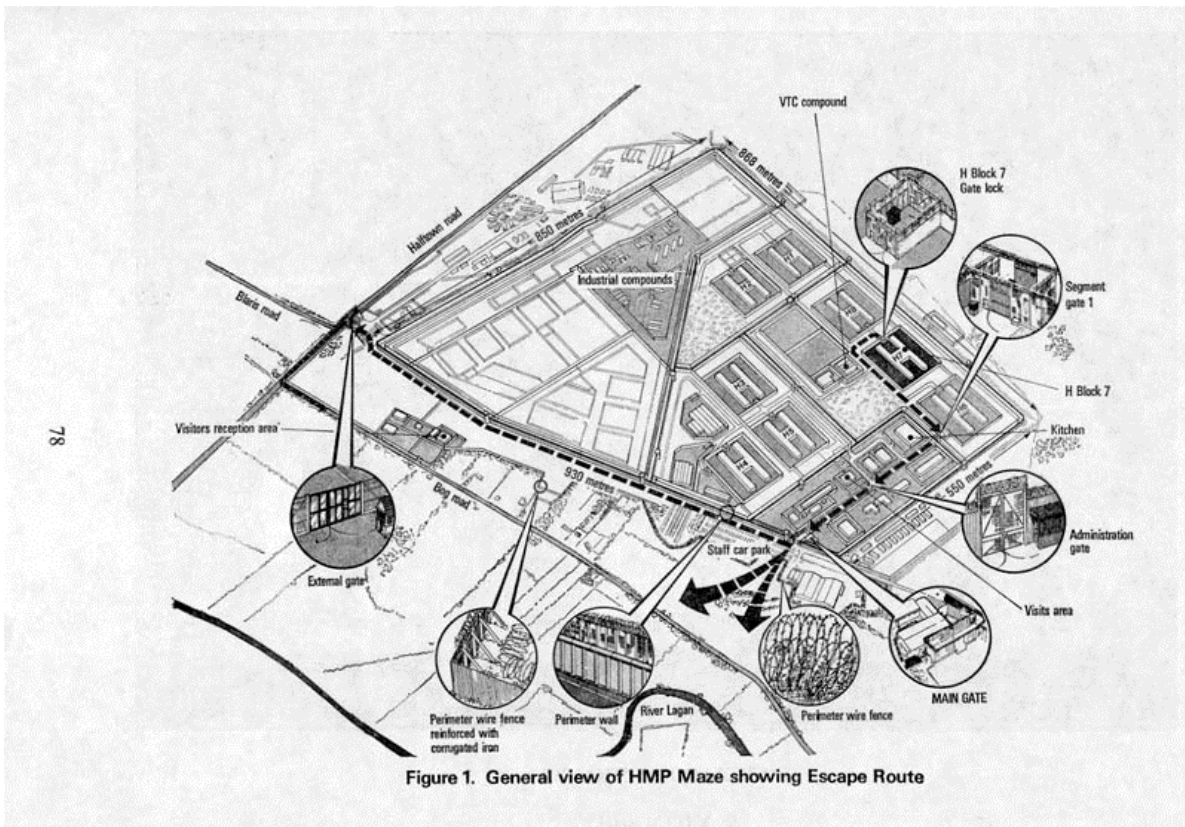


Figure 1. General view of HMP Maze showing Escape Route

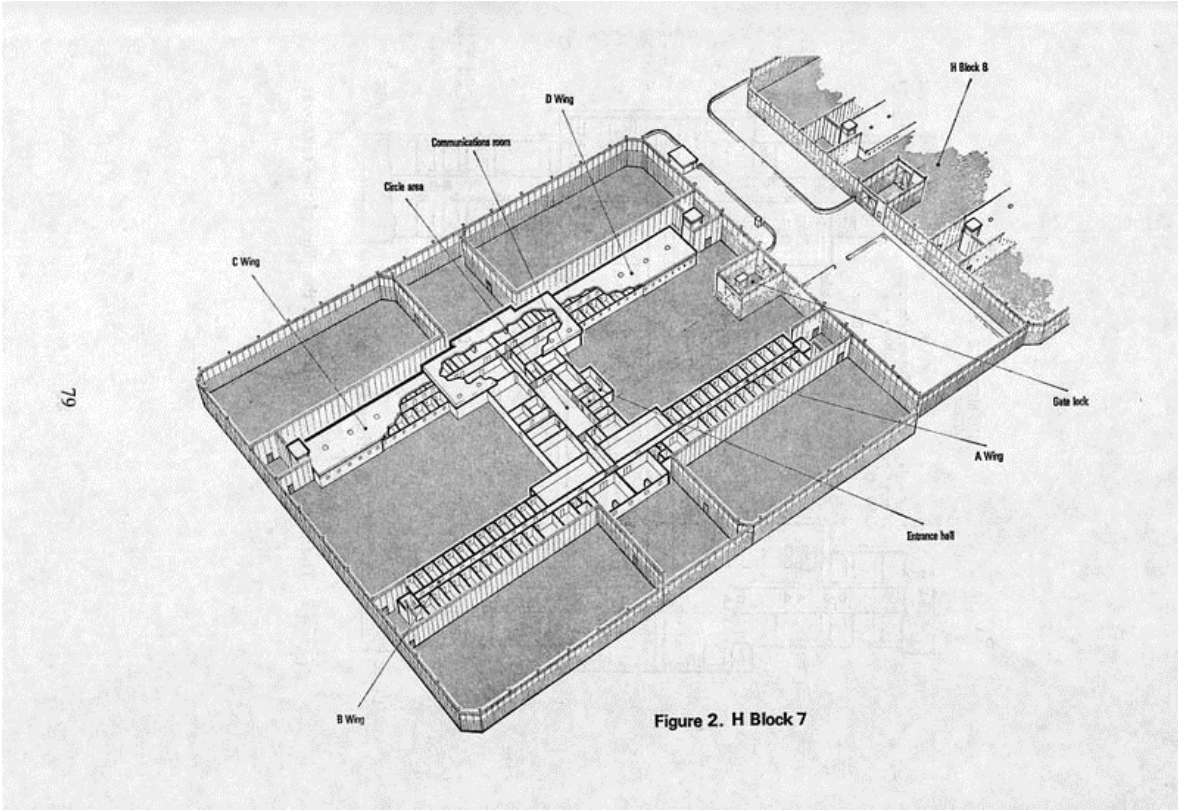


Figure 2. H Block 7

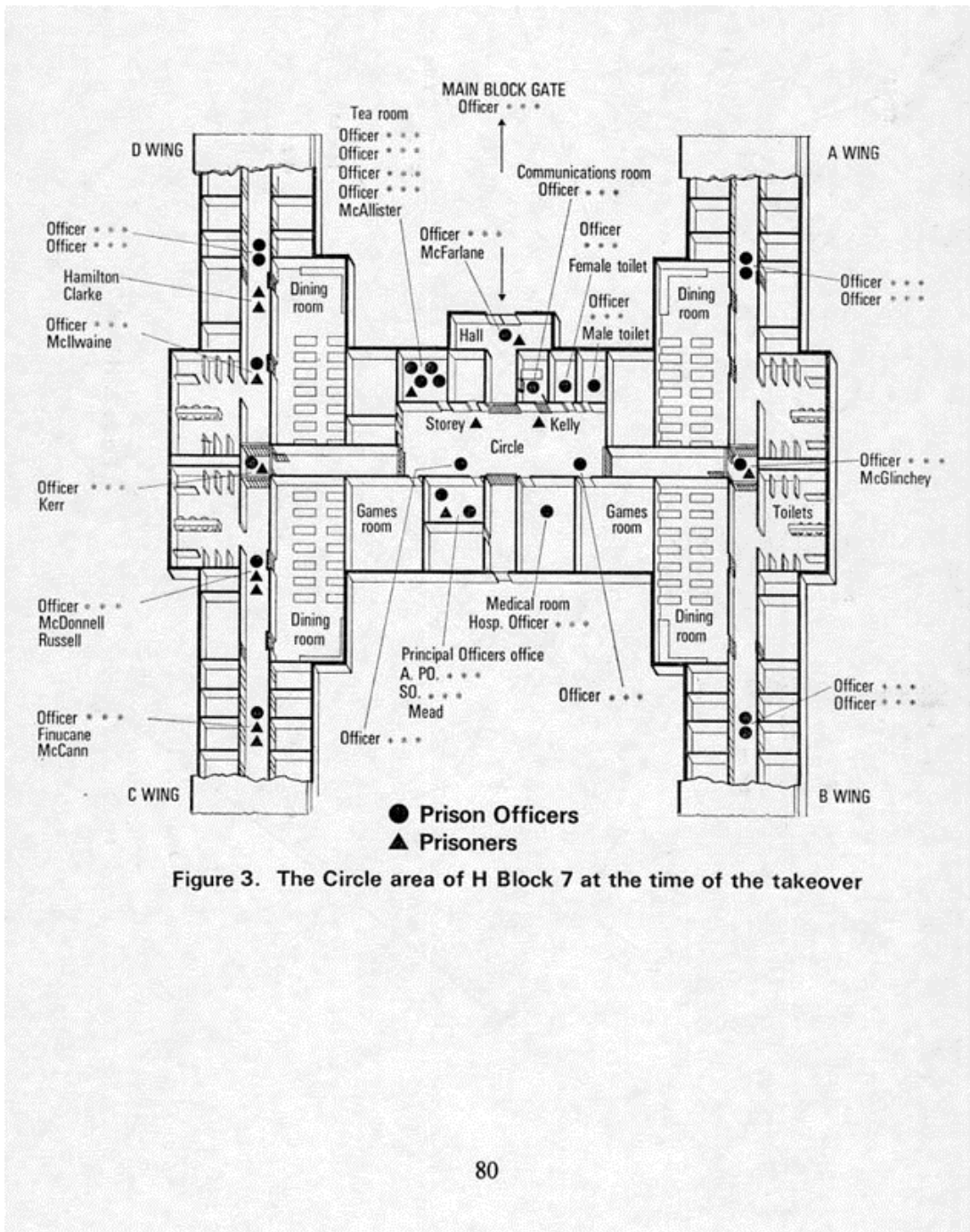


Figure 3. The Circle area of H Block 7 at the time of the takeover

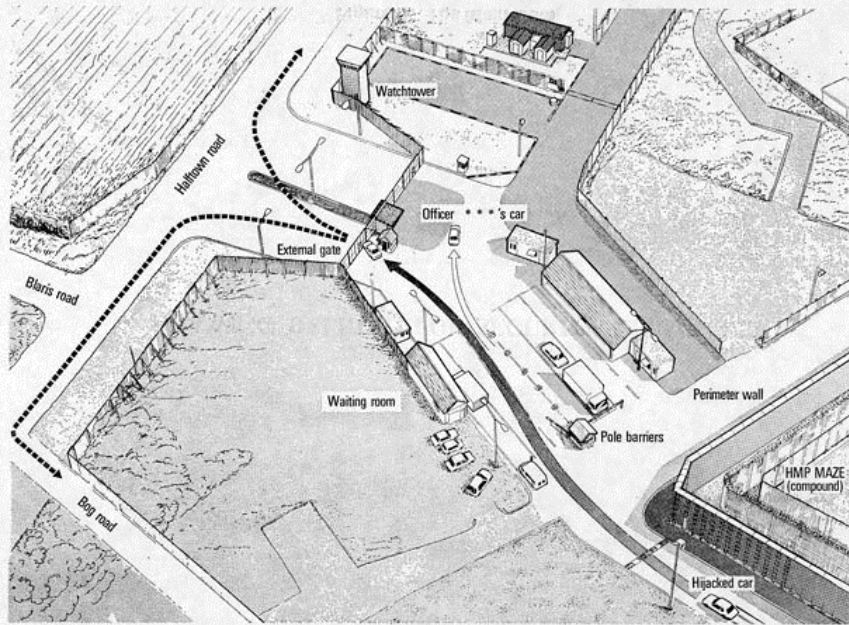
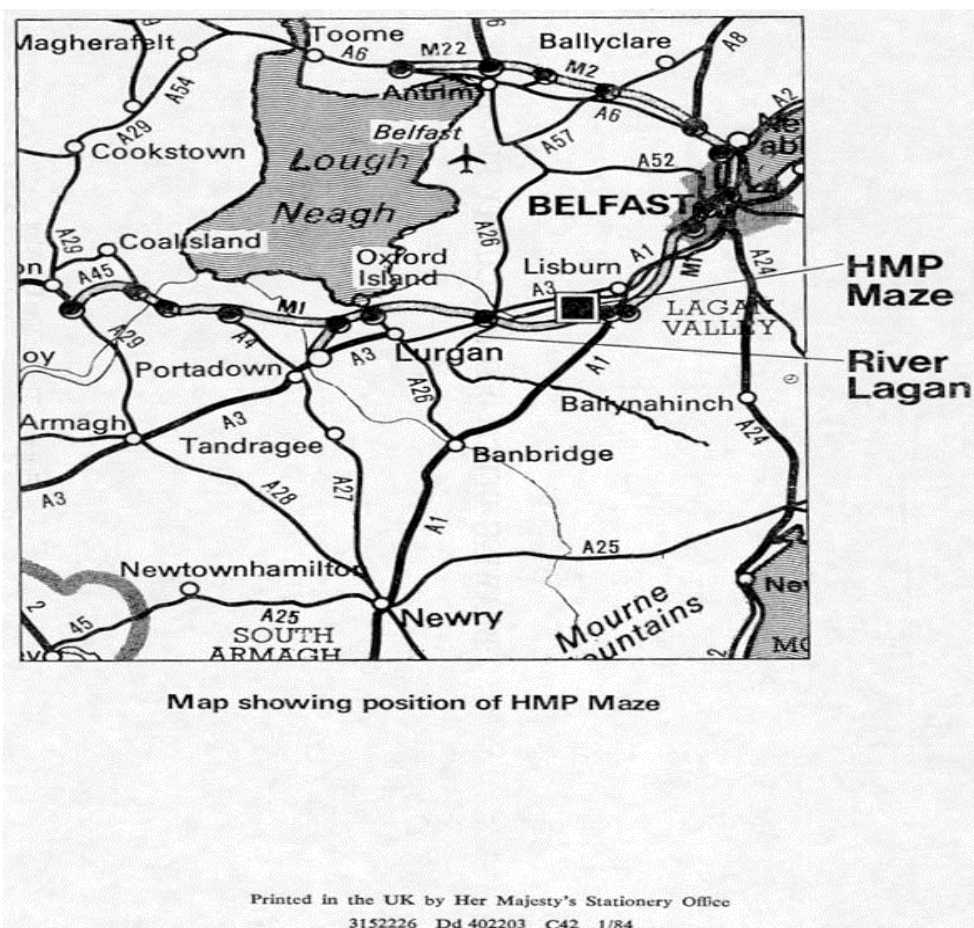


Figure 5. The External Gate

Figure 5. The External Gate



Map showing position of HMP Maze

APPENDIX: ARTICLE FROM WIKIPEDIA

The **Maze Prison escape** (known to [Irish republicans](#) as the **Great Escape**) took place on 25 September 1983 in [County Antrim, Northern Ireland](#). [HM Prison Maze](#) (previously known as Long Kesh) was a maximum security prison considered to be one of the most escape-proof prisons in Europe, and held prisoners convicted of taking part in armed paramilitary campaigns during [the Troubles](#). In the biggest [prison escape](#) in [British](#) history, 38 [Provisional Irish Republican Army](#) (IRA) prisoners, who had been convicted of offences including murder and causing explosions, escaped from H-Block 7 (H7) of the prison. One prison officer died of a [heart attack](#) as a result of the escape and twenty others were injured, including two who were shot with guns that had been smuggled into the prison. The escape was a propaganda coup for

the IRA, and a British [government minister](#) faced calls to resign. The official inquiry into the escape placed most of the blame onto prison staff, who in turn blamed the escape on political interference in the running of the prison.

Previous escapes

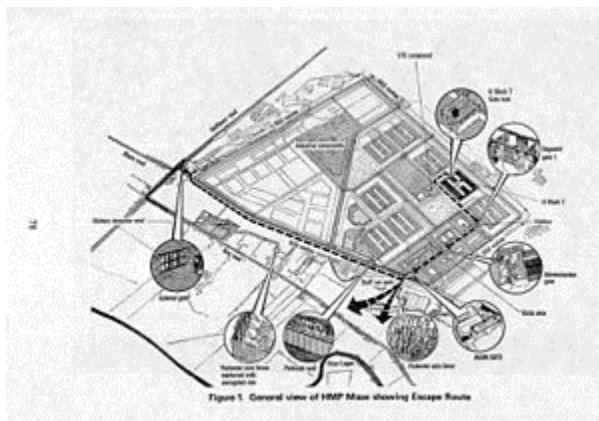
During the Troubles, Irish republican prisoners had escaped from custody *en masse* on several occasions. On 17 November 1971, nine prisoners dubbed the "Crumlin Kangaroos" escaped from [Crumlin Road Jail](#) when rope ladders were thrown over the wall. Two prisoners were recaptured, but the remaining seven managed to cross the border into the [Republic of Ireland](#) and appeared at a press conference in [Dublin](#).^[1] On 17 January 1972, seven [internees](#) escaped from the prison ship [HMS Maidstone](#) by swimming to freedom, resulting in them being dubbed the "Magnificent Seven".^{[1][2]} On 31 October 1973, three leading IRA members, including former [Chief of Staff Seamus Twomey](#), [escaped from Mountjoy Prison](#) in Dublin when a helicopter landed in the exercise yard of the prison. Irish band [The Wolfe Tones](#) wrote a song celebrating the escape called "[The Helicopter Song](#)", which topped the Irish popular music charts.^{[3][4][5]} 19 IRA members escaped from [Portlaoise Jail](#) on 18 August 1974 after overpowering guards and using [gelignite](#) to blast through gates,^[6] and 33 prisoners attempted to escape from Long Kesh on 6 November 1974 after digging a tunnel. IRA member Hugh Coney was shot dead by a sentry, 29 other prisoners were captured within a few yards of the prison, and the remaining three were back in custody within 24 hours.^{[5][7]} In March 1975, ten prisoners escaped from the courthouse in [Newry](#) while on trial for attempting to escape from Long Kesh.^[5] The escapees included [Larry Marley](#), who would later be one of the masterminds behind the 1983 escape.^{[8][9]} On 10 June 1981, eight IRA members on [remand](#), including [Angelo Fusco](#), [Paul Magee](#) and [Joe Doherty](#), escaped from Crumlin Road Jail. The prisoners took prison officers hostage using three handguns that had been smuggled into the prison, took their uniforms and shot their way out of the prison.^[10]

1983 escape

HM Prison Maze was considered one of the most escape-proof prisons in Europe. In addition to 15-foot (4.6 m) fences, each H-Block was encompassed by an 18-foot (5.5 m) concrete wall topped with [barbed wire](#), and all gates on the complex were made of solid steel and electronically operated.^[11] Prisoners had been planning the escape for several months. [Bobby Storey](#) and [Gerry Kelly](#) had started working as orderlies in H7, which allowed them to identify weaknesses in the security systems, and six handguns had been smuggled into the prison.^[8] Shortly after 2:30 pm on 25 September, prisoners seized control of H7 by simultaneously taking the prison officers hostage at gunpoint in order to prevent them from triggering an alarm. One officer was stabbed with a [craft knife](#), and another was knocked down by a blow to the back of the head. One officer who attempted to prevent the escape was shot in the head by Gerry Kelly, but survived.^{[8][12]} By 2:50 pm the prisoners were in total control of H7 without an alarm being raised. A dozen prisoners also took uniforms from the officers, and the officers were also forced to hand over their car keys and details of where their cars were, for possible later use during the

escape.^[12] A rear guard was left behind to watch over hostages and keep the alarm from being raised until they believed the escapees were clear of the prison, when they returned to their cells.^[12] At 3:25 pm, a lorry delivering food supplies arrived at the entrance to H7, where [Brendan McFarlane](#) and other prisoners took the occupants hostage at gunpoint and took them inside H7. The lorry driver was told the lorry was being used in the escape, and he was instructed what route to take and how to react if challenged.^[12] Bobby Storey told the driver that "This man [Gerry Kelly] is doing 30 years and he will shoot you without hesitation if he has to. He has nothing to lose".^[8]

At 3:50 pm the prisoners left H7, and the driver and a prison orderly were taken back to the lorry, and the driver's foot tied to the [clutch](#). 37 prisoners climbed into the back of the lorry, while Gerry Kelly lay on the floor of the cab with a gun pointed at the driver, who was also told the cab had been [booby trapped](#) with a [hand grenade](#).^[12] At nearly 4:00 pm the lorry drove towards the main gate of the prison, where the prisoners intended to take over the gatehouse. Ten prisoners dressed in guards' uniforms and armed with guns and chisels disembarked from the lorry and entered the gatehouse, where they took the officers hostage.^[12] At 4:05 pm the officers began to resist, and an officer pressed an alarm button. When other staff responded via an intercom, a senior officer said while being held at gunpoint that the alarm had been triggered accidentally. By this time the prisoners were struggling to maintain control in the gatehouse due to the number of hostages.^[12] Officers arriving for work were entering the gatehouse from outside the prison, and each was ordered at gunpoint to join the other hostages. Officer James Ferris ran from the gatehouse towards the pedestrian gate attempting to raise the alarm, pursued by Dermot Finucane. Ferris had already been stabbed three times in the chest, and before he could raise the alarm he collapsed.^[12]



Map of [HM Prison Maze](#) showing the escape route

Finucane continued to the pedestrian gate where he stabbed the officer controlling the gate, and two officers who had just entered the prison. This incident was seen by a soldier on duty in a watch tower, who reported to the Army operations room that he had seen prison officers fighting. The operations room telephoned the prison's Emergency Control Room (ECR), which replied that everything was all right and that an alarm had been accidentally triggered earlier.^[12] At 4:12

pm the alarm was raised when an officer in the gatehouse pushed the prisoner holding him hostage out of the room and telephoned the ECR. However, this was not done soon enough to prevent the escape. After several attempts the prisoners had opened the main gate, and were waiting for the prisoners still in the gatehouse to rejoin them in the lorry. At this time two prison officers blocked the exit with their cars, forcing the prisoners to abandon the lorry and make their way to the outer fence which was 25 yards away.^[12] Four prisoners attacked one of the officers and hijacked his car, which they drove towards the external gate. They crashed into a car near the gate and abandoned the car. Two escaped through the gate, one was captured exiting the car, and another was captured after being chased by a soldier.^[12] At the main gate, a prison officer was shot in the leg while chasing the only two prisoners who had not yet reached the outer fence. The prisoner who fired the shot was captured after being shot and wounded by a soldier in a watch tower, and the other prisoner was captured after falling. The other prisoners escaped over the fence, and by 4:18 pm the main gate was closed and the prison secured, after 35 prisoners had successfully breached the perimeter of the prison.^[12] The escape was the biggest in British history, and the biggest in Europe since [World War II](#).^{[11][13]}

Outside the prison the IRA had planned a logistical support operation involving 100 armed members,^[14] but due to a miscalculation of five minutes the prisoners found no transport waiting for them and were forced to flee across fields or hijack vehicles.^{[8][15]} The [British Army](#) and [Royal Ulster Constabulary](#) immediately activated a contingency plan, and by 4:25 pm a cordon of vehicle check points were in place around the prison, and others were later in place in strategic positions across Northern Ireland, resulting in the recapture of one prisoner at 11:00 pm. Twenty prison officers were injured during the escape, thirteen were kicked and beaten, four stabbed, two shot, and another, James Ferris, died after suffering a heart attack during the escape.^{[8][12]}

Reaction

The escape was a propaganda coup and morale boost for the IRA, with Irish republicans dubbing it the "Great Escape".^{[8][11]} Leading [Unionist Ian Paisley](#) called on [Nicholas Scott](#), the [Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State](#) for Northern Ireland, to resign. The British [Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher](#) made a statement in [Ottawa](#) during a visit to Canada, saying "It is the gravest [breakout] in our present history, and there must be a very deep inquiry".^[11] The day after the escape, [Secretary of State for Northern Ireland James Prior](#) announced an inquiry would be headed by [Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Prisons](#), James Hennessy.^{[11][16]} The *Hennessy Report* was published on 26 January 1984 placing most of the blame for the escape on prison staff, and made a series of recommendations to improve security at the prison.^{[12][17]} The report also placed blame with the designers of the prison, the [Northern Ireland Office](#) and successive prison governors who had failed to improve security.^[12] James Prior announced the prison's governor had resigned, and that there would be no ministerial resignations as a result of the report's findings.^{[17][18]} Four days after the *Hennessy Report* was published, then Minister for Prisons Nicholas Scott dismissed allegations from the Prison Governors Association and the [Prison Officers Association](#) that the escape was due to political interference in the running of the prison.^[17] On 25 October 1984, nineteen prisoners appeared in court on charges relating to the death of prison officer James Ferris, sixteen of them charged with his murder.^{[8][17]} A pathologist stated that the stab wounds Ferris suffered would not have killed a healthy man. The judge acquitted all sixteen as he could not correlate the stabbing to the heart attack.^[8]

Escapees

Fifteen escapees were captured on the first day, including four who were discovered hiding underwater in a river near the prison using reeds to breathe.^{[11][15]} Four more escapees were captured over the next two days, including Hugh Corey and Patrick McIntyre who were captured following a two-hour siege at an isolated farmhouse.^[11] Out of the remaining 19 escapees, 18 ended up in the republican stronghold of [South Armagh](#) where two members of the IRA's [South Armagh Brigade](#) were in charge of transporting them to [safehouses](#),^[19] and they were given the option of either returning to active service in the IRA's armed campaign or a job and new identity in the United States.^[20]

Escapee [Kieran Fleming](#) drowned in the Bannagh River near [Kesh](#) in December 1984, while attempting to escape from an ambush by the [Special Air Service](#) (SAS) in which fellow IRA member [Antoine Mac Giolla Bhrighde](#) was killed.^[21] Gerard McDonnell was captured in [Glasgow](#) in June 1985 along with four other IRA members including [Brighton bomber Patrick Magee](#), and convicted of conspiring to cause sixteen explosions across England.^[22] [Séamus McElwaine](#) was killed by the SAS in [Roslea](#) in April 1986,^[23] and Gerry Kelly and Brendan McFarlane were returned to prison in December 1986 after being [extradited](#) from [Amsterdam](#) where they had been arrested in January 1986, leaving twelve escapees still on the run.^[24] [Pádraig McKearney](#) was killed by the SAS along with seven other members of the IRA's [East Tyrone Brigade](#) in [Loughgall](#) in May 1987, the IRA's biggest single loss of life since the 1920s.^[25] In November 1987 Paul Kane and the mastermind of the escape Dermot Finucane,^[15] brother of [Belfast](#) solicitor [Pat Finucane](#) who was later killed by [loyalist](#) paramilitaries in 1989, were arrested in [Granard, County Longford](#) on extradition warrants issued by the British authorities.^[26] Robert Russell was extradited back to Northern Ireland in August 1988 after being captured in Dublin in 1984,^{[27][28]} and Paul Kane followed in April 1989.^[29] In March 1990 the [Supreme Court of Ireland](#) in Dublin blocked the extradition of James Pius Clarke and Dermot Finucane on the grounds they "would be probable targets for ill-treatment by prison staff" if they were returned to prison in Northern Ireland.^{[30][31]}

Kevin Barry Artt, Pól Brennan, James Smyth and Terrence Kirby, collectively known as the "H-Block 4", were arrested in the United States between 1992 and 1994 and fought lengthy legal battles against extradition.^{[32][33]} Smyth was extradited back to Northern Ireland in 1996 and returned to prison, before being released in 1998 as part of the [Good Friday Agreement](#).^[33] Tony Kelly was arrested in [Letterkenny, County Donegal](#) in October 1997,^[34] and fought successfully against extradition.^[35] In 2000 the British government announced that the extradition requests for Brennan, Artt and Kirby were being withdrawn as part of the Good Friday Agreement.^[36] The men officially remain fugitives, but in 2003 the [Prison Service](#) said they were not being "actively pursued".^[37] Dermot McNally, who had been living in the Republic of Ireland and was tracked down in 1996,^[33] and Dermot Finucane received an amnesty in January 2002, allowing them to return to Northern Ireland if they wished to.^[38] However Tony McAllister was not granted an amnesty which would have allowed him to return to his home in [Ballymurphy](#).^[39] As of September 2003 two escapees, Gerard Fryers and Séamus Campbell, had not been traced since the escape.^[40] Up to 800 republicans held a party at a hotel in [Donegal](#) in September 2003 to celebrate the 20th anniversary of the escape, which was described by [Ulster Unionist Party](#) MP [Jeffrey Donaldson](#) as "insensitive, inappropriate and totally unnecessary".^[37]

Subsequent escape attempts

On 10 August 1984 [loyalist](#) prisoner Benjamin Redfern, a member of the [Ulster Defence Association](#), attempted to escape from HM Prison Maze by hiding in the back of a [refuse lorry](#), but died after being caught in the crushing mechanism.^{[41][42]} On 7 July 1991 IRA prisoners [Nessan Quinlivan](#) and Pearse McAuley escaped from [HM Prison Brixton](#), where they were being held on remand. They escaped using a gun that had been smuggled into the prison, wounding a motorist as they fled after escaping the prison.^{[43][44]} On 9 September 1994 six prisoners including an armed robber, [Danny McNamee](#) and four IRA members including [Paul Magee](#), escaped from [HM Prison Whitemoor](#).^[45] The prisoners, in possession of two guns that had been smuggled into the prison, scaled the prison walls using knotted sheets.^{[45][46]} A guard was shot and wounded during the escape, and the prisoners were captured after being chased across fields by guards and the police.^[46] In March 1997 a 40-foot (12 m) tunnel was discovered in H7 at HM Prison Maze. The tunnel was fitted with electric lights, and was 80 feet (24 m) from the outside wall having already breached the block's perimeter wall.^[47] On 10 December 1997 IRA prisoner Liam Averill, serving a life sentence after being convicted of the murder of two Protestants, escaped from HM Prison Maze dressed as a woman.^[47] Averill mingled with a group of prisoners' families attending a Christmas party, and escaped on the coach taking the families out of the prison.^{[47][48]}

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Brixton Prison: Escape

My Lords, with the leave of the House, I shall now repeat a Statement on the escape of two Category A high risk prisoners from Brixton Prison which is now being made in another place by my right honourable friend the Home Secretary. The Statement is as follows:

"I wish to make a Statement about the escape of two Category A high risk prisoners from Brixton Prison using a firearm on the morning of 7th July. They were awaiting trial at the Central Criminal Court for serious offences including conspiracy to murder and conspiracy to cause explosions.

"Yesterday morning the two prisoners named Pearse Gerrard McAuley and Nessian Quinlivan attended the first Roman Catholic mass of the day in the prison. The service began at 9.15 a.m. and finished at about 10.05 a.m. Since both were high risk prisoners, they were subject to the usual security precautions. Accordingly, they underwent a rub-down search before leaving their secure unit for the chapel. They were escorted there by three officers.

"After the service, and again in accordance with the usual procedures, the prisoners were escorted by three prison officers to return to their unit. A dog patrol supervised them between the chapel and the main prison building. Once inside and in a narrow passageway, one of the prisoners produced a firearm and took one of the escorting officers hostage, holding the gun to his head. He fired a shot above the officer's head, and the other prisoner took the keys of the hostage officer and used them to gain access to the prison centre. In the centre a further shot was fired which passed through the clothing of another officer. The prisoners and their hostage went through two other gates, entering a building yard.

"In the yard another shot was fired to keep pursuing staff at bay, and the prisoners reached the prison wall at a point where they were able to scale it despite the razor wire at the top. They then escaped into the married quarters area outside the prison and threatened a prison officer who was cleaning his car. They took possession of it but abandoned it when they found their route was blocked.

"They were at that point within a few yards of Brixton Hill, where they stopped a private car. The driver was ordered out and shot in the upper right leg and the woman passenger got out unharmed. I am pleased to say that the driver is recovering in hospital. The car was driven into Brixton and abandoned in a side street. With money they had taken from the car driver, they used a taxi to take them to Baker Street Underground Station.

"I am deeply disturbed by this grave lapse of security and by the associated risk to members of the public. I have decided that we must have a swift [1227](#) and independent inquiry into the circumstances of this deplorable incident so that any necessary lessons can be learned promptly.

"I have therefore asked Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Prisons, His Honour Judge Tumim, to carry out a full inquiry with the following terms of reference: 'To inquire into the circumstances of the escape of prisoners McAuley and Quinlivan from Her Majesty's Prison Brixton on Sunday, 7th July, and in particular to review the security arrangements for handling high risk

prisoners in this prison; to assess how those arrangements were operated on the day concerned; and to make recommendations'. "I spoke to Judge Tumim this morning and he told me that he would be starting the task immediately. He will be assisted by the police. I have asked him to submit an interim report by the end of this month. Subject to the need to protect sensitive security material and to the possibility of criminal charges being laid, I intend that the chief inspector's findings should be published.

"When Judge Tumim inspected Brixton last year, his report referred to certain comments on security matters which he had put directly to the Director-General of the Prison Service. These dealt with matters of physical security, including the position and coverage of closed circuit television. I shall be asking the inquiry to pay particular attention to the progress made in these areas.

"Judge Tumim also recommended that we should reconsider holding Category A high risk prisoners in Brixton when new accommodation became available at the new Belmarsh Prison in Woolwich. The Director-General accepted this recommendation. The new unit at Belmarsh for all Category A prisoners in London who are designated as a high risk has been recently completed. It had been planned to use this as from November, but I have decided to bring this forward to next month.

"In the meantime I have taken the following action. All governors of prisons which hold Category A prisoners, other than dispersal prisons, have been asked to review urgently their procedures for handling Category A high risk prisoners whenever it is necessary for them to leave their secure units. In particular they must consider immediately whether religious services can be provided for them in their living areas as opposed to allowing them to move to chapels. I have asked the Director-General of the Prison Service to report to me on this as a matter of urgency.

"I have also given instructions that other prisoners awaiting trial on terrorist charges should be moved immediately from Brixton to high security dispersal prisons.

"This was a very serious incident and no time must be lost in finding out exactly what happened and taking all possible measures to prevent such an event recurring."

The House and the country will be deeply disturbed that two suspected terrorists held in supposedly high security conditions can procure firearms and break out of prison in this manner. While considering this dreadful incident, I am sure that the whole House will have learned with some relief that the motorist concerned appears to be recovering in hospital. We offer him from all sides of the House our sympathy in his injuries and our good wishes for his speedy recovery. The House will also, I am sure, wish to express our admiration for the brave prison officers who faced these two men, armed and fierce as they were.

Quite obviously we welcome the Government's announcement that an inquiry is to be launched into what occurred. From these Benches, we are grateful that that inquiry will include an examination of all the security arrangements at Brixton Prison and not just the circumstances of this particular escape.

We were pleased too to know that an interim report is to be issued and published by the end of the month. I trust—if I am allowed to say this—that the usual channels will procure that any such interim report is speedily debated in your Lordships' House. It is important and urgent for obvious reasons, not least because such incidents have a most damaging effect on the morale of prison officers in our prisons and on this occasion on the morale of our security forces, who show great courage in apprehending suspects of this kind and spend an enormous amount of time in doing so.

Will the Minister confirm or deny that at the time of the break-out, Brixton prison was holding 1,060 prisoners, 230 more than the official limit, with only 140 staff on duty? Does the Minister not agree that the break-out occurred after chapel on Sunday? One can hear in this House, and no doubt in another place too, grim echoes of Strangeways. Almost precisely the same timing and almost precisely the same methods were employed in the incident at Strangeways. In his report on the prison disturbances at Strangeways, Lord Justice Woolf considered the problem of weekend staffing levels. He suggested that disturbances are more likely to occur at that time. He went to the trouble of recommending, at paragraph 13.106 on page 351 of his report, ways of increasing weekend staffing, not least because of the risks that exist at this time. What have the Government done about that recommendation? If they have done nothing until now, why is that?

These escapes are even more alarming, not just because of the report of Lord Justice Woolf but also because of a report referred to in the Statement, namely, that of Judge Tumim, the very man who is being asked to conduct the inquiry into these events. However, what the Statement did not contain was the date upon which Judge Tumim made his report on Brixton Prison. That occurred in August last year—11 months ago. The Statement does not contain [1229](#) direct quotations from that report. However, because of the seriousness of the contents of this Statement, I must ask for your Lordships' indulgence while I quote from that report. At paragraph 3.08 on page 46 of his report Judge Tumim deals with the question of security at Brixton Prison. He stated in August 1990: This process would be helped if Brixton did not hold high or exceptional risk Category A inmates; the need for it to do so should be re-examined in view of the prison's existing level of security and the forthcoming opening of ... Woolwich with extensive, purpose-built Category A accommodation and security. In the meantime, the time taken to approve proposed visitors to Category A inmates should be reduced". At paragraph 2.12 of the report Judge Tumim further states: At the time of our inspection Brixton held nearly 60 inmate, in the highest security category (Category A1), many of whom also had the ability and resources to mount escape bids". What firmer warning could the same judge who is now being asked to conduct the inquiry give? Why has the warning been ignored—as one anticipated—and why has the judge been asked to report again on precisely the matters on which he reported in August 1990? This House has received many excellent reports on conditions in our prisons. Many of those reports have drawn attention to most unsatisfactory conditions of overcrowding and insecurity. From these Benches I welcome the fact that there will be another report. But could we have done with reports and see action instead?

My Lords, I, too, wish to thank the noble Lord, Lord Waddington, for having repeated the Statement. Few Home Secretaries can have had to read such a sombre Statement in the House of Commons than has been the lot of the current Home Secretary. It is a matter of the gravest importance that two dangerous, armed men have been allowed to escape from Brixton prison.

The men represent a danger to the general public and that fact is causing the most serious concern in the police service. I am sure the noble Lord, Lord Waddington, recognises that fact.

What is the purpose of major police operations that are launched to bring suspected terrorists before the courts if the suspected terrorists are allowed to escape in the circumstances of the break-out at Brixton Prison yesterday? It is all the more worrying that this incident has taken place when there is an ever-present prospect of still further Provisional IRA activities in Great Britain. Like the noble Lord, Lord Mishcon, I, too, welcome the fact that Judge Tumim is to be asked to conduct an independent inquiry. All of us have substantial confidence in Judge Tumim who has produced some admirable reports on conditions in prisons. Our welcome of his appointment is unrestrained but it raises the question—the noble Lord, Lord Mishcon, has just touched on the point—of how wise it has been to hold Category A prisoners in prisons which are so grossly overcrowded. That situation represents a major threat to the security of a prison. This is not a case of being wise after the event.

I welcome the fact that changes will be made as regards high security prisoners attending chapel services. Again I am not trying to be wise after the [1230](#) event. But, given what happened at Strangeways last year, one has to wonder why, when the disturbances at Strangeways arose within the chapel, greater steps were not taken to ensure that serious problems did not arise from Category A prisoners attending chapel services in Brixton.

The question of staffing levels is a difficult one. I believe most of us recognise that there has been a major improvement in the staff-inmate ratio in prisons over the past 20 years. We welcome that improvement but we may need to look at staffing levels on Sundays. It is no accident that both these episodes took place on a Sunday. I hope very much that the noble Lord, Lord Waddington, will be able to confirm that that matter is receiving substantial attention.

In conclusion I must say that there can be absolutely no excuse whatever for what occurred at Brixton yesterday. I hope very much that we shall have an opportunity to discuss this matter on the basis of Judge Tumim's report at the earliest opportunity.

[§Lord Waddington](#)

My Lords, I believe we can all agree that the noble Lord, Lord Mishcon, was entirely right when he referred to this Statement as a grim Statement. The noble Lord also voiced the opinions of everyone in this House when he expressed his sympathy for the motorist who was shot. The sympathy of all of us goes out to the motorist. The noble Lord expressed his admiration for the people who, faced with those armed, desperate men, behaved so well. He said that he would like a debate on this very serious matter and obviously that request will be considered.

The noble Lord asked about the number of prison officers on duty yesterday in the prison. The answer is that 145 prison officers were on duty and there were about 1,000 prisoners in the prison. As was pointed out by the noble Lord, Lord Harris of Greenwich, one of the matters which Judge Tumim will undoubtedly look into is the question of staffing ratios on Sundays. The noble Lord was at pains to point out that staffing ratios overall have improved dramatically over the past decades. In the 1960s there were six prisoners to one prison officer; 10 years ago there

were three prisoners to one prison officer; and now there are two prisoners to one prison officer. Therefore, in fairness one should not forget the great improvements which have taken place, just as one should not forget the great improvements in the prison estate, with 12 new prisons since 1979 and 12 other prisons to be completed during the next three years.

The noble Lord, Lord Mishcon, referred to Judge Tumim's report on Brixton published in August 1990. I can assure him that Judge Tumim's warnings have not been ignored. The Home Secretary has been advised by the director-general that all his recommendations are being considered and action has been taken. It is for the inquiry to consider whether further action should have been taken.

Noble Lords should be hesitant to criticise the Government regarding the recommendation that high risk Category A prisoners should be moved to Belmarsh. Belmarsh has only recently opened. The original intention was that high risk Category A prisoners should be moved to Belmarsh in November [1231](#) this year. Only two of the four wings at Belmarsh are yet in operation. It is a newly-commissioned prison coming into operation by stages, as one would expect. In view of the obvious anxiety that is bound to have been caused throughout the country as a result of the incident, my right honourable friend the Home Secretary has decided to bring forward the transfer of Category A high risk prisoners to Belmarsh. As I said in the Statement, they will go there next month.

Both the noble Lord, Lord Mishcon, and the noble Lord, Lord Harris of Greenwich, welcomed the decision to ask Judge Tumim to carry out the inquiry. I certainly do so.

So far as concerns the lessons from Strangeways, it is worth bearing in mind that there were 309 people in the chapel at Strangeways and there were 71 in the chapel at Brixton on this occasion. One of the things that was said after the Strangeways incident, which I remember so vividly, was that with such a large number of people in the chapel it was difficult to exercise proper supervision over them, particularly with staffing levels as they were on a Sunday. Having 309 people in the chapel confronted the staff with a considerable task. One could say that that lesson was learnt because yesterday there were 71 people in the chapel—a very great difference. As the Statement makes clear, the Home Secretary is not content with that. One of the matters which will have to be considered by the inquiry is whether such chapel gatherings should be terminated for high risk prisoners and whether those prisoners should have the opportunity for religious observance in the wings within which they are kept secure.