

PRISON ESCAPES 2

17th century

- In 1621 Dutch author Hugo Grotius

escaped from Loevestein where he was held captive by hiding himself inside a book coffin. He was then smuggled outside.

18th century

- Jack Sheppard

took to theft and burglary in 1723, and was arrested and imprisoned five times in 1724 but escaped four times, making him a notorious public figure and wildly popular with the poorer classes.

- The Italian author and adventurer Giacomo Casanova

escaped from prison in 1757.

19th century

- Napoleon Bonaparte escaped from his prison on the island Elba in 1815 and returned to Europe in an attempt to restore his Empire.

- The notorious outlaw Billy The Kid

managed to escape from prison in 1881, but was captured and shot by Pat Garrett

only a few months later.

1900-1950

- German Naval Air Service Kapitänleutnant Gunther Plüschow

escaped from the Donington Hall

prisoner of war camp in 1915.

- John Dillinger

served time at the Indiana State Penitentiary at Michigan City, until 1933, when he was paroled. Within four months, he was back in jail in Lima, Ohio

, but his gang sprang him, killing the jailer, Sheriff Jessie Sarber. Most of the gang was captured again by the end of the year in Tucson, Arizona

, due to a fire at the Historic Hotel Congress. Dillinger alone was sent to the Lake County jail in Crown Point, Indiana

. He was to face trial for the suspected killing of police officer William O'Malley during a bank shootout in East Chicago, Indiana

, some time after his escape from jail. During this time on trial, a famous photograph was taken of Dillinger putting his arm on prosecutor Robert Estill's shoulder when suggested to him by reporters.

- On March 3, 1934, Dillinger escaped from the "escape-proof" (as it was dubbed by local authorities at the time) Crown Point, Indiana county jail, which was guarded by many police officers and national guardsmen. Newspapers reported that Dillinger had escaped using a fake gun made from wood blackened with shoe polish.

- Japanese murderer Yoshie Shiratori

broke out of prison four times between 1930s and 1940s. A novel and TV-drama *Hagoku* was based on his true story.

- The Fort San Cristóbal is a fort located on the top of the mount San Cristóbal, which is very close (4 km) to Pamplona

, Spain

. Built inside the mountain and obsolete since its opening in 1919, due to its weakness against aviation, it served as a prison. On May 22, 1938, during the Spanish Civil War

, around 30 prisoners organised a mutiny for a massive prison break. 792 prisoners fled away but only 3 succeeded in getting to the French

border; 585 were arrested, 211 died and 14 of the arrested who were considered the leaders were sentenced to death. Most fugitives were intercepted during the following days. In 1988, a sculpture was erected to honour the memory of the Republican people dead there. The fort ceased to be prison in 1945.

- In The Great Escape

, 76 Allied POWs (primarily Commonwealth airmen) escaped from Stalag Luft III

during World War II

. Fifty of the escaped POWs were rounded up and shot by the Gestapo

, while only 3 succeeded in reaching neutral territories.

- Colditz Castle

was used as an 'escape-proof' prisoner of war camp during World War II; but over the course of 300 escape attempts, 130 prisoners escaped. Thirty escapees eventually managed to reach friendly territory. The men had tunneled, disguised themselves as guards, workmen or women, sneaked away through sewer drains, and even planned to use a glider to get over the wall.

- André Devigny, a French resistance fighter during World War II, escaped Montluc Military Prison

in Lyons with his cellmate in April 1943.

- In the Cowra breakout

, at least 545 out of approximately 1000 Japanese Prisoners of War escaped from Number 12 Prisoner of War Compound at Cowra on the night of 4 August 1944, of those 231 commit suicide and 108 are wounded.

- French author Henri Charrière

tried to escape in vain several times, but eventually was successful in 1943. His story, Papillon was published and filmed under the same name

.

1950-1975

- Accused safe cracker Alfie Hinds

tried to proclaim his innocence by repeatedly walking out of prison. He became famous for escaping from Nottingham Prison

after sneaking through the locked doors and over a 20 feet (6.1 m) prison wall, for which he became known as "Houdini" Hinds. He later escaped from the Law Courts at the Old Bailey

. Escorted by two guards, he went to the lavatory, where they removed his handcuffs outside. As the three entered, Hinds locked the two guards inside the lavatory by snapping a padlock, which had been smuggled in to him earlier, onto screw eyes

inserted on the door by his unknown accomplices and escaped into the crowd on Fleet Street

. Hinds sealed his notoriety by making a third escape from Chelmsford Prison

.



- Frank Morris, John Anglin

and Clarence Anglin

escaped

from 'inescapable' Alcatraz Island in 1962; although the fate of the escapees is unclear.

- The escape of Lucien Rivard

in Canada in 1965. Rivard was consequently named the Canadian Newsmaker of the Year

by the Canadian Press

.

- Soviet spy George Blake

escaped from Wormwood Scrubs

on 22 October 1966, assisted by Pat Pottle, Michael Randle and Sean Bourke. Both Blake and Bourke reached the safety of the Soviet Union

.

- Before being sentenced to 12 years in the Federal Corrections Institution at Petersburg, Virginia

in April 1971, Frank W. Abagnale is said to have escaped from both a British VC-10 airliner, and the Federal Detention Center in Atlanta, Georgia

. His autobiography was later adapted to the screen for the 2002 release of *Catch Me If You Can*

, starring Leonardo DiCaprio.

- In 1973, three Provisional Irish Republican Army

prisoners escaped in the Mountjoy Prison helicopter escape

, when a hijacked helicopter landed in the exercise yard at Mountjoy Prison

, Dublin, Republic of Ireland

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1975-2000

- *Midnight Express*

author Billy Hayes escaped from a Turkish prison island where he was serving a 30 year sentence for hashish smuggling, using a fishing boat to make his way to Greece and eventually home to New York City, in 1975.

- Serial killer Ted Bundy

escaped from prison twice in 1977.

- Michael Sabo

escaped from Allenwood Federal Prison in 1979.

- In December 1979, political prisoners Tim Jenkin, Stephen Lee and Alex Moumbaris escaped from South Africa's maximum-security Pretoria Prison. After 18 months of plotting, testing, preparing, and learning how to pick locks and forge keys, the trio escaped the prison the same way they came in: through 10 locked doors.

- In the 1983 Batticaloa Jailbreak on 23 September 1983, 41 Tamil political prisoners and 151 criminal prisoners escaped in eastern Sri Lanka.

- In the Maze Prison escape on 25 September 1983, 38 Provisional Irish Republican Army members escaped from HMP Maze in Northern Ireland, the biggest prison escape in British history.

- In 1984, six death row inmates escaped Mecklenburg Correctional Center, making it the largest mass death row escape in American history. All were recaptured within 18 days, and all six men would eventually be executed. The final execution took place in 1996.

- Claude Dallas

escaped from a penitentiary in Idaho
in 1986 and spent a year on the run.

- Danny Ray Horning escaped from the Arizona State Prison in Florence, Arizona

on May 12, 1992, and a 55-day manhunt ensued as Horning fled the authorities. The pursuit ended on July 5, 1992, near Sedona, Arizona

. Horning led authorities hundreds of miles through the Arizona wilderness, and committed numerous kidnappings during the manhunt.

- In September 1994, 6 prisoners, including Paul Magee

, used guns to escape Whitemoor Prison

. They were later recaptured.

- In 1995 Vellore Fort Jailbreak

on 15 August 1995, 43 Tamil Tiger inmates escaped from Vellore Fort prison in India.

- In August 1996, Englishman David McMillan

escaped from Thailand's Klong Prem Central Prison while awaiting trial on drug charges. McMillan cut the bars of his shared cell, scaled four walls before dropping over the electrified outer wall using a bamboo ladder, and then skirted the moat while hiding his face under an umbrella from the prison factory. The break-out is described in his book *Escape* (published 2007).

- In 1998, the Belgian child molester Marc Dutroux

notoriously managed to escape for a few hours. He was caught the same afternoon, but the incident forced two politicians to resign and deepened the loss of faith in the Belgian judicial system.

(<http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/europe/88889.stm>)

- Martin Gurule escaped from the Texas Death Row at Ellis Unit

in 1998. He was found dead a few days later.

- In 1999, Leslie Dale Martin

and three other inmates on Louisiana

's death row

escaped from their cells at the Louisiana State Penitentiary

. They were caught within hours before they even managed to escape prison grounds. The four men had managed the escape with the use of hacksaws that had been smuggled in for them by a bribed corrections officer. Other corrections officers were inattentive to the inmates' two to three week effort at cutting their cell doors and window. After the escape, two corrections officers were fired and two others were demoted. Martin was later overheard by two corrections officers plotting another escape, which included taking hostages and commandeering a vehicle to ram the prison's front gates. Martin was immediately moved to the holding cell outside the Death Chamber, a month before his execution in 2002.

- In March 1999, Lucy Dudko hijacked a helicopter during a joy-flight over Sydney and ordered the pilot to land inside Metropolitan Remand and Reception Centre

in Silverwater, New South Wales

where her lover, John Killick, was serving 28 years for armed robberies. The helicopter plucked Killick from the prison's exercise yard and avoided a shower of bullets fired by prison guards. The couple then went on the run, eluding police around the country until their luck ran out in a Sydney caravan park six weeks later.

- Ty Conn

's escape on May 6, 1999 from inside Kingston Penitentiary

was the 26th in the history of facility. Conn employed a ladder and homemade grappling hook to scale the wall and used cayenne pepper

to deter dogs following his scent.

2000-Present

- The Texas 7

escaped from John B. Connally Unit on December 13, 2000. Six of them were captured after over a month and a half on the run; the 7th killed himself before being captured.

- In January 2001, 3 inmates escaped from Oklahoma State Penitentiary

's H-Unit (Hi-Max). One of them was injured during the escape, and while trying to get back in the prison he got caught in the razor between the fences. The other 2 offenders (one serving a life sentence for murder, the other for rape and kidnapping) were at large for several days before being apprehended in a small town approximately 40 miles (64.4 km) from the prison.

- In New York, two convicted murderers escaped from Elmira State Penitentiary in July 2003, both recaptured in 2 days.

- Hugo Selenski was the target of a nationwide manhunt and gained national media recognition in USA when he escaped from the jail where he was awaiting trial the week he was charged with murders, on Friday, October 9, 2003. He and another inmate used bedsheets to escape from the Luzerne County Correctional Facility in the county seat of Wilkes-Barre, Pennsylvania

. Selenski's partner in the jailbreak, Scott Bolton, was injured and hospitalized during the escape, but Selenski remained free. He turned himself in several days later.

- Brian Nichols

on March 11, 2005 escaped from the Fulton County

courthouse in Atlanta, by overpowering an officer and taking her pistol. He then murdered a judge, a court reporter, a police officer and U.S. Customs agent. He then held a woman named Ashley Smith hostage for a night in her own home, before he allowed her to leave to visit her daughter. Once she was released, she called the police, and he surrendered peacefully to SWAT

officers who arrived on the scene.

- On November 4, 2005, Texas Death Row Inmate Charles Victor Thompson

escaped from the Harris County Jail by acquiring a set of street clothes and pretending to be a representative from the State Attorney General's office to fool the corrections officers. He was recaptured two days later in Shreveport, Louisiana, 200 miles (321.9 km) from where he escaped.

- Ralph "Bucky" Phillips escaped from prison on April 2, 2006, in New York, by cutting through the ceiling in the kitchen with a can opener. On June 10 he was suspected of a shooting which ended with one New York state trooper being severely wounded. Bucky was later caught in Warren County, Pennsylvania, on September 8, 2006, his escape led police on the largest manhunt in New York state history. He was sentenced to life without parole for the shooting death of SWAT officer Longobardo and 40 years to life in both other shootings, which injured one state trooper and one other SWAT officer.

- Richard Lee McNair

has escaped from custody three times, including from a federal maximum-security prison in April 2006. He was recaptured by the RCMP on October 25, 2007 in Campbellton, New Brunswick, when he was stopped while driving a stolen vehicle.

- John Parsons

(who murdered a Chillicothe, Ohio

Police Officer while running away from the police for robbing a gas station) escaped from a jail in Ross County, Ohio

on July 29, 2006 using bedsheets, toilet paper, and newspaper. He was later recaptured on October 19, 2006 .As a fugitive, Parsons was twice featured on the Fox television show America's Most Wanted

.

- Kelly Allen Frank

(who had plotted to kidnap the infant son of talk-show host David Letterman) and William John Willcutt escaped from a Montana prison on June 8, 2007. Both were recaptured on June 13, 2007.

- On December 15, 2007 inmates Jose Espinosa and Otis Blunt escaped from the high-security level of the Union County

jail in Elizabeth, New Jersey

. Espinosa was awaiting sentencing on an aggravated manslaughter

charge, while Blunt was being held in lieu of bond on robbery and weapons charges. They escaped by scraping away the mortar around the cinder blocks

making up the cell walls. They then smashed the block, hid the pieces in a footlocker and covered the holes with pin-up pictures. To delay knowledge of the escape, they made dummies out of sheets and pillowcases and left them in their beds. Espinosa was recaptured on Tuesday, January 8, 2008. Blunt was recaptured the following day Wednesday, January 9, 2008 in Mexico City, Mexico.

- Mas Selamat

escaped from the Singapore's Whitley Road Detention Centre at 4:05 pm on Wednesday, February 27, 2008. He was eventually recaptured in Johor Bahru, Malaysia on April 1, 2009, over a year after his escape.

- Sarposa Prison attack

; a raid on the Kandahar detention facility in Kandahar

, Afghanistan

by Taliban insurgents on June 13, 2008. One of the largest attacks by Afghan insurgents, the raid freed 400-1000 prisoners.

- Eight inmates charged with violent crimes escaped from the Curry County Adult Detention Center in Clovis

, New Mexico

on August 24, 2008. The eight men escaped by climbing prison pipes in a narrow space inside a wall, then using homemade instruments to cut a hole in the roof. The jailbreak was featured on a September 6 episode of *America's Most Wanted*

. As of October 2010, convicted murderer Edward Salas was the only inmate still at large.

- Three inmates Lance Battreal, Charles Smith, and Mark Booher escaped from a Michigan City

, Indiana

prison on July 12, 2009 through underground tunnels under the prison yard. Charles Smith was captured on July 20, 2009 near Chicago Mayor Richard M. Daley

's vacation home in Grand Beach

, Michigan

. Lance Battreal was captured on July 21, 2009 at his mother's house in Rockton, Indiana

. Mark Booher was captured on July 23, 2009 in a hotel in Indianapolis

, Indiana

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- Three inmates at an Arizona State Prison for-profit Management and Training Corporation

operated facility on July 30, 2010. Two, Daniel Renwick and Tracy Province were murderers and John McCluskey had been convicted of attempted murders. Renwick was captured in a shootout in Rifle, Colorado on August 1, 2010. Though he still had 32 years on his sentence in Arizona, he was sentenced to 60 years to be served in Colorado. Province, already a lifer, was captured on August 9, 2010 in Meeteese, Wyoming. After being sentenced to 38 1/3 years, he was quickly extradited to face murder charges in New Mexico. McCluskey, who had been doing consecutive 15-year sentences, was captured with Casslyn Welch, his cousin/accomplice in eastern Arizona on August 19 in the Apache-Sitgreaves National Forest. He was sentenced to 43 years in an Arizona prison on escape, kidnap, hijacking and robbery charges. Like Province, Welch and McCluskey were soon extradited for the alleged robbery, hijack and murder of two vacationers in New Mexico. The U.S. Attorney in New Mexico had filed death penalty charges against all three.

Escapee squeezes out some extra time

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Flashback ... Robert Cole after he was recaptured.
Photo: *Janie Barrett*

It has been a revolving door system for Robert. When he comes out of jail he goes onto drugs

AdvertisementAdvertisement

October 20, 2006 - 3:31PM

A prisoner who escaped from a Sydney jail after losing weight and slipping between the bars of his cell has been sentenced to a further one year and nine months in prison.

Robert Cole, 37, spent three days on the run from police after escaping from Sydney's Long Bay jail on January 18 this year.

The prisoner shed up to 14 kilograms - apparently with the help of laxatives - to fit his 56kg frame in a 15cm gap between the brickwork and steel bars of his hospital cell.

In the NSW District Court at Parramatta today, Judge Roger Dive handed Cole a non-parole period of one year and nine months, backdated to the date of his arrest on January 21.

Judge Dive said Cole's escape involved a considerable degree of planning.

"This is a serious offence of escape," Judge Dive told the court.

"It has involved some time consuming efforts and planning and preparation."

The court was told Cole spent three weeks scraping the brickwork in his cell with a butter knife and also made a blanket to assist him in scaling razor-wire fences.

Cole will be eligible for parole on October 20 next year.

Escape



Dummy head found in Morris' cell



Chiselled cell air vent



The dug out vents in the utility corridor

By September 1961 Morris, West, and the Anglin brothers were planning an escape attempt, which they carried out on the night of June 11, 1962.^[3] They fabricated dummy heads from a mixture of soap, toilet paper and real hair, and left them in their beds to fool prison officers making night-time inspections.^[6] They escaped from their cells by crawling through holes in the cell walls which they had dug with spoons over a year's time. This put them into an unused service corridor. West could not make it out of his cell and was left behind.^[7]

From the service corridor they climbed a ventilation shaft to reach the roof. The trio then climbed down from the rooftop, scaled the prison's fence and assembled a raft from the prison's standard-issue raincoats and contact cement. They pumped up the raft on the northeastern coast of the island. At around 10 p.m. they climbed aboard, shoved off, and started paddling.^{[3][7]}

Killers hack their way out of prison

Thursday 06 November 1997

About 150 police wearing flak-jackets hunted late yesterday for five escaped prisoners, including three murderers serving life sentences and described as the most dangerous people in Australia.

"We consider these five escapees to be the most dangerous and desperate people on the streets of Australia at the moment and police are absolutely petrified and

terrified as to what they may do to remain at large," a police media spokesman, Brian Swift, told a news conference.

The prisoners, said by police to be armed, used diamond-encrusted wire to break out of Brisbane's maximum-security Sir David Longland jail in the early hours of yesterday.

Police used helicopters after possible sightings in Brisbane's central business district and had earlier warned people in the city's outer suburbs to lock their houses and cars.

Using diamond-encrusted "angel wire" smuggled into the jail, the prisoners cut through the bars of their cells, then used their bed sheets to winch open the bars, said prison officials.

The prisoners then used cell chairs to scale a fence crowned with two rolls of razor wire.

After cutting through three more security fences, the prisoners reached the jail's perimeter fence and were thrown bolt-cutters by two people outside the jail.

The accomplices, armed with a high-powered rifle, began shooting at a guard who was chasing the prisoners as the jail's alarm began to sound.

A volley of 10 to 12 shots was fired, several piercing an armour-plated prison van which was patrolling the jail.

"When the patrol vehicle got to within 70 metres [230 feet] of the perimeter it was fired upon and both of its batteries were destroyed," said the Corrective Services Commission spokesman, Stan Macionis.

One bullet pierced the unarmoured roof of the van but the two officers inside were not hit.

The prisoners and two accomplices then ran down a road to a waiting car and sped off. A police car gave chase, but pulled back when fired on.

The Queensland Police Minister, Russell Cooper, has ordered all prisoners to be locked in their cells pending a report on the massive security breach.

"This is the first time we have had a concerted external assault on a perimeter in such a ruthless and cold, calculated way," said Mr Macionis.

One of the prisoners, Brendan Abbott, is nicknamed the "Post Card Bandit" for sending police taunting holiday picture postcards of himself holding bags of money while on the run.

Abbott, 35, was serving a 12-year term for bank robberies. The other prisoners are Jason Nixon, 27, serving life for murder, Oliver Alincic, 32, serving life for murder, Andrew Jeffrey, 20, serving life for murder and Peter Sterling, 31, serving 13 years and seven months for deprivation of liberty.

The Great Escapes

It's harder than ever to escape from prison. How do inmates still do it?



A 24-year-old inmate reportedly "walked away" from a state prison in Shirley, Mass., Monday morning. On March 9, Texas prisoner David Puckett sawed through the bars of a recreation yard roof, jumped to the ground, scaled a fence topped with razor wire, and commandeered a pickup truck. (The keys were already inside.) Two prisoners escaped from a St. Louis detention center on Friday using the oldest trick in the book— a rope made of tied-together bed sheets.

Such reports make it seem as if escaping from prison is easier than ever. And yet the number of state prison escapes has declined steadily since the early 1990s, according to data provided by the Bureau of Justice Statistics. In 1993, 14,305 prisoners of a state prison population of 780,357 escaped or went AWOL. By 1998, that number had been cut to 6,530. Escapes continued to decline in the 2000s, with only 2,512 escaped prisoners in 2008, the most recent year for which data is available, even as the state prison population has risen to 1.4 million.

If escaping from prison is so hard these days, how do inmates do it? Same as always—though with an occasional high-tech twist. Here's a rundown of the most common techniques.

Advertisement

Cut and run. Find a hole in the facility's security structure and exploit it. In 2006, career criminal Ralph "Bucky" Phillips used a can opener to cut a hole in a prison kitchen ceiling. (When police finally caught up with him he pleaded "guilty as hell.") Eight inmates in a New Mexico county jail used "homemade instruments" to cut a hole in the roof and escape in 2008.

Fake it till you make it. In 2005, convicted killer Charles Victor Thompson slipped out of a Texas jail by changing into a set of smuggled civilian clothes and bluffing his way past guards. (He told them he was a "state investigator" and flashed his

prison ID.) The infamous Texas Seven snuck out of a maximum-security state prison in 2000 by impersonating supervisors over the phone, among other ruses.

The *Shawshank*-esque redemption. Slow and steady wins the race and, in some cases, freedom. Just this week, nearly 500 Taliban escaped from Sarposa prison in Kandahar, Afghanistan, after militants spent months digging a 360-meter tunnel that led from one inmate's cell. In 2007, two New Jersey convicts, apparently taking inspiration from *The Shawshank Redemption*, used tools to carve holes in their cell walls and covered them with pinup posters.

Brute force. This might be the toughest technique of all. In March 2005, Brian Nichols overpowered a security guard at an Atlanta courthouse and took her gun. He went on to shoot a judge, a court reporter, and a police officer before taking a woman hostage in her home. He eventually surrendered to police. In 1998, a friend of Florida inmate Jay Sigler drove a giant truck through four layers of security fence and blasted guards with a shotgun while Sigler jumped into a second getaway car driven by Sigler's mother.

Cry for help. Friends don't let friends rot in prison. Three convicted murderers escaped from an Arizona state prison in August 2010 by using wire cutters thrown over the prison fence by a woman outside. When David Puckett drove his stolen pickup to Houston after escaping from a Texas prison, he had money wired to him by a woman he'd met online while in prison. But the Best Friend Award probably goes to Pascal Payet. The French criminal first escaped from prison in 2001 in a helicopter hijacked by a group of friends. In 2003, he paid it forward by helping three friends escape from the same prison—again via a helicopter. He was soon arrested and returned to prison, from which he escaped once again in 2007—by helicopter. He was caught in Spain two months later.

Not all escapes require a helicopter. But a little technology helps. According to some experts, a major threat to prison security is cell phones. Puckett wouldn't have had any money after escaping were it not for the woman he met online while using his cell phone in prison. In 2008, a death row inmate in Texas used a smuggled cell phone to threaten a state legislator. Even Charles Manson was recently caught with a mobile phone. Some penitentiaries have begun installing phone-jamming systems to keep prisoners from making calls.

But in the end, preventing escapes usually comes down to having enough competent officers on duty. There's a strong correlation between prison security and the officer-to-inmate ratio, says Kevin Tamez of MPM Group, a security consulting firm. "Yes, technology can assist with escape issues," says Tamez. "But it doesn't alter the fact that you gotta have feet on the ground."

How the Taliban Pulled Off a Massive Prison Break



This morning, in a major setback to U.S. efforts in Afghanistan, almost 500 political prisoners--many of them Taliban fighters and commanders--escaped from the Sarposa prison in Kandahar through a tunnel in the second prison break orchestrated by the Taliban since 2008, when the group freed 1,200 prisoners in a suicide attack that killed 15 guards, according to *The New York Times*. An effort to recapture the escaped prisoners is underway. In the meantime, here's what we know about how the Taliban accomplished today's escape:

Prison guards discovered that prisoners in the institution's political wing were missing around 4 am, according to the Associated Press, but the Taliban claims the guards didn't discover the breach until closer to 7:30 am. In the photo above, an Afghan prison guard points to the hole that inmates used to escape through the tunnel.

The break came from *without* rather than *within*, according to the Taliban at least. Spokesman Zabiullah Mujahid explained in a statement that the Taliban worked for five months to dig a 320 meter-long tunnel into the prison that snaked below security checkpoints outside the facility and the Kabul-Kandahar highway (Afghan police, according to the *Times*, say the tunnel is more than 1,000 meters long). The militants launched the dig from a house "within shooting distance of the prison guard towers," the AP notes, but it's not clear whether they lived in the house as the dig continued. The head of Kandahar's prisons told *The Guardian* that constructing the tunnel must have been extremely labor-intensive given that the Taliban had to refrain from using heavy machinery that could attract attention to its efforts.

At 11 pm on Sunday night, per the Taliban's account, three Taliban prisoners who'd been informed of the plan ahead of time went from one cell to another, rousing several inmates at a time and escorting them to the tunnel. Mohammad Abdullah, who claimed he helped organize the escape from within the prison, told the AP that he and his associates got copies of cell keys from "friends"--suggesting that some prison guards may have acted as accomplices. The escape took place between 11 pm and 3:30 am, according to the Taliban, and one escapee told the BBC that it took him around 30 minutes to walk the full tunnel. When the prisoners emerged from the underground passageway, Taliban members greeted them and whisked them to waiting vehicles, which transported them to Taliban-controlled locations. As the prisoners boarded the vehicles, Taliban fighters and suicide bombers stood by in case security forces got wind of the scheme and tried to thwart the operation.

Update: The Daily Beast's Ron Moreau and Sami Yousafzai have a fascinating account of their interviews with two Taliban commanders who escaped today. One fighter explains how he feared the tunnel would collapse as he moved through it, while another notes that the prison break organizers confiscated the inmates' cell phones before they entered the tunnel to prevent them from informing people about their escape prematurely. The Daily Beast also learns that the Taliban dug their tunnel using pickups, tractor-pulled trailers, and donkey carts, and that the Taliban's original plan, aborted at the last minute, was for its suicide bombers to enter the jail after all prisoners had escaped and blow themselves up once prison security noticed the breach. "The escapees sounded more committed than ever to rejoin the fight," Moreau and Yousafzai observe.

Taliban Prison Break: How They Did It

Apr 25, 2011

In a stunning escape, nearly 500 Taliban fled an Afghanistan prison through an underground tunnel on Monday. Ron Moreau and Sami Yousafzai talk exclusively to two freed men about how they pulled it off, what their next move is—and why this is a big blow to the U.S. war effort.

Mullah Asadullah Akhund had a hunch that something was going on—but he wasn't sure what. He recalls that over the past few months there was a "sort of smile in the eyes" of one of the top Taliban commanders who was incarcerated with him in the political wing of the Kandahar jail.



An Afghan policeman takes a look at the opening of tunnel at the main prison in Kandahar, Afghanistan which prisoners escaped through on Apr. 25, 2011. (Photo: Allauddin Khan / AP Photo)

Early Monday morning he learned the secret the commander had been hiding. At about 2 a.m., as he was sleeping on his cell's hard cement floor, he was awakened by someone tugging on the big toe of his right foot, Akhund told *The Daily Beast* exclusively in a cell phone call. It was the senior commander, who told him in a whisper to quietly get up and go to another adjoining cell, where someone would show him the way to freedom. Hardly believing what he had heard, he quickly did as he was told and soon found himself in an underground tunnel with a line of other Taliban prisoners who were making their escape.

As he began moving through the narrow passageway in a crouch, he says another Taliban commander holding a flash light ahead of him told him to be calm, and that more Taliban were waiting at the end of the tunnel to take care of them. "It was the greatest escape of my life," he says. "It was like a dream."

Akhund, a 30-year-old Taliban commander who was arrested in Marjah last year and subsequently sentenced to 10 years in prison, was one of nearly 500 Taliban fighters and commanders who made a storybook escape from the high-security Kandahar prison in the predawn hours of Monday. As the Taliban tell the tale, insurgents and their supporters had worked like ants for more than five months to dig the tunnel from inside a sympathizer's house, secretly removing the earth bit by bit in pickups, tractor-pulled trailers and even donkey carts. The tunnel ran from the house, then under the main Kandahar-to-Herat highway and finally into a central cell block of the prison's political wing.

The jailbreak is not only a major psychological victory for the insurgents—who are being hard-pressed by U.S. troop reinforcements in Kandahar and Helmand

provinces—but it also re-infuses the Taliban’s ranks with some of their most experienced, respected and savvy commanders.

“Among us are some of the strongest commanders from Kandahar City and the region,” says a 28-year-old Kandahar City commander who freshly escaped and who requested anonymity as he spoke to The Daily Beast by cell phone.

It’s clearly a major blow to the U.S. war effort in the south that had prided itself on how many Taliban commanders it had killed and captured over the past few months, and on how those losses seemed to have reversed the previous momentum that the insurgents had enjoyed in the region where Mullah Mohammad Omar’s Taliban was born. The great escape also calls into question—once again—the ability of the Kabul government and its security forces to maintain security in areas that are not directly controlled by American forces.

“Among us are some of the strongest commanders from Kandahar City and the region,” says a 28-year-old who freshly escaped.

“Faith has overcome and defeated technology for the second time,” crowed a Taliban website Monday, referring to another daring, but violent, jailbreak in June 2008 when Taliban suicide bombers and gunmen broke through the walls of the same prison, killing some 15 guards and freeing some 1,200 prisoners, among them more than 350 Taliban. “We are poor in technology, but with the help of All Mighty Allah we embarrassed the enemy with all its technology and weapons,” says the Kandahar City commander, who was captured three years ago and sentenced to 15 years in jail, as he enjoyed his first day of freedom by sipping green tea in a Taliban safe house inside the city with his friends. “We dedicate this victory to Mullah Omar.”

The escapees sounded more committed than ever to rejoin the fight. “Getting out of jail does not mean I will say goodbye to the jihad,” says Akhund. “I’m even more determined to drive the foreigners and their puppets out of Afghanistan.” “We will now be fighting in the jihad with a clearer, smarter mind,” adds the Kandahar commander. They both sound more radicalized by their jail time. “We experienced the worst beating and torture in prison,” says the Kandahar commander. “But what was worse was the abusive language they used against our leader, Mullah Omar. Now I hate the Americans, the (Afghan) army and police even more.”

Both men, and presumably their recently freed fellow combatants, emphasize how grateful they are to the Taliban’s organization, which is often viewed as being disjointed, if not completely chaotic, that never forgot them and worked so hard for their release. “I’m glad our mujahideen didn’t forget us and cared for us,” says the Kandahar commander. “We salute that mujahideen who did this long-term project and kept the secret for so long.”

As the two freed commanders recount their escape, they marvel at the secrecy and organization that went into the successful plot.

At one point as he moved through the tunnel, Akhund feared it would collapse. He says he felt a rumbling and some dirt falling from the tunnel's roof when a heavy truck moved along the highway overhead. At the tunnel's exit, he says there were five or six Taliban suicide bombers wearing explosive vests and carrying heavy weapons, guiding the men as they emerged from the hole in the house's floor to pickup trucks, buses, and motorcycles for their final getaway. Akhund was taken away in a pickup (its lights switched off) with 10 other escapees on a 20-minute drive to a Taliban safe house in the city. The vehicle then went back to pick up more escapees. From there he and a couple of other freed prisoners hired a local truck in the village that took them to the town of Geresk just inside Helmand province, where he is celebrating his release with friends. "I never thought I'd ever get out from behind those high, thick walls of my enemies," he says.

The Kandahar commander says the operation on the inside was headed by three senior commanders. He too was awakened just after midnight by one of the three commanders, who confiscated each man's contraband cell phone to prevent anyone from phoning the good news and giving away the plan as they escaped. His journey through the tunnel, which was perhaps two meters wide and two and a half meters high, took five to 10 minutes, he estimates. He too says that several suicide bombers wearing explosive vests were waiting at the end. He was transported in a large truck with 50 other escapees to a safer location immediately after he emerged from the hole.

The original plan, the commander says, was that the suicide bombers would go into the jail through the tunnel after the last men had escaped and wait for the guards and officials to discover that the political prisoner wing was empty. They would then blow themselves up, killing everyone. But that plan was aborted at the last minute. According to the Taliban, prison officials only discovered the great escape and the empty political wing at 7 a.m., several hours after the prisoners had already fled into Kandahar City and the surrounding towns and villages. After a brief rest, they will begin plotting their revenge, they say.

How I escaped from being locked up by the Brazilian Federal police [Travel story]

| [53 comments](#) | Category: travel



As you can imagine, with over eight years on the road, I have had quite a few things happen to me. Today I'm going to share one of my many (mis)adventures.

It takes place in 2006, in Rio – my first time in the city. I would come back three years later to live there and learn the local dialect of Portuguese (cariquês), but in this visit I just had two things I needed to do: see some touristy sites, and renew my travel visa.

I had already spent three amazing months in Brazil; most of it on the paradise island of Florianópolis (Floripa), and travelling through Porto Alegre, Curitiba and hanging around São Paulo state, going deep into it to a wonderful town called Votuporanga – where I was the first “gringo” (foreigner) most of them had ever met.

For this whole time I had been speaking Portuguese, and this enhanced my experience to an incredible level with the friendships I could make and experiences I could have. To this day, Brazilians remain my favourite people on the planet. Those three months were the happiest I had ever been in my life...

Until I got to Rio.

The “simple” visa renewal procedure

I could have renewed my visa in Curitiba or São Paulo very easily – all you need to do is go into a Federal Police station and go through some bureaucracy and they'll do it for you. Other travellers assured me that it's a sinch.

Staying longer was a no-brainer for me. I **really** wanted to spend three more months in Brazil so that I could experience the *World Cup* atmosphere there. I had

already arranged for accommodation and arranged to meet friends and had many many plans for travels in the Northeast in the coming three months. Renewing a visa just seemed like a minor formality.

Before even looking at the Cristo statue or Sugar Loaf Mountain, I went straight to the Federal Police station. Doing so in the most touristy city in the country was a bad idea, since they are so overworked, but the later I renew the visa, the longer my 3 extra months counts. I went in a few days before my current visa was to expire.

After waiting for several hours, I finally got in only to discover that the fee for renewal had to be paid *to a bank* and I had to present the payment receipt. They wouldn't accept cash. Annoyed as hell for all the time wasting, I went to a bank, paid and returned and lost my place in the line and had to wait all over again. I skipped lunch so I could just get this overwith.

Finally it was my turn again, after waiting most of the day in sweat and starting to get hungry. I was very much impatient and just wanted the stamp already.

My run-in with the federal police officer

The same lady saw me again and told me to take a seat. She examined my passport and glanced back up at me suspiciously, as I came in with a disgruntled look and was speaking impatiently to get this overwith. She didn't even look at my payment receipt. She looked me in the eye and said "I think you want to work illegally in Brazil".

What?? Of course not, I insisted.

I produced a bank statement I prepared just in case, and showed her my credit card that has a decent limit on it. I had saved up in advance thanks to a convenient well-paid English teaching job in France just before, with plans not to work at all here, and was not spending much on accommodation as usual, so my money was taking me far.

You say you're a tourist here for the first time – then why are you speaking Portuguese so well??

The exchange was taking place *in Portuguese* of course. This was one of the few times that speaking a local language has ever worked against me. The real problem was that she was stressed out from talking to impatient tourists all day, and needed to lash out on someone. When you deal with lazy English-only tourists all day as your full time job, my story of having picked up Portuguese in just a few months must have seemed hard-to-swallow.

She didn't believe my retorts and said that she reckons three months is more than enough time for me in Brazil, and it's time to go home. She stamped my passport

with a *one week* extension, which meant I couldn't have gone to another federal police station instead. That was it... I had to leave Brazil and my plans evaporated because I was acting impatient and because of one surely woman.

My mistake: Asking for trouble

Now, what I *should* have done was to just go back to the hostel and accept this. But I was **mighty** pissed off. Hungry, thirsty and now being sent away with nothing when I had such wonderful plans.

I went back to the line of people waiting for their visa extensions and vented. I did it a little *too* enthusiastically though. I cursed this woman as a sexually deprived witch with a stick up her ass, and suggested that they go renew their visas in any other place than this hellhole. I was yelling my curses in a mixture of English and Portuguese.

What I didn't know was that there was a small window to her office in the wall above me and she heard *everything*.

Oops.

She stormed over to me and told me to come to her this instant. Suddenly, I (conveniently) couldn't understand Portuguese any more and hastened towards the exit instead. Thinking I had gotten away from her, I was amazed to see several police officers running towards me. I didn't run away – I was just confused about what was happening. They got to me, slammed me on the floor, handcuffed me and threw me into a locked room.

Locked up with time to think

When you are handcuffed in a locked room in a Brazilian Federal police station, while very hungry and thirsty, you start to look at things from a different perspective.

Rather than get scared, I actually got even more angry. But after two hours passed, the anger started to subside.

I started to realise how idiotic what I just did was. Insulting a federal police officer is probably a punishable crime here. I was in deep shit. Maybe they would officially arrest me – with a criminal record I'd never get into so many countries, and I'd have trouble finding work. I may even have to spend more time locked up before they deport me. My life could be ruined by this.

*There **has** to be a way out of this.*

I looked around the room scrambling my thoughts trying to remember if I had seen MacGayver escape from a maximum security prison with just a paperclip and a napkin. No use.

Think Benny!!

Some hours later, in comes a very angry looking man with huge muscles and a look in him that told me that the lady I insulted was his sister. *You and I are going to have a little talk* he said as he threw down some papers including my passport, and some complicated looking forms we were probably going to fill out, onto the table. He then walked out of the room to get something else.

Desperate times call for desperate measures

F&%k!! What'll I do??

Thinking up my defence, or threatening with something weak like that *I'll get the Irish embassy on you for this outrage!* made me realise that it's precisely what he'll expect. Another arrogant tourist thinking he can do what he wants.

And then it hit me. I knew precisely what I was going to do to get out of this. It was my only option, but I had to try it. I had to surprise this officer with the last thing he would ever expect.

As pissed off and hungry as I was, I forced myself to imagine all the saddest things I could – when I had to bury my pet turtle Torlinus as a child, when the first girl I asked out turned me down harshly... and everything else I could. Sad thoughts, sad thoughts. And I forced myself to tear up.

By the time he came back I was ready for my Oscar award winning performance. I cried like a little girl.

I'm so sorry!! [sniff] I didn't mean to say what I did – it was such a stupid thing to do. I'm so scared – I don't want to go to jail!

Three months in this country and other times in other Latin countries taught me that when you are dealing with macho men of the calibre of what I was looking at, they simply thrive on conflict and pissing competitions. An argument would have been the worst thing to go for, and so, I went for the opposite. It's possible that he had never even seen a grown man cry right in front of him, especially in the dramatic way that I was doing it. He suddenly started feeling very awkward.

Pull yourself together! Stop this nonsense – we need to talk!

- [sob] I... I... I'm so sorry! [sob] Waaaah!

He couldn't get a word in, and then I got the break I was hoping for.

He threw the passport at me, and said *Get out of my sight! You're pathetic!* ... ignoring all the other forms, and reminding me that I had just over a week to get out of Brazil.

I walked out, still sobbing, and apologised to the lady and continued out, still looking like a wreck until I was a block away and sure nobody from there could see me, and then I laughed out loud. I had "escaped from federal police custody" using tears. Haha!

My consolation prize

I was still pissed off about having to leave Brazil, but at least I got myself out of the hole I had stupidly dug for myself. I got back to my hostel, looking like crap and the receptionist asked me how my day was. When I told her, she exclaimed *That was you!? Come here!*

It turned out my story was doing the rounds already!

She brought me to the hall where I was greeted with a cheer by one of the people who had also been in the line renewing *his* visa. He saw my outburst and hand-cuff detainment and had told the whole hostel the story. Luckily he was long gone by the less admirable crying part of the story. I was greeted with a hero's welcome, and spent the rest of my time in Rio knowing the entire hostel.

I got to see the Cristo statue up close *for free* because a group going there found a taxi driver who would bring them and explain the history, but he only spoke Portuguese and so they requested the "famous" foreign Portuguese speaker to be an interpreter and covered my share of the taximan's hefty fee for my troubles. Having the reputation I did in the whole hostel made sure that I had a fantastic time in Rio, before I did finally have to head back to Europe.

And of course I got an important humbling lesson to not push my luck too much and try to avoid getting into trouble in future. Five years later, and lots more travel experience under my belt, you can bet I'd handle the same situation *very* differently now!

Since I had brought this on myself, I had no hard feelings about Rio and was happy to come back a few years later. I've been in a few very different jams since, but whenever something terrible is happening you have to remember that you *will* be able to look back on it and laugh some day, especially if you can figure out how to get yourself out of it by whatever means necessary.

Even the worst thing in the world could turn out to be a funny story or open a door to something very interesting if you think straight.

Prison Escapes on the Decline

With so many high-profile prison escapes recently it might seem that inmates are fleeing like never before.

First the "Texas Seven" broke out of a maximum security prison, and now six of them — one has since committed suicide — are charged with killing a police officer while robbing a sporting goods store.

Then last month, two Oklahoma inmates escaped from another maximum security prison, pulling toilets from cell walls and escaping through a hidden maintenance tunnel and a vent.

This week, six inmates in Alabama, using a broom to sneak under a fence, managed to bypass correctional officers and high-tech security systems to make their way out of the medium security St. Clair Correctional Facility.

Despite these three highly publicized escapes, experts say prison breakouts are less common today than they were 10 years ago.

"Escapes are going down," said Camille G. Camp, co-president of the Criminal Justice Institute, which has been publishing the Corrections Yearbook on criminal statistics since 1981. "The reason we've heard about all these recent outbreaks lately is that you'll have something dramatic, sensational."

In 1990, 2,583 inmates nationwide escaped from minimum, medium and maximum security prisons, according to CJI. That number does not include "walkaways," inmates who leave work programs or don't return after furlough programs.

Escapes hit a 10-year-high in 1991, with 2,660, and hit a recent low in 1998 at 660. In 1999, 1,047 walked away from incarceration.

Escapes from high-security prisons included within the survey declined, as did the larger figure. In 1990, 292 prisoners escaped from high-security facilities, like the ones in Texas and Oklahoma, and 115 escaped in 1999, according to CJI. The high year for escapes was 1992, with 318.

Architecture, Technology Help

Corrections experts say the main reason fewer inmates are escaping is that the nation has recently built so many new facilities to house the nation's booming prison population.

"These are new facilities that are state-of-the-art, with the technology that reduces some of your manpower requirements," said James Turpin, spokesman for the American Correctional Association, an industry group. "They [prisons] tend to be more secure because of technology."

However, analysts see reason to worry.

While the Texas and Oklahoma cases involved sophisticated escape plans, more often prisoners flee on the spur of the moment when a window of opportunity opens.

"It's when they have that five-second space when something happens or someone is not looking that they take off," Camp said. "There are not many forced escapes."

And those kinds of escapes are stopped by having more guards, the experts say.

Camp said one predictor of escapes in a prison system is the ratio of officers to prisoners. The average in state and federal prisons is one officer per 5.6 prisoners.

In Alabama, where the six inmates escaped Tuesday, the officer to inmate ratio is one to 9.4 prisoners, according to Camp's numbers.

Law enforcement officials said the escapees used a broom handle to slither under a 5,000-volt electrified fence, and somehow made their way around two other razor-wire fences at the St. Clair Correctional Facility, north of Birmingham.

They escaped some time early Tuesday evening, and their absence went unnoticed during the 8 p.m. head count.

More Guards Needed, Experts Say

Turpin agreed technology isn't enough.

"It still doesn't remove fact that you need people and you need qualified well-compensated people," he said.

Prison have had trouble attracting prison guards to a dangerous job where starting pay is often below \$20,000 per year, and turnover nationally is about 25 percent per year. Utah, has 13 prisoners for every guard, the highest ratio in the country.

After the escape of the "Texas Seven," a report by the Texas Department of Criminal Justice found the breakout was the result of a failure in the correctional system and could have been prevented had prison staff not made a series of mistakes.

Correctional officers at the Connally Unit of the state prison near Kenedy, Texas, say the mistakes happened because they were overworked and have begun to ask the state Legislature for better pay and better working conditions.

Throughout Texas, correctional officers say conditions are much the same.

"Because of staff shortage it was my hardest summer," said Sherryion Lane, a prison guard who has worked at Thomas Goree Unit in Huntsville Texas, for 17 years. "We were so short that I had work 17-hour days every other day. It is just not humanly possible to keep the state of alertness is that we need to do our job."

"Considering what they are fighting against, they are doing a good job of preventing people from getting out," Camp said.

The not-so-great escape - falling bricks expose prisoners' plot to breakout of Grafton Jail

- Inmates painstakingly scraped mortar from a wall with hook
- Bricks were then reset with damp toilet tissue and painted
- Hidden inside a cavity were sheets fashioned into a rope

AS escape plans go it was old-fashioned, not very original and too ambitious.

In the tradition of classic prison break movies *Escape From Alcatraz* and *The Shawshank Redemption*, prisoners from New South Wales's Grafton Jail painstakingly scraped mortar from a wall with a makeshift hook to loosen bricks.

The bricks were then reset with damp toilet tissue and painted to deceive guards.

Hidden inside a cavity between two brick walls were a large number of linen sheets fashioned into rope, ready to scale the imposing 7m prison wall.

A grappling hook had been made from a coathanger removed from the back of a door.

But the plan came unstuck when prison guards inspected the wall after receiving intelligence that a prison break was being planned.

On Saturday afternoon at 3.30pm the plan came crashing down when a guard pushed one brick and the rest tumbled away, revealing a gaping hole.

More than eight bricks had been removed and reset - just enough room for an adult to crawl through.

A mobile phone was also found during a search of the unit, which appears unrelated to the break-out attempt.

"It was a lot of work for very little result," one prison official said.

"Very ambitious and doomed to fail."

The false wall was discovered inside the minimum security accommodation unit attached to the main prison.

"It houses low security risk inmates due for release soon," a prison spokesman said.

There are about 12 units housing 10 inmates each.

The prisoners have their own "cells" and share access to a common room and shower facilities. They are not locked in their cells and come and go as they please inside the facility, but the unit block is locked at night.

The bricks had been removed from one of the walls inside the day room.

"No one knows how long they had been working on the wall or how many prisoners were involved," the spokesman said.

The prison towers and swivelling search lights were removed years ago and replaced by electronic monitoring. For years it was one of the state's hardest jails, housing some of the state's toughest criminals.

But now the facility, about 650km north of Sydney, is a medium/minimum prison.

Jail sources said it appeared the prisoners were about to work on the outer layer of the wall when their plan was foiled."But even if they had got out of the unit there

were two more fences to get past, not to mention security cameras all over the place," a source said.

Great Australian jail breaks

Russell "Mad Dog" Cox - armed robber turned killer

(Former) Katingal Special Security Unit, Long Bay

November 3, 1977

Method: cut bars

First man to escape from the "electric zoo" and supposedly escape-proof supermax block at Long Bay. Cut through a metal bar over the exercise yard and climbed over several barbed wire fences. Spent next 11 years on the run until he was arrested in Melbourne after a shootout during a payroll van heist.

Patrick Hudd - career criminal, murderer

Long Bay

March 10, 1992

Method: car jacking

On his way to court, an accomplice wearing a balaclava held up his police escort with a shotgun at the intersection of Anzac Parade and Allison Rd, Kensington. Hudd was captured two months later.

Ian Hall Saxon - rock promoter, drug importer

Long Bay March 2, 1993

Method: van

After bringing some of the biggest stars to Australia including Frank Sinatra and Sammy Davis Jnr, Saxon turned to importing cannabis resin. While awaiting trial Saxon disappeared in what was later thought to be in a laundry van.

Alex Nuchimov - Russian crime Tsar

In custody

January 21, 1994

Method: dentist visit

Awaiting trial in relation to importing 20kg of cocaine, Nuchimov was in the operating chair of a Bondi dentist surgery surrounded by three prison guards when a masked accomplice burst through the door and fired a shot. The dentist and guards were locked in a toilet and the pair fled, presumably to central Europe.

Anthony Lanigan - double murderer

Long Bay

March 20, 1995

Method: cut fence

Double murderer Lanigan was among a gang of inmates at Parramatta Jail who almost pulled off the greatest escape in Australian prison history in 1979 after they dug a tunnel (complete with lights, exhaust fans and a digging roster) from his cell to the adjacent grounds of the linen service. His later escape was far less audacious. After cutting a fence while on work release he hasn't been seen since.

George Savvas - drug importer

Goulburn Correctional Centre

July 6, 1997

Method: disguise

Relocated to Goulburn after an escape plot at Maitland Gaol was foiled, Savvas was in the visitor's area where he simply donned a false beard, moustache and wig and walked out. He was arrested after a tip-off to police nine months later at a restaurant in Sydney.

Brendon Abbott - Postcard Bandit

Brisbane Correctional Centre

November 5, 1997

Method: diamond wire

Gaining infamy after his daring break out of Fremantle Prison on November 24, 1989, dressed in guard uniforms he fashioned in the prison tailorshop, Abbott was with four other prisoners who used diamond-encrusted wire to cut through cell bars and fences at Brisbane's now defunct Sir David Longland jail. They were met by armed accomplices who threw bolt cutters over the last fence and escaped amid a hail of gunfire.

John Reginald Killick - serving 28 years for armed robbery

Silverwater (Metropolitan Remand and Reception Centre)

March 25, 1999

Method: helicopter

Librarian Lucy Dudko chartered a helicopter for joy flight over the site of the upcoming Sydney Olympics only to hijack the pilot at gunpoint and force him to land inside the prison where Killick was waiting. Both arrested 45 days later.

Spaniard Rio Francisco and Mexican Armando Eduardo Quiroz - drug barrons

Parklea Correctional Centre

September 11, 2001

Method: delivery truck

Awaiting extradition on charges of smuggling thousands of tonnes of cannabis from Mexico into the US, the pair seized an opportunity to grab the keys to a truck delivering steel to the prison. With the driver untying the load and the prison officer inside doing paperwork, the pair smashed through three gates before dumping the truck at Parklea Markets where they jumped in a Volvo driven by a female accomplice.

Robert Cole - armed robber

Long Bay

January 18, 2006

Method: crash diet

Entering prison weighing 70kg, Cole was in a prison hospital cell for mental health treatment when he shed 14kg and managed to squeeze his 56kg frame out of his window between the bars and the bricks he had been diligently chipping away. He scaled a cyclone wire fence and escaped only to be captured three days later with a broken leg.

10 notorious prison breaks

By Jon Watt



Considering that prison breaks often involve freeing dangerous convicts, it's remarkable how they continue to capture our imaginations. Perhaps it's our natural inclination to rebel against the 'system' that makes us view such escapes with romance-tinted glasses.

Prison escapes aren't always about digging tunnels under walls and cutting through barbed wire. Russian gulags had no walls but the freezing miles of arctic tundra, while the US Civil War prisons relied on the distance they were located behind enemy lines to deter escape. Like walls and wire though, they could not stop prisoners attempting to escape.

NZ Men reveals 10 of the most difficult, ingenious and significant real-life prison breaks.

Alcatraz, US

Although now a museum, Alcatraz in San Francisco Bay remains the world's most notorious prison. Official records show that in the 29 years that the prison was operational, 34 inmates tried to escape and none were successful.

Unofficially, however, one of those attempts might just have made it. On 11 June 1962, Frank Morris together with John and Clarence Anglin (pictured), put into action a plan they had been working on for over two years. As the cell block slept, the three placed replica heads in their beds and then crawled through tunnels in the back walls of their cells, which they had dug using series of tools including a drill assembled from a vacuum cleaner motor. They then used the utility corridor to move onto the roof where they cut through a fence, shimmied down a drain pipe and boarded a raft they had constructed earlier.

Despite one of the largest man-hunts in US history, the men have never been found either dead or alive.

Maze prison, Northern Ireland

It wasn't a complicated escape, but the sheer size and brutality of the Maze prison break of 25 September 1983 earns it a place on this list.

At 2.30am, 38 IRA prisoners used guns they had smuggled into the prison to take hostage the guards in Block 7. The attack was quick and brutal – one officer died of a heart attack, two were shot and 20 were injured. The prisoners took the guards' clothes and car keys and then made their way to the loading bay where there was a truck carrying food supplies. Tying the civilian driver's foot to the clutch they forced him to drive them out of the prison. It was 3.50am and all 38 had escaped.

Over the following days, 18 were picked up by the police, the rest were never found.

Camp 303, Siberia

Located 650km south of the Arctic Circle in Siberia, Camp 303 was one of the worst gulags in the Soviet Union. It was here that Polish soldier Slawomir Rawicz made one of the most arduous escapes of all time.

Rawicz had been sentenced to 25 years' hard labour in 1939 but only arrived at the camp in 1940 having been made to walk much of the distance along with thousands of other prisoners. Once there they set about building the camp from scratch, until, in April 1941, Rawicz and six accomplices escaped during a blizzard.

Heading south and making sure to avoid all contact, they scavenged off the land, eventually crossing the border into Mongolia. Once there they were safe from the Russians but not from the environment. Over the next 11 months, as they journeyed over the Gobi desert and Himalayas, three of the group died, leaving just four to crawl their way into British India.

After the war, Rawicz settled in England and wrote an account of his escape entitled 'The Long Walk' which is currently being made into a film directed by Peter Weir.

Libby Prison, US

The Libby Prison break in February 1864 was the biggest escape in US history. In total 109 Union soldiers escaped through a tunnel they had dug in just 17 days.

The initial plan for escape involved just 15 prisoners digging around the clock in shifts of five. Having found a way into the prison basement, known a 'rat hell', via a chimney, the men set about digging a horizontal tunnel eastwards towards a vacant lot on the far side of the prison wall.

Their first attempt came up yards short of the wall and they had to cover over and dig again, eventually emerging hidden on the far side of the wall.

The following night 109 men crawled to freedom though only 59 managed to make it back to Union lines.

Stalag Luft III, Poland

Immortalised in the film *The Great Escape*, the prison break from the air force prisoner-of-war camp at Stalag Luft III in March 1944 is surely the most famous of them all. The tale of the escape was a readymade Hollywood script, with Americans, Brits and a host of other nationalities working together to dig three tunnels out of the escape-proof camp.

Over 600 men were involved in digging the tunnels, disposing of the dirt, scavenging for wood and tools, making the escape kits and creating the diversions – making it the most complicated escape in history. In all, over 200 tonnes of sand were shifted over a 12-month period, requiring the disposal teams to make an estimated 25,000 trips into the yard to get rid of the material.

Despite a series of setbacks on the night of the escape, 76 airmen made it out though only three made it to freedom – the others were captured by the Germans who promptly executed 50.

Leads Prison, Italy

Locked up in Venice's Leads Prison on a charge of adultery in 1753, legendary lover Giacomo Casanova had no intention of serving all five years of his sentence, and promptly set about planning his escape.

For a man who had spent a lifetime escaping from wrathful husbands, it was simply another challenge to overcome. Having found a metal bar in courtyard he spent months digging a way out of his room and into the adjoining cell which housed a renegade priest.

Borrowing the same metal bar, the priest in turn dug through the ceiling of his cell, allowing the two convicts access to the eaves of the building. They then pried open the prison's lead roof and climbed down the outside of the building, finally breaking open one last door which led them onto street level. There, they jumped into a gondola and disappeared into the city's waterways.

John Connally Unit, US (Texas Seven)

On 13 December 2000, America watched in horror as news broke of a brutal prison break from the John Connally maximum security unit near Kenedy, Texas.

Taking advantage of a mid-afternoon lull in security that they had witnessed, seven convicts violently overpowered 15 guards, civilian maintenance contractors and innocent inmates. They quickly stripped them of clothes, identifications and credit cards, and even impersonated the

guards on their radios to avert suspicion, before using a prison maintenance truck to escape through the rear gate.

The escapees were dubbed The Texas Seven. Once free, they went on a crime spree across the area, stealing cash, guns, killing a police officer and earning themselves a place on the America's Most Wanted TV programme – which led to their eventual capture after over a month on the run. Five of the gang are now on death row, one has already been executed, while the seventh committed suicide when captured.

Hoi Het, Laos

Unlike some of the other escapees on this list, Dieter Dengler is not a household name, but the German-American Navy pilot does have the honour of being the only American serviceman to have successfully escaped from a prison camp in the Vietnam War.

When his plane was shot down over Laos on 1966, Dengler was taken to the Hoi Het PoW camp. Having already escaped and been recaptured on his journey to the camp, Dengler wasted no time in organising his second bid for freedom.

Along with two other US airmen, he slipped his bonds, shot down three guards with their own guns and escaped into the trees. When he was finally spotted by a US plane having wandered lost in the dense jungle for 23 days, he was emaciated, malnourished, riddled with parasites and the sole survivor of the break out.

The Tower of London, UK

There have been a number of escapes from London's most famous jail over its 1,000-year history, but none are quite so daring as that of John Gerard, a Jesuit priest who virtually tightrope-walked to freedom in 1597.

Sentenced to death for his Catholic beliefs under the rule Queen Elizabeth I, Gerard had been meticulously planning his escape from the moment he had arrived in the Tower. Having communicated his plan to friends on the outside using notes penned in invisible ink, Gerard managed to engineer a visit to a fellow prisoner being held in the Salt Tower which overlooked the river.

Together, the men broke out onto the roof of the tower and from there managed to throw a rope across the moat to a boat waiting for them on the Thames. The men, including a guard who had helped them, then traversed down the swaying rope to freedom. Gerard eventually escaped to the continent where he lived out his days in Rome.

Le Santé, France

The greatest escape artist of them all has to be the bank robber and kidnapper Jacques Mesrine. Dashing and daring, Mesrine is still celebrated

in his native France as their Robin Hood — robbing from the rich and powerful, and giving to the homeless.

Over a 10-year period, Mesrine planned and executed numerous elaborate escapes from prisons in Canada and France, but his most infamous break out came in 1979 from the maximum security prison at La Santé in Paris.

Despite an anonymous call warning the governor of the prison that his star convict planned to escape in the coming days, Mesrine and his cellmate managed to use guns which had been smuggled into the prison to hold up their guards and lock them in their cell.

Then, having forced a group of workmen to turn their ladder against the outside wall, they used grappling hooks and rope to lower themselves down the outer wall. The greatest escape in French history had taken just 25 minutes. Mesrine's freedom was short-lived however, and six months later he was surrounded in his car and shot dead by police.

Taliban 'Great Escape': DIY Tunnel Leads to Massive Jailbreak



class="aligncenter size-large wp-image-45233" title="Afghanistan Kandahar Prison Escape"

src="http://www.wired.com/images_blogs/dangerroom/2011/04/AP11042515007-660x471.jpg" alt="" width="660" height="471" />

It was 4 a.m. before the guards at Kandahar's Saraposa prison even knew anything was wrong. By then it was too late: The last of at least 476 prisoners, most of them Taliban and some of them experienced commanders, had escaped the facility through a tunnel — more than 1,000 feet long — painstakingly dug into the compound over the course of five months.

The Saraposa prison break this morning wasn't just a triumph of DIY underground engineering, clandestine keys and possible double-agents. The escape amounts to a big manpower boost for the Taliban in a region where the insurgency has recently lost ground.

Equally, the breakout is a damning failure for Afghan security forces that failed to stop an even bigger escape at the same Afghan-run, 1,200-inmate facility two years ago. The threat of imprisonment is a real deterrent to insurgent activity, at least at the lowest levels. The Saraposa breakout undermines this effect.

The return of hundreds of veteran Taliban fighters to their units — just as the annual spring fighting season is getting underway — is also foreboding development for NATO forces hoping to show off lasting security gains ahead of their slow withdrawal, scheduled to begin this summer. "This will have a negative effect on Kandahar's security situation," Abdul Wahab Salihi, the deputy intelligence chief in Kandahar, told *The New York Times*.

The escape from Saraposa apparently had all the makings of a Hollywood blockbuster: high stakes, a fearsome antagonist in the form of NATO forces, a daring and intricate plan and alleged inside men. It was like the 1963 Steve McQueen classic *The Great Escape*, with the Talibs playing the McQueen role and ISAF standing in for the Nazis. The only difference is that the Talibs were way more successful than McQueen and his cohorts.

Also like a big-budget Hollywood movie, the bust-out was accompanied by a slick promotional campaign. Around the same time the befuddled Afghan prison guards were just discovering the escape hole chiseled into the concrete floor of a blue-walled cell, Taliban PR rep Zabiullah Mujahid announced the escape to Western media.

"We have planned and worked on this for five months, and the tunnel is 360 meters long," Mujahid said in a statement. "This was very important for us; we were trying to not leave anyone behind, not even one sick or old political prisoner."

"Our mujahedeen worked in a very careful way," Mujahid added by way of understatement. The tunnel's diggers started their work in a house on the opposite side of the Kandahar-Kabul highway from the prison. Likely working at night, they dug underneath the highway and the prison's razor-wire-topped walls and, apparently, straight into a cell belonging to Taliban prisoner.

At least one prisoner was in communication with the diggers. "There were four or five of us who knew that our friends were digging a tunnel from the outside," escapee Mohammad Abdullaht told the Associated Press by phone this morning.

Based on Abdullaht's statement, some of the prison guards might have been in on it, too. "Some of our friends helped us by providing copies of the keys," the Talib explained. "When the time came at night, we managed to open the doors for friends who were in other rooms."

Just in case the escape was detected, the Taliban had fighters and suicide bombers standing by, according to *The New York Times*.

Starting around 11 p.m., Abdullaht and the other ringleaders sneaked prisoners through the tunnel in groups of four or five, Abdullaht said. By sunrise, nearly 500 inmates — a third of the prison's capacity — were free in Kandahar city. Half an hour later, prison guards sounded the alarm, and nearby U.S. forces joined the hunt for escapees. CTV described a "swarm" of allied troops in and around the tunnel's outside exit.

"Some of the prisoners have already been recaptured," Kandahar Gov. Wesa Tooryalai said this morning. CTV pinned that number at 26 ... out of at least 476 total escapees.

Tooryalai was quick to assign blame. "This is absolutely the fault of the ignorance of the security forces," he said. "This was not the work of a day, a week or a month of activities, this was actually months of work they spent to dig and free their men."

"I don't know how many among them were leaders or prominent people," local intel chief Salihi said of the escapees, "but if there is a fire and you put more wood on it, there will be more flames, so these escaped people will add fuel to the fire."

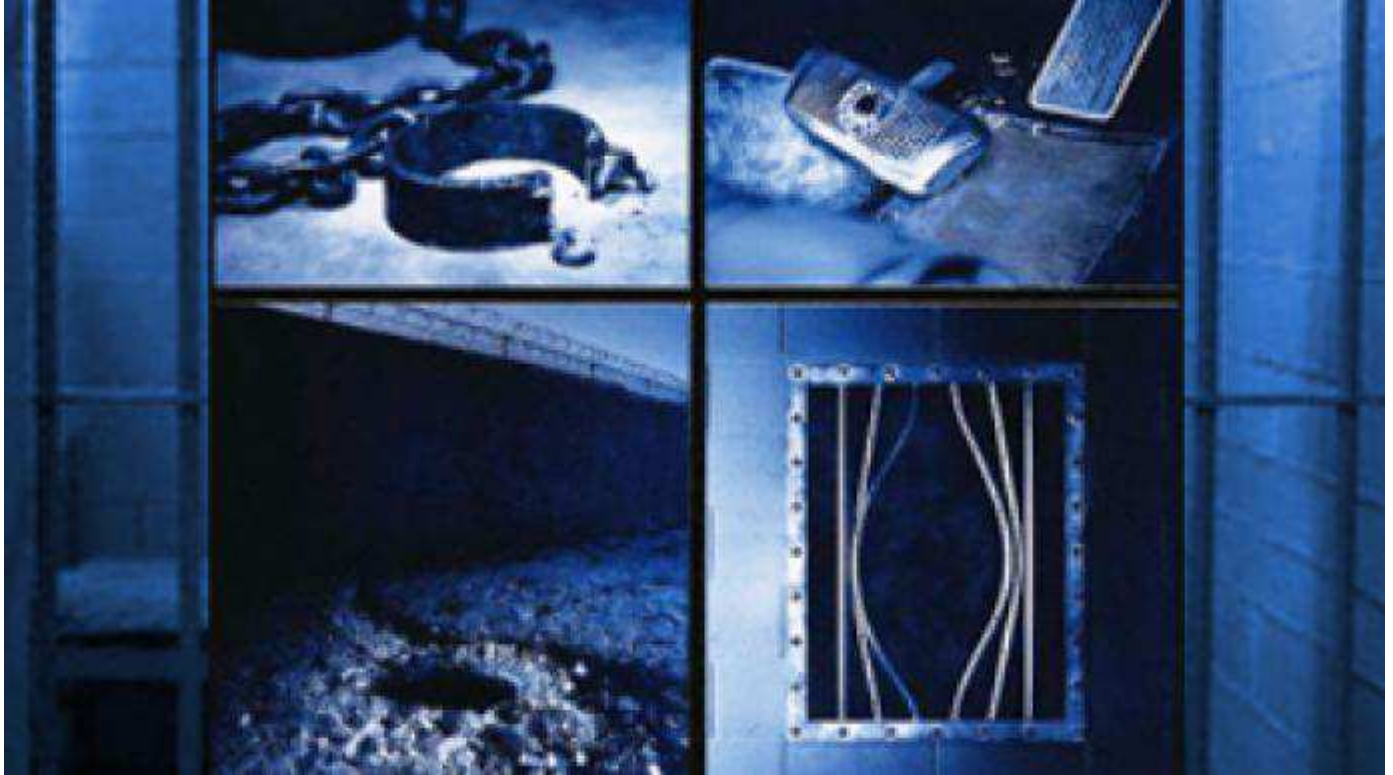
Photo: Allauddin Khan/AP

Top 10 prison breaks

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Escape from high security prison has always been a top-choice plot for writers and filmmakers, but some of the most fantastic stories of escape have actually taken place.

1. Maze Prison Break – The largest prison break in British history, when 38 inmates who were members of the IRA and serving time for murder and bombings broke out of HM Prison Maze H-block on 25th September, 1983. The prison, in Northern Ireland, was considered the most escape-proof prison in Britain. During the breakout, an officer died from a heart attack, and many others were injured by guns that had been snuck into the prison.

The prison itself made for a highly-improbable escape, as it was surrounded by 15-foot fences and an 18-foot concrete wall with barbed wire, as well as electronic solid steel gates. The escape started with the guards being held hostage and their clothing and car keys being taken, as well as a food delivery truck being stopped and the driver being made to help them. Less than 90 minutes later, all the inmates had escaped from the compound. While 19 were caught and a few more found in the USA and extradited, the remaining were assisted by the IRA and are no longer being sought.

2. Pascal Payet is the famous French criminal who escaped twice from high security prisons in France using a hijacked helicopter. He was initially thrown in jail for a 30-year sentence for a murder he committed while robbing a security van. His first escape took place in 2001 from the Luynes prison, and he remained on the loose until he was recaptured after assisting in the escape of fellow prisoners in 2003, again using a hijacked helicopter. He was moved to Grasse prison but, with the help of four men, escaped again in 2007 in a hijacked helicopter. He was later captured in Spain after authorities recognized him, even though he had undergone cosmetic surgery.

3. The Great Escape took place at Stalag Luft III, a German Air Force POW camp during World War II. The escape plot was led by South African Roger Bushell and called for the digging of three tunnels given the codenames "Tom", "Dick" and "Harry". The tunnels had to be extremely deep, around 30 feet below ground, in order to avoid detection by microphones on the surface. In January 1943, the project was begun and the first tunnel "Harry" was ready to go in March of the following year. Finally, on March 24th 1944, the escape began. Unfortunately, the tunnel came up just short of the tree line, and while, during the course of the night 76 people climbed through, only 3 escaped, while 50 were killed and the rest for recaptured and sent back to the prison.

4. Escape from Alcatraz- The 1962 Frank Morris-led attempt to escape from Alcatraz is the only attempt that is theorized to have been successful in the 29-year history of the island prison in San Francisco Bay.

Frank Morris and the Anglin brothers had all been transferred from another prison after repeated attempts to break out. Morris, the presumed mastermind behind the scheme, drew up a plan in which they cut through their cells to get to the top of the cell block and then through metal bars, up an air vent to the roof, from where they were able to descend to the water and, with a makeshift raft created from standard issue raincoats, escaped into the bay. Their bodies were never found, and while they are officially listed as missing or presumed drowned, it is believed that their escape was a success.

5. The Texas Seven – On December 13, 2000 a group of prisoners escaped from a maximum security prison near the southern Texas town of Kennedy. A little over a month later, they were recaptured as a result of the television show America's Most Wanted. The actual escape was very well-planned and involved subduing unsuspecting maintenance workers, officers and even fellow prisoners during the slowest parts of the day, and then hiding them while taking their clothing, credit cards and identification. They also pretended to be officers and made phone calls, creating false stories to slow their detection. Once they made it to the prison maintenance truck, they escaped from the facility. They were later discovered in a trailer park in Colorado. The owner had watched America's Most Wanted and reported that they were staying in his park. They were surrounded and eventually captured.

6. The Libby Prison Escape – is by far the best-known prison escape to take place during the American Civil War. The Confederate prison, located in Richmond Virginia, saw the escape of 109 prisoners directly on to the streets of the city on the night of February 9th and 10th, 1864. They had dug a tunnel leading out of the building into an empty lot and gained a 17-hour head-start before Confederate authorities realized they had gone missing. The tunnel was started in a rat-infested basement of the prison, but had the advantage of having a straw covered floor, allowing for their escape plan to proceed unnoticed. After the escape, one prisoner walked directly past an unsuspecting Confederate sentry. Of the 109 escapees, 59 were able to get across federal lines and find safety in the North.

7. Alfred Wetzler and the escape from Auschwitz – perhaps the most infamous Nazi Death Camp escape. Wetzler and fellow escapee Rudolf Vrba hid in a wood pile that was being used to build a new 'arrivals' section. They used Russian tobacco soaked in gasoline to trick the dogs and hid there for four days. On April 10, wearing clothes they had taken from the camp, they walked along the Sola River and made their way to the Polish-Slovak border 80 miles away, using a child's atlas as a guide. Of almost greater importance was the report the two had written about the inner operation of the camp, including the gas chamber and crematorium construction plans, as well as the label from a can of Zyklon gas they had managed to grab. It was the first such report to reach the West that was considered credible. Eventually, it led to bombing key government buildings in Hungary, in which Nazi officials responsible for the Auschwitz deportations were killed.

8. Alfred Hinds – this British criminal and escape artist managed to find his way out of not one, not two, but three high-security prisons. After the final one, he was even able to get pardoned after finding a loophole in the British legal system. He was initially sentenced in 1953 to a 12-year sentence for jewelry theft. He escaped Nottingham prison by getting through locked doors and over a 20-foot wall. He gained the nickname "Houdini" Hinds in the media. He was on the run for over six months before being found by Scotland Yard and arrested. However, he sued the authorities for illegal arrest and used the court appearance as an opportunity to make his next escape. A padlock was smuggled into the toilet, and when his guards accompanied him to the toilet, he locked them to the door and escaped. After he was caught, he ended up in Chelmsford Prison, from which he escaped less than a year later. A few years afterwards he was caught again and finished serving his sentence. He then became somewhat of a celebrity, and was even a sought-after speaker on the ills of the British legal system.

9. David McMillan – escape from Klong Prem prison in Bangkok, Thailand. McMillan is known as the only Westerner ever to escape from this high-security prison, known ironically as the Bangkok Hilton. The British-Australian national had been arrested and jailed in Australia for drug trafficking. After serving a long sentence and being released on parole, he was again arrested in Bangkok for heroin trafficking and faced the death penalty. During one night in August 1996, he was able to cut his cell bars with hacksaws, scale four inner-prison walls and then, using a bamboo-pole ladder, get over the outer wall. Using a false passport, he got on a plane four hours later to Singapore. Apparently he never learned his lesson, and

was later arrested in Lahore, Pakistan and also managed to get involved with a Moscow street gang, and be arrested again in Copenhagen. Interestingly enough, the warrant in Thailand still stands for McMillan, who is now quietly living in London. However, because the UK doesn't extradite people to countries which carry out the death penalty, he seems to be safe for now.

10. Pretoria Prison – Three prisoners, who learned to pick locks, were able to pick their way through 10 locked steel doors as they broke out of this high-security prison in South Africa. Political prisoners Tim Jenkin, Stephen Lee and Alex Moumbaris planned for 18 months, learning to pick locks and forge keys, and made their escape together in December, 1979. Tim Jenkin wrote a book on the escape, in which he also described how three white, privileged South Africans risked everything to fight for those who were being terribly discriminated against.

Prison Break: A History of Mass Escapes

Feb 22, 2012 09:50 AM ET // by Talal Al-Khatib



What seemed to be a prison riot sparked by rival gangs housed at the Apodaca correctional facility in Nuevo Leon, Mexico, that left 44 fatalities turned out to be **a brazen mass escape in disguise**. Thirty members of the notorious criminal cartel, the Zetas, slipped away during the melee

Although this mass escape is certainly a black spot on the records of prison authorities, some of whom have been implicated in assisting the effort, how this escape plays out for the prisoners who are now on the lam remains to be seen.

BLOG: Invisible Beam to Break Up Prison Fights

If history of mass escapes is any guide, it usually ends badly. See for yourself in this timeline of other mass escapes throughout history:

The Libby Prison Escape, 1864

Like many of the facilities during the Civil War, Libby Prison in Richmond, Va., must have been hell on Earth, even by prison standards. Lack of food, proper medical care and sanitation caused thousands of deaths among the inmates.

On Feb. 9, 1864, Union soldiers determined they had had enough, and over 100 of them slipped away in the night through tunnels they had built from the prison basement. Considered a generally successful mass escape, more than half of the inmates made it back to Union lines.

'The Great Escape,' 1944

Like the Union soldiers held at Libby prison during the Civil War, Allied POWs during World War II also used their ingenuity to stage what might be the most famous prison break of all time.

Dubbed "The Great Escape," the plan was part of a nearly year-long effort to dig three tunnels, dubbed "Tom," "Dick" and "Harry," 30 feet underground and involving as many as 600 prisoners. Led by a British officer named Roger Bushell, nearly 200 inmates attempted to bust out through the first tunnel that was ready, "Harry." The prisoners also had on them fake documentation to prevent their recapture.

Unfortunately for the inmates, because of an error in planning, the tunnel was too short. As a result, only 76 prisoners actually made it out. All except three were recaptured.

As a warning to any POWs still contemplating escape, the Gestapo killed 50 of the recaptured prisoners.

Cowra POW Camp, 1944

The Cowra prisoner-of-war camp in Australia housed prisoners from the Axis powers, including Germany, Italy and Japan. **Unlike other prisoners who were more complacent with their fate, Japanese inmates were more restless,** partly due to the cultural barrier but also the shame of being captured.

In the early hours of Aug. 5, 1944, a Japanese fighter pilot sounded a charge with a banged up bugle on the prison guards, backed by some 1,000 Japanese POWs brandishing hand-crafted weapons, flinging themselves into barbed wire and machine gun fire. Nearly 230 inmates were killed and 100 more wounded. Four guards also died.

Following the escape, many of the inmates committed suicide rather than submit to recapture.

Batticaloa Jail, 1983 and 1984

In September 1983, over 40 political prisoners part of the separatist guerrilla group, the Tamil Tigers, and around 150 other inmates who just took advantage of the opportunity, **escaped from prison in Batticaloa, Sri Lanka**. They smuggled in weapons and overpowered the guards before fleeing by boat to India.

Tamil Tigers broke back in in 1984 to retrieve a female inmate who had been left behind in the original escape a year earlier.

The Maze Prison Escape, 1983

The same month as the first Batticaloa escape, half a world away, 38 members of the Provisional Irish Republican Army (IRA), who had been convicted of a range of politically motivated crimes including murder, **escaped from a maximum security prison in Northern Ireland**. The prisoners smuggled in handguns, held the guards hostage and escaped using a prison van. One officer was murdered and another injured in the process.

Half of the prisoners were caught shortly after escaping. Many of the other escapees were recaptured years later or died before they could be.

BLOG: Man Breaks Dog Out of Jail
Sarposa Prison, 2008 and 2011

Sarposa prison in Kandahar, Afghanistan, has seen more escapes than all of the other jails on this list combined.

In 2008, over 1,000 prisoners, nearly half of which belonged to the Taliban, escaped after a truck bomb detonated outside the gates to blast open the facility. Then, **according to a Taliban spokesperson in a report from *The Guardian*,**

30 motorcycle-mounted militants and two suicide bombers attacked the guards, allowing virtually every prisoner in the facility to escape.

Three years later, despite an overhaul of the facility with major security upgrades, nearly 500 prisoners escaped through a tunnel. Once again, inmates had assistance from Taliban insurgents on the outside. It took roughly four and a half hours to clear all of the prisoners through, **though they managed to flee without a shot fired.**

Kandahar Prison Escape: the Taliban's Tale

without comments

The Taliban issued a new edition of their Arabic-language Al-Somood magazine a few days ago. You can view the original on Aaron Zelin's excellent Jihadology website. The most interesting articles, I found, were the two relating to the Taliban's recent prison escape from Sarpoza jail. There has been a lot written about the escape, but we've heard relatively little from escapees. These two articles offer a fair amount of new detail. Of course, al-Somood needs to be taken with a pinch of salt, but the accounts are interesting nonetheless.

Accordingly, full translations of the two articles are presented below, exclusively to this website.

{Part 1: pp12-14 of al-Šumūd (Steadfastness), 5th year, volume 60, Jumada al-Thaniya 1432AH/May-June 2011}

The Prison Break Story

How Fiction Became Reality

By Abd al-Ra'uf Hikmat

Kandahar Prison

Kandahar's main prison lies in the Sarposha area, north of Kandahar-Herat highway. It is considered the largest state prison in south Afghanistan with its capacity to hold thousands of prisoners. It comprises a main gate and multiple segments; it is also surrounded by high and impenetrable walls.

This prison has essentially been built professionally, with the establishment of high surveillance and watch towers in its four corners. It is also surrounded by a number of underground walls, further to its high [overground] walls, to prevent digging tunnels to the outside.

Notwithstanding this impervious building and tight security measures, this prison has become the scene of a fascinating story not only in the Afghan domain but internationally as well. Over the past eight years, political prisoners have been able to escape on three occasions. The first time saw in June 2003 inmate mujahideen of the political ward digging a tunnel from within the prison to the outside, thus freeing all of this ward's prisoners who totalled 45 via the tunnel. Then in June 2008, the Islamic Emirate launched militant martyrdom attacks on this prison that caused the death of all the prison's guards and released close to 1,200 inmate mujahideen. Subsequently, Americans and Kandahar officials took care of maintaining this prison; Canadian forces trained special policemen to guard the prison; watch towers were increased and monitoring cameras installed; all the prison was encircled by a deep and wide trench. Despite all these measures, the mujahideen were able for the third time to release 541 prisoners following a long planning on the 25th of April of this year, 2011.

Pure Fantasy

One of the surprising mujahideen squad in the city of Kandahar, who by his connections gained full knowledge of the inside and outside of the prison, pondered one day whether it could be possible to dig a tunnel from the inside of a house on the other side of the street to the prison as a means to releasing the prisoners. This fantasy and imagination seemed laughable at first even to its owner; he dared not share his opinion with others. But, after more time and continued thinking, he reached a conclusion. On one of these days, while he was riding a motorcycle with two of his comrades, he shared that view with them. They thought it impossible initially and deemed it a fruitless, dangerous attempt. Finally, they placed their trust on God and shared their opinion with the mujahideen high command in Kandahar. With guidelines from the command, the aforementioned four revealed [to] their trusted comrades their decision to implement this plan regardless of its risks and even if it looked impossible.

Concrete Workshop

Six months ago these committed mujahideen rented a house opposite the south corner of Kandahar prison. The old house rooms were in disrepair. Initially they built a new room. Then they brought in all necessary [equipment] and machines to make concrete, hiring a number of workers who worked during the day. But in the afternoon, when the workers left, the mujahideen stayed under the pretence of guarding. It was during that time that they proceeded to dig the tunnel from within the room they had just built.

Hard Labour for Four Months

At first, four mujahideen were plodding through this operation. Their work method was the following: one was to hit with the pickaxe, digging the tunnel, while the other three were to move the soil. The tunnel was narrow, the soil could not be moved out by wheelbarrows, so some operation planners went to the market and bought a number of children bicycles, removing their small wheels and fixing

barrows on them. They were able to prepare wheelbarrows that suited their task. Now they filled these barrows with soil, pulling them by a rope to the tunnel opening and collecting the soil there before moving it to the lorry. In the morning, when the soil lorries headed to the city for its sale, mujahideen would bring in their soil-filled lorry and sell it, thus getting rid of it.

For two months, four mujahideen were working in the tunnel digging. Then their number increased to eight mujahideen. Now they were digging four meters every night. When their continued work reached 100m, they faced the issue of ventilation and lack of oxygen; nevertheless they carried on until cutting a distance of 150m. At this point it was terminally difficult to continue working, due to oxygen lack, and work carried on no further. In the beginning they tried a ground fan; it resolved the ventilation issue but it was winter and the cold weather caused headache. Then they made an air-pumping machine, delivering air by a pipe from the outside to the inside of the tunnel. This was the best method to resolve the ventilation and lack of oxygen – the machine worked quietly by a charged battery. But they then realised the risk of their digging a tunnel under the road that carried the heavy enemy vehicles to the inside of the prison: There was a possibility of a tunnel collapse under intense vehicle pressure. The question was how deep was the tunnel to be dug to exclude that possibility. As an experiment, they parked a lorry atop the tunnel; it suffered no damage, assuring them that it would not suffer because of enemy vehicles. The tunnel was 2.5m deep between the house and the public road, but as a precaution they deepened it further. Four months passed and the tunnel went 220m, a well iron pipe surprised them before realising it was not a prison pipe but a pipe to a village south of the prison. In fact, the tunnel diggers, having no map, deviated from the correct path to the right, crossing the road and reaching a village close to the prison. Here they recognised that the target could only be reached with the prison map and distance measuring tools.

One and a Half Months of Efficient Work

The tunnel diggers who lost their way and made an extra 120m now downloaded the prison map off the internet and by which were able to pinpoint the prison location. Using earth measurement tools they re-dug at the distance of 100m of the tunnel directly towards the prison. However, with the passing of the winter, night was shorter. Consequently they increased the number of labour mujahideen until they reached twenty-one. Furthermore, earth evaporates less in summer, so ventilation was a lesser issue, work faster and more effective. By digging 166m they reached the middle of the prison (it must be added that the Islamic Emirate's site mentioned the distance dug by mujahideen including the distance dug by error, giving a total of 360m, when the precise distance, excluding additional distance, was 266m. Noteworthy to add the tunnel's 70cm height and 60cm width).

The prisoner mujahideen were in two separate locations within the prison: Most were in the political ward, where they numbered 530, but a small number was in a room called 'Tawqif Khanah' [arrest room]. The tunnel was dug first towards Tawqif Khanah room, as it held a linked mujahid aware of the case. He used to hit the ground for a reason and no reason in order for the tunnel diggers to recognise

whether they were ahead or behind or at the target. Thus they were able to pinpoint the place, but for verification they raised a blade to the room, until the prisoner assured them of hitting the target. They moved on to the political ward. Five days produced further 23m, reaching the political ward where its room 7 held two linked prisoners aware of the case. The aim was to take the tunnel to room 7. Here again the tunnel diggers wanted to raise a blade to ascertain and avoid any error when opening the tunnel to the prison. The mujahideen were hesitant: were they under room 6 or 7? To keep the matter secret when the blade would be raised, the two prisoners held a Qur'an completion [session]; all the rooms were vacant, the two aforementioned prisoners left, one to room 6 and the other to room 7. When the blade was raised they realised they were under room 6, contrary to their expectation. Then two further meters were dug until reaching room 7. Now they could not vacate the rooms with the Qur'an completion excuse again, so the mujahideen used the afternoon time when prisoners would go out to washing rooms and get prepared for the noon prayer; the blade was raised and it made it successfully to room 7. The opening place was specified for the escape operation day. It should be added that the blade raising operation was made subsequent to a wise and interesting plan: The prison ground was about 2.5m above the tunnel, with the tunnel's height of 70cm, how a long blade could fit through this tunnel to reach the prison ground? The mujahideen cut iron blades of 50cm length and joined them together; when they were raising a blade 50cm by a car lift, they would fix to it another blade and raise it by the lift. Thus they prepared for the dismantling of blades a machine that would be attached to each blade then hit by a hammer downwards. This was how they were able to pinpoint the location precisely.

Prison Release Plan

Following the tunnel digging to the desired target, the persons responsible for digging finished their work. They requested from the Islamic Emirate's high command guidelines concerning the prison release planning. The Kandahar Province's and high ranking Islamic Emirate's officials held continuous consultations for the secure and successful delivery of the release operation. Subsequent to consultation, the following plan was adopted.

The mind behind this operation, who on his own hit the pickaxe laboriously to dig 300m of the tunnel, would himself be the commander of the prison release operation as well. He would adopt during the operation ad-hoc plans as needed. The high command would tell him about whatever might happen. The operation would be kept secret until the last moment of execution. Links would be established with the linked brothers within the prison; they would be prepared inside the prison to take the responsibility of organising and moving out the prisoners according to the plan. Similarly all decisions were taken, delegating the operation command to the aforementioned person.

Release Operation

For the best execution of the operation, precautionary measures were checked and preparatory processes were taken again to solve the ventilation problem inside the

tunnel. A powerful machine to pump air was operated while the pipe laid inside the tunnel was holed in ten places to deliver air to all parts of the tunnel. Forty-five lamps were also switched on for illumination of the tunnel. As a precautionary measure, a team of to-be-martyrs were sent to the prison neighbouring areas to launch a militant attack if necessary.

For the operation concealment and fear of being exposed, the operation-tasked person chose five mujahideen, out of the 21-mujahid team as stated before, on the operation day, so he would not lose all his friends, God forbid, if some bad thing were to happen. Subsequently, the release operation team was six persons. These six told the three linked mujahideen within the prison at 9am, one of them was in the Tawqif Khanah room and two in the political ward, that the coming night would be the date of executing the operation, God willing, in order to be prepared. The two linked persons in room 7 of the political ward, for the purpose of telling the rest of prisoners about the case at an appropriate time, prepared some hospitality in their room and invited one or two persons from each room.

The operation commander planned as follows: four brothers of the six would enter the tunnel, two would start working to open the tunnel to the Tawqif Khanah room and two would work to open a tunnel to the political ward; the remaining two would be outside the tunnel. The mujahideen would extend a telephone wire inside the tunnel, establishing a connection between brothers outside and brothers inside and allowing exchange of information e.g. where the work reached and what need be done, etc.

The four brothers entered the tunnel with car lifts and] solid iron [poles]. They started opening the tunnel to the "Tawqif Khanah" room and the political ward. At about 10 o'clock they easily opened the "Tawqif Khanah" room floor with the lift. The prisoners exited. But as they had among them two spies from the prison administration disguised as prisoners, one was made unconscious by the mujahideen and the other taken out via the tunnel handcuffed to prevent him from causing noise.

As for the ground of the political ward, its construction was heavy-duty and it took the mujahideen long to make a hole through. The lift was raising the (cement) concrete ground but due to blocked air in the tunnel it was difficult to hole. After many trials the mujahideen were able to smash the ground. After cutting a huge hole to the ward's room 7, the brothers down the tunnel gave four pistols and four daggers to the linked brothers for use in the operation. They also gave them a telephone handset to establish a connection with the brothers out of the tunnel. Thus the prisoners went on to exit until 1.30am (April 25th, 2011); approximately 250 prisoners exited this way. But the work team realised that if exiting would carry on as such it would last until 2 o'clock, while the plan was for the prisoners not to wait long [outside] as waiting till dawn would be dangerous leading possibly to a botched operation. Therefore, the team postponed the exiting of prisoners for half an hour. They started letting prisoners out again at 2am. By 3am no prisoner was in this ward.

We would like to add that all prisoners were being inspected at the entrance and exit of the tunnel. When entering, their luggage boxes would be taken as carrying them would have caused their delay and risked their re-arrest. When exiting, any money surplus to 3,000 rupees would be withheld and granted to those with no money.

While leaving, it was properly organised. The tasked brothers would wake up the prisoners of each room in turn and guide them to the tunnel. At the exit they would ride the lorries parked at the house; each lorry would carry 36 persons. It was 3:10am when [all] the prisoners left and lorries were allowed to depart. The lorries left from the yard but some brothers headed to the town suburbs on foot – they were instructed to cut a distance before returning to the Kandahar-Herat highway after daybreak and to leave the yard using taxis.

It must also be added that two of these lorries that were transporting the prisoners made two journeys to transport them. By 3:30 or 4:00am no prisoner was in the prison neighbouring areas. It is noteworthy to say that by God's favour and then the mujahideen carefulness and sagacity, the enemy felt nothing throughout concerning what was going on next to it – the house used in the operation was about 20m from the enemy's watch tower that oversaw easily the middle of the house. A surveillance camera was also installed facing the house door. Nevertheless and thank God, it noticed nothing.

The Operation's Expenses

We must add that there were no body losses and the mujahideen shot no bullet. Furthermore, the financial expenses were much lower than expected. According the person in charge of the operation and its planner, the expenses during the operation's five months reached about 900,000 Afghanis (i.e. US\$20,000). These included the house fees, mujahideen food, lorry charges and other equipment the mujahideen left in the house after the operation.

On the last day of the operation, the person in charge who built the concrete workshop for the operation execution stated: we sold during the five months 150 concrete blocks, making much profit. He added: After the operation and the final exit, when the house gate was locked, we left the air pumping machine, 45 lamps, 10 concrete blocks, a pole valued at 50,000 Afghanis, 2 power generators, 2 wheelbarrows, 2 car lifts and some building material; but this historic house benefited us much that these expenses seemed nothing.

{Part 2: pp24-25 of al-Sumud, 5th year, volume 60, Jumada al-Thaniya 1432AH/May-June 2011}

Story narrator: Muhammad Idris

Editor: Habib Mujahid

I was the Second Person to Exit

(A Prisoner Tells his Story)

Muhammad Idris, a 23-year old Kandahar resident, had for many years been launching surprise operations in Kandahar city under the Islamic Emirate's command. He was caught 7 months ago by the enemy in Kandahar city and sent to Kandahar prison. He said he had yet to be tried. Since his captivity, he lived in room 9 of the huge prison with other 15 mujahideen. He was the second, out of hundreds, to exit the prison via the tunnel dug from the known house to the prison.

Let us allow Muhammad Idris to tell us his story himself:

The Kandahar prison is thus established: in the middle of the political ward there is a vast yard. All room doors open to this yard; so the ward's main gate is always locked while the internal room doors are always open. Therefore, prisoners are able to enter other rooms with no difficulty; they gather for the communal prayers as well.

The prisoners of the room that the tunnel reached hosted on Monday night their friends and invited from each room one or two persons. To the hospitality this ward's prayer imam, a scholar prisoner, was also invited, while I represented my room. So to the supper we went.

We had our supper. Then Mawlawi, the prayer imam, started talking. After some beneficial advice, the sheikh [imam] started telling the persons present about the release operation plan. None of us knew anything about the subject until then. During his talk he told the prisoners sitting in the room: "Tonight an operation to free and release us will be made; we better be ready for it". "Anyone of you exiting is ordered not to operate his mobile until tomorrow afternoon. If he talks on his mobile he must be careful not to mention how he got out," he added. Following these guidelines he told us: "Keep mentioned God sincerely so he brings this operation to success." We all started mentioning God. Within half an hour all brothers were busy with praises and prayers. Then the brothers who were aware of the plan came to the mentioned room. They cleared the items and mat in a particular part of the room. Moments later the cleared area was knocked at, and the brothers in the tunnel under the area put a car lift underneath. They continued the pressure until breaking the (cement) concrete ground. As this place was low, they brought with them many robust poles in order for the lift power to reach the concrete [ground]: they would place the poles on the lift then raise it. They repeated this two or three times until a huge hole was opened in the middle of the room.

Thereafter, the brothers inside the tunnel gave the linked prisoners a number of pistols, daggers and knives. They also gave them a box containing a telephone headset, video camera and other devices that I did not recognise. I looked to the tunnel and saw two mujahids: one who gave the box and another. Both retreated and headed to the other opening. At this point the prisoner release operation was delegated to the prisoner mujahideen who were aware of the operation. They linked

the telephone headset with the wire, establishing a connection with the mujahideen on either side of the tunnel: inside and outside of the prison.

These operation-aware prisoners distributed then the arms among themselves, adding a number of trusted mujahideen to them. This ward was holding 2 rooms of criminal prisoners [as well]. There were also a number of state spies among the prisoners. So the decision was made if such spies were to cause trouble or attempt telling the prison guards we would kill them by these arms and knives. They said that such an operation would be difficult to comprehend; if any brothers would not trust it and refuse leaving, we would force them with these arms to exit.

Meanwhile, the operation-aware prisoners said to persons present prior to going down the tunnel: "When you go out on the other side of the tunnel, you will meet a number of mujahideen. They will take surplus money from you, mobiles and other items. They will allow you neither to talk nor to leave; listen to them in whatever they say to you." Alright, will do, we said. Now I was the second in turn in the group sitting in the room to the tunnel, the first prisoner went down and I followed. The tunnel was wide, but not very much, I mean we could walk kneeling or crawl easily. But the mujahideen dug it fantastically: Every 15m there was a lamp, it was very bright. Similarly the mujahideen laid a 6" diameter plastic pipeline along the tunnel for ventilation. At its start they operated a device for pumping air in, and made small holes in the tunnel. We thus felt no lack of air in the tunnel. Additionally two wires were laid in the tunnel: One was for the telephone and I did not know whether the other was for electricity or otherwise. We went about 15 minutes inside the tunnel until reaching the other side: One went in front of me and a large number were behind me. Upon reaching the tunnel exit there were 15 armed mujahideen. They meticulously inspected all people exiting from the tunnel, taking from all their mobiles and sim cards. If one had money they would leave 3,000 rupees to him and take the rest. There was a coat where they would put the money they took from us in. As for prisoners with no money or less than 3,000 rupees, they would give them from the collection in order to have 3,000 rupees. This was the best method for everyone to have money that would help with errands until reaching their destination. After exiting I saw three mujahideen I knew, so they joined me to them in the operation execution. In the house were six transport cars. The brothers told us to make anyone exiting from the tunnel get in the cars after inspection and ordered them to say nothing but mention God discreetly, as close to the [house] yard was a prison tower; if disorder was to occur the enemy could notice. This way the prisoners exited from the tunnel and we made them ride the cars. Whenever a car would be full we would cover it. When all brothers finished, some friend said: "Not much space is left in the cars. Brothers who know the area and town alleys should go on their feet to the town suburbs". The house gate was facing the prison while its back faced a residential area. We made a hole in the back wall and through which the brothers who could not be taken by cars walked to the town suburbs.

But I and four of my friends who were of the city residents discussed it between us and agreed to go to the city. At this point the cars left the house and the five of us left minutes later to the street. We waited a little while on the pavement until a taxi

came that was heading to the city. We rode it. It was 4am. Upon heading to the city the police stopped our car at "Dand" roundabout then told us by his hand to go. The same inspection process was repeated at "Madad" roundabout; the policeman said nothing. We reached the city and we had our rescue; salvation.

I need add that the prisoners in the political ward of Kandahar prison are all mujahideen. Nearby there was another ward called Tawqif Khanah where a prison room held mujahideen. From the main tunnel the mujahideen dug a secondary one to that room, allowing 10-15 prisoners of mujahideen to exit that room, thank God.

In the morning, when I walked about the town and was following the news, in my view until 8am the enemy felt nothing concerning the runaway mujahideen from the prison, as I saw no mandatory checks being carried out in the city. After 8am, the enemy started action. The prison guards used to count us twice: at 8am and in the afternoon. I think that when they arrived to the political ward at 8am to count the prisoners, they found none. Then they started searching and looking for them.

To my knowledge, not a single mujahid remained in the prison's political ward, but there was a room for the mentally ill and they remained inside the prison. As for the other wounded and sick prisoners, all were freed. There was even a wounded prisoner with two iron bars in his legs, during his walk inside the tunnel the two bars were broken and he fainted of extreme pain. Nevertheless, the mujahideen carried him in this condition, got him out of the tunnel and transported him by car.

The one who got away

Heroin pusher David McMillan infamously escaped the 'Bangkok Hilton' - but he lived like a prince on the inside.

Published on September 16, 2007



The man I glimpse in London seems innocuous enough. Used to hiding in crowds, he now travels to work against the morning commuter rush to Dorking, a small town in Surrey. His job is filling tins of health supplements, and his boss says he's a quick worker.

He should be. David McMillan is a notorious drug trafficker. He still faces the death sentence in Thailand for heroin smuggling.

He's better known as "the only Westerner to have escaped the notorious Bangkok Hilton", as Lad Yao Prison is unaffectionately known. He did so in the middle of his trial in August 1996.

In the decade before that event McMillan was at the centre of a daring plan to escape by helicopter from Australia's Pentridge Prison, a stunt for which he was willing to pay half a million Australian dollars.

His story, "Escape", has been selling well at Asia Books and in airport lounges throughout Southeast Asia. It has not been released in Australia, where publishers fear the cash might be seized as the proceeds of crime.

Britain will not allow extradition to a country that still uses the death penalty, so at 51, McMillan remains safe from Australian clutches, and Thailand, busy with a higher-profile fugitive, seems to have all but forgotten him.

In the book McMillan gives some details on how he operated during the 30 years he was moving heroin from the Golden Triangle and from Pakistan and Afghanistan's Golden Crescent to markets in Australia and Europe - and about his amazing Bangkok jailbreak.

But the book is not a testimony to inhumanity and depravity in Thai prisons, like so many others on the shelves. In fact, it's almost the opposite. McMillan played the system and won. He was an Oriental Hotel regular; others who write of Thai jail horrors seem to be more Nana Plaza types.

At the peak of his career in the '80s McMillan was a multimillionaire with homes and offices in London, Melbourne, Hong Kong and Brussels, as well as Bangkok.

But as he came to the attention of British, American and Australian authorities, he never took a direct route anywhere. He lived a life of switching cabs, entering and exiting department stores, and carrying a seemingly endless variety of mobile phones and passports.

After finishing school McMillan did actually try to get a regular job, but then started his own company. It was called Kilo Productions.

He was busted for his first kilo of cannabis at London's Heathrow Airport in 1979 and served six months in jail.

"I started dealing among friends, but of course, with the profits being so good it went much bigger," he says. "I am not going to pretend what I am not ... It is inevitable that ... I will be labelled a 'Merchant of Death' or something like that. I make no justification for my actions.

"Actually the reason I wrote the book was not to make money. It's because so many people asked me during dinner conversations how I escaped from the Bangkok Hilton. I just thought I'd put it down on paper."

McMillan writes that he wanted "a life of adventure. The drug world provided that opportunity ... Travelling to exotic locations, devising ways to cheat customs, and being handsomely rewarded seemed ideal."

And he admits to paying a high price: His wife was arrested along with him in Australia and died in a fire at the remand centre a few weeks later.

"Was it worth it? The answer is that such a life is not quite worth the suffering. All of us have less than 50 years of quality, and so many were spent imprisoned or locked in a losing battle with police agencies of different kinds. Most of my friends from those days are dead and coped less well, I think ...

"I've got no time for most of the people who write these whining books about Thai prisons," McMillan says. "I understand the Thais and the way they work. I do not see what they do as corruption, in the same way that other prisoners did."

Of course, McMillan was not just a lowly courier, as are most foreigners at the Bangkok Hilton. His banker on the outside knew exactly how to look after him.

While the foreign prisoners in the prison's Building 2 were waging a battle against vermin, worms, tuberculosis and Aids on a diet of soup with an occasional fish-head, McMillan in Building 6 had his own chef and servants and dined on goods bought in the local supermarket.

"I had access to television and radio and my own office, and instead of 70 to a cell we just had five. This all cost about Bt10,000 a week each.

"I did not see it as bribery. The guards saw themselves as helping and I was just showing my gratitude. We wanted it to be a bit more like a hotel and we were willing to pay."

One of his privileged fellow prisoners was former police general Chalor Kerdthes, jailed for murder in the Saudi gems fiasco. McMillan refers to him in the book by a pseudonym, but is happy to talk on the record.

"General Chalor had an even more comfortable time than I did. He was like royalty. He had taken over the prison's [Intensive Care Unit] as his own suite."

Chalor refused to help McMillan, and that's when the Briton decided it was time to go.

"I knew I was going to get the death penalty," he says, and a move to Bangkwang Prison was imminent.

Using hacksaws smuggled into prison in a box of pornography that served to distract the guards, McMillan got from his third-floor cell to the jail's outer wall.

He built a pair of ladders from bamboo poles and the picture frames that the prisoners make to earn some income, and cleared two smaller walls and the outer electrified wall. He says he felt only two surges of electricity on his rubber soles before dropping to the ground below.

Then, using an umbrella to shield him from the guards in the towers, he followed the path around the prison. Other guards were just arriving for the morning shift as he strolled out to the main road and hailed a taxi.

By 10am, McMillan had picked up a passport that was waiting for him in Chinatown and was boarding a flight for Singapore.

Having escaped the death penalty - or at least the minimum 100-year sentence - he might have considered quitting the drug trade. He didn't.

He fled to Pakistan, and there was arrested on another charge of heroin trafficking. At Karachi Central Prison, McMillan befriended the husband of deposed president Benazir Bhutto, and a bank executive jailed for fraud.

"Both men had been allowed to build their own houses in the prison complex, complete with gardens. I dined at their typically British Sunday lunches, at which all sorts of influential people from the outside, including leaders of industry and police, attended."

McMillan was ultimately acquitted for lack of evidence and by the late 1990s was back in England, still unwilling to quit.

He was last arrested in 2003 at Heathrow for bringing in half a kilo of heroin. He got four years and is currently out on parole.

McMillan can only console himself with a statement made last week by Australian lawyer Philip Dunn: "McMillan was very charming, a dashing buccaneer, very different from your average criminal."

Andrew Drummond

Special to The Nation

Andrew Drummond is a Bangkok-based British journalist and correspondent for the Times of London.

Drug dealer who escaped Bangkok jail is on the run in London

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Andrew Drummond in Bangkok and Paul Cheston in London

14 September 2007

This is drug trafficker David McMillan buying a newspaper in Fulham Road while on the run from a death sentence in Thailand.

McMillan, 51, escaped from the notorious "Bangkok Hilton" prison 11 years ago. Ten years earlier, he paid £250,000 in a failed attempt to be helicoptered to freedom from Pentridge Prison in Australia.

Today, he makes a daily trip from Kensington to Dorking to pack health food nutrients in tins for a living.

The Evening Standard tracked down McMillan, who is still wanted in Thailand for heroin trafficking and in Australia for breaching parole.

He is safe in his humdrum lifestyle because the Government refuses to extradite anyone to a country which carries out the death penalty and dodging parole is not an extraditable offence.

Now, in the style of Howard Marks - the international drug dealer who became a best-selling author - he is touting a book about his 30 years moving heroin from south-east Asia, Pakistan and Afghanistan to Europe and Australia and his prison escapades.

The book, entitled *Escape*, is selling well in Asia and is due to be published in Britain soon.

In the Eighties, Bayswater-born McMillan, son of one of the first controllers of ITV, was a multi-millionaire with homes in Mayfair, Melbourne, Bangkok, Hong Kong and Brussels.

He remembers: "I was a stubborn little bastard and wanted my own way in all things - and a life of adventure. The drug world provided that opportunity."

In August 1996 he escaped Bangkok's Klong Prem prison, where - unlike the normal drug dealers who suffered with vermin, worms, tuberculosis and Aids, surviving on a diet of soup and the occasional fish head - his wealth had bought him a chef, servants and a sanitary toilet. "I knew I was going to get the death penalty and I had to move before being sent to the Bangkwang Prison, known as The Big Tiger, which holds Thailand's death row," he says.

McMillan gave guards the impression he was content but secretly acquired hacksaws, hidden in posters for his cell walls. He used these to saw through two bars in his cells and descend 40ft to the ground using webbing belts. Reaching the

prison factory, he collected a stash of gaffer tape, eight picture frames made by prisoners, civilian clothes and drinking-water. He then constructed two ladders using bamboo poles, the tape and the frames to scale the walls.

Before reaching the outer wall he had to negotiate "Mars Bar Creek", an 8ft wide trench full of raw sewage.

Afterwards, he washed with the water and changed clothes before tackling the prison's electric wire, feeling only two surges of electricity on his rubber soles before dropping to the ground below. Finally, he skirted the outside of the prison with an umbrella over his head, on the grounds that "escaping prisoners don't carry umbrellas".

Within four hours he was on a flight to Singapore after using a new passport to clear Thai immigration.

By the late Nineties McMillan was back in Britain and was arrested at Heathrow in 2003 with half a kilogram of heroin. He was sentenced to four years and is currently out on parole. "I'm going straight now," he claims.

The Thai Department of Corrections said: "If Mr McMillan comes back he will be arrested and re-charged."

Today, the fugitive admits that while life on the run was exciting it was ultimately unfulfilling. "Such a life is not quite worth the suffering," he says. "Most of my friends from those days are dead."

David McMillan: How I made my jailbreak from Klong Prem prison

David McMillan, who is the only Westerner to have escaped Thailand's notorious Klong Prem prison, reveals his journey.



David McMillan recalls his journey in his autobiography *Escape*

'It wasn't until I stopped planning my own death that I started planning my escape,' explains convicted drug trafficker David McMillan, the only Westerner to have escaped from Bangkok's infamous maximum security Klong Prem prison, a high-security complex that houses up to 20,000 inmates in squalid conditions.

There had been very few escapes from Klong Prem, mainly thanks to the maximum-security conditions but also to the brutal punishments if caught. Life inside could have been a lot worse for McMillan (pictured far right) but he could afford such luxuries as a butler, cook and cleaner. 'I was in there 18 months but I realised if I stayed any longer I was finished,' he says.

After a package was sent to him with duct tape carefully hidden and hacksaw blades concealed in the dowel rods of a poster, McMillan started his bid for freedom. After sawing through the bars he lowered himself to the ground using rope hidden in the lattice of his bed's mattress, then ran to the prison factory, where he used the duct tape, bamboo poles and picture frames to assemble a ladder. He then began the task of climbing over the seven walls until he reached the outer wall.



A guard stands watch inside Klong Prem, Thailand's notorious prison

Before he could taste freedom he had to navigate the 2.5metre sewer he calls 'Mars Bar Creek' before the last wall. He recalls this as the toughest part of his journey and says that if he wasn't alone, he would surely have been caught.

'It's not always easy to think of a solution when under pressure,' he says. 'I'm sure if I'd had company I would have failed as we'd have been arguing and dismissing each other's ideas.'

Finally, he reached the outer wall, where he used rubber shoes and a voltage detector made by a scientist friend to get through the electric wires, sliding down

some rope to the other side. McMillan cites an umbrella as his saving grace from here on – he figured no one would ever consider a man carrying one to be an escaped prisoner. ‘Prisoners don’t take the trouble of taking an umbrella with them just in case it rains,’ he laughs.

A Chinese friend organised a passport to be left in a flat for him and, within hours, he was on a flight to Singapore. ‘There’s nothing better than the suction sound of an aeroplane door being sealed,’ he recalls.

Despite how easy they make it look in the movies – and latest prison break film *The Next Three Days* is out on DVD next week – escaping from jail is not something many prisoners have tried. That didn’t put off McMillan, though.

‘I had no interest in my trial,’ he says. ‘I knew what it was going to be like – a farce, a mockery, a sham and a travesty – and that I would receive the death penalty.’

These might sound like choice words from one of the world’s most notorious drugs smugglers. However, McMillan, who escaped while awaiting trial in 1993, protests his innocence of the drugs charges against him.

‘Isn’t that the ridiculous part about it?’ McMillan asks. ‘I was arrested for possessing a false passport and for the \$12,000 I had on me – the police thoughtfully pocketed the remaining \$35,000. Then I was charged with having 190g of heroin. I had to scratch my head about that but soon realised someone must have left an unmarked, unnamed bag at the airport and, because of my smuggling history, they automatically assumed it belonged to me. I didn’t mind being arrested but that wasn’t even mine.’

McMillan is open about his past life as a smuggler. ‘For me it was the challenge of puzzle-solving, how to get the drugs through customs – and maybe arrogance too of doing things the way I wanted regardless of the consequences.’

Growing up, McMillan had a promising life ahead of him. The son of John McMillan CBE, controller of Associated-Rediffusion Television, his early career was as a children’s TV presenter, cameraman and ad agency producer before he turned to crime. After several stints in prison he jumped parole in Australia and flew to Thailand, where he was arrested and sent to Klong Prem.

‘When I arrived, what I found there were people who’d completely abandoned their lives,’ he explains. ‘I thought, if I’m going to end up dead it’s not going to be at the feet of my enemy.’

Despite being wanted in Thailand McMillan has no fears of being deported from Britain as the government won’t deport suspects who face a possible death penalty. So does he miss anything about his old life?

'I miss the people I met, such as my butler Jet in Klong Prem, but I don't miss the mechanics of the smuggling life,' he says. 'In the back of the mind, though, I still wish something would come up that would make it worthwhile to go on another adventure.'

The Next Three Days is out on DVD and Blu-ray on May 16. David McMillan's autobiography, *Escape*, is published by Mainstream Publishing.

'Five Thai inmates managed to cut through the mesh of the dormitory but they'd all lied to each other about their plans – one said they had someone coming to meet them and another talked about a ladder near the kitchen – so when they couldn't get out, they handed themselves in.

'They were put in The Soy, a tiny coat locker-sized room with only a letterbox slit for air. From here they were dragged out for daily beatings. The guards think themselves very kind for letting the prisoners run certain things inside the prison city but they considered it an act of complete betrayal that anyone would threaten their jobs by escaping.

'The only thing worse than being beaten is listening to someone being beaten. Thais accept their beating without a murmur but you could still hear the sounds of heavy chains and boots and the swishing of a cane cutting through the air and hitting flesh. After about six weeks, four of the five inmates were dead.

'Another attempt involved some Israeli guys who'd escaped from Chiang Mai prison. They'd managed to get out and as far as a guest house, where the owner fleeced them for all their money and then turned them in. When the Thai guards got hold of them they threw them into the dungeon, broke their legs with iron bars and threw rocks on top of them so their bones set that way. It's quite a story of survival as their legs looked like drinking straws when we saw them.'

Bangkwang, Thailand: This prison holds some of the worst criminals. Inmates spend their first months chained in leg irons and death-row prisoners have them welded on permanently. The prisoners on death row are given just two hours' notice before being executed by lethal injection.

Tadmor Military Prison, Syria: Described as the 'kingdom of death and madness', this is one of the world's most brutal prisons with untold torture happening within its walls. The guards drag the prisoners by ropes until dead or beat them to death with pipes. Bloodthirsty guards have also been found chopping up body parts in the courtyards.

Carandiru Penitentiary, Brazil (pictured): Notorious for its violence, over its 46-year history 1,300 inmates have died. However, the prison is becoming more well known for its Aids epidemic. It's thought one out of five inmates have HIV, and most did not have the disease when they entered. If the prisoners need surgery there's no chance of anaesthetic – they suffer in agony.

Nairobi Prison, Kenya: Infested with horrific diseases due to overcrowding – one ward has 250 inmates in a room meant for 50, sharing just five mattresses. The congestion means most inmates don't get the medical attention they need and end up dying a slow, painful death.

La Santé Prison, Paris: French law means some prisoners have to stay more than four months in crowded conditions without being charged. Skin diseases are common and the facility is infested with rats. The prisoners cover every crack in their cells with sheets and clothes to keep the rats out. Amy Mountstephens

David McMillan recalls several escape attempts that ended badly during his time at Klong Prem

Shawshank Redemption-style prison break foiled after staff discover escape tunnel disguised with papier mache bricks

Prison staff thwarted a Shawshank Redemption-style escape after prisoners excavated a tunnel through their 4ft thick cell wall.

The would-be runaways attempted to hide their escape attempt by filling in the hole in the wall with papier mache bricks from the prison's arts and crafts store.

Two inmates used improvised tools to dig through the wall at Exeter Prison in Devon before removing the dust, inserting fake bricks and painting over them.



Escape: The plan to tunnel through a prison wall is similar to that dreamed up by Tim Robbins' character in The Shawshank Redemption, pictured

The men had reached daylight on the other side when their plan was foiled by a guard who spotted brick dust on the outside.

Another member of staff then looked up and saw four bricks that appeared to be the wrong way around in the second-floor wall.

More...

- Probation staff spend three quarters of their time tangled in red tape rather than watching dangerous criminals
- Lockerbie bomber paraded on TV - two years after being freed because he was dying of cancer

Detective Constable Alex Bingham, of Exeter CID, said: 'We believe that the two inmates may have orchestrated a move to one of the only cells that you could possibly dig from.'

'They dug through the wall and used papier mache to fill in where the mortar had fallen out.'

'They have then used paint to paint over what they have done. If you did a visual check of the cell you would not have noticed it.'



Exeter Prison: This category B jail would have been hard to escape from

The men are thought to have gained access to the arts and crafts department, where they obtained paint and materials to make papier mache. They then painstakingly removed the thick red bricks from their cell wall using hand-made tools, before concealing the hole using paint and fake bricks.

The plan was scuppered as they were just inches from making it through the wall, when a member of staff noticed the bricks appeared to be 'the wrong way round'.

A site manager, who was on a routine patrol around the building, alerted wardens who checked the wall from the inside and discovered the ruse.

Officers said that when they uncovered the plot the wall was wet with paint and the removed bricks were hidden under the lower bunk bed in the cell.



Life imitating art: Morgan Freeman and Tim Robbins both played prisoners in The Shawshank Redemption

However, even if the inmates had made it out they would still have had to negotiate a 20ft wall topped with razor wire to complete their escape.

The two men, who have not been identified, were arrested and are being held at separate jails after being charged with attempting to escape lawful custody.

DC Bingham said a prisoner on each ward has access to paint for renovating cells. However, he said the suspects had a bottle full of paint in their possession without either of them having asked for any.

He added: 'This looks to us like a professional orchestrated escape plan from the prison. It is unusual that these inmates would try to escape. It is not something that happens very often.'

Exeter prison is classed as a category-B jail, and is officially described as holding 'prisoners for whom the very highest conditions of security are not necessary, but for whom escape must be made very difficult'.

It is understood that the prison has since carried out a full check of all the cells. No-one at the prison was available to comment.

The foiled escape echoes the plot of the 1994 film *The Shawshank Redemption* starring Morgan Freeman and Tim Robbins, whose character tunnels his way out of a tough US jail.

Three years ago, a similar plot was foiled when wardens heard Daniel Vail, 25, burrowing through walls. He even made a dummy from bedding and dug a hole in his cell before being caught out.

Iraqi prisoners tunnel out of jail

Most of the 35 "terror suspects" who escaped from Mosul prison have been recaptured, security officials say.

The US military helped Iraqi authorities in the search for the escaped prisoners with various surveillance [EPA]

Fourteen prisoners charged with "terrorism" escaped from a prison via a tunnel in the northern Iraqi city of Mosul, security officials say.

Jailbreaks and prison unrest are relatively common in Iraq.

"Thirty-five prisoners tried to escape from a prison in Al-Faisaliyah" in central Mosul, Colonel Mohammed al-Juburi, of the Nineveh province police in Mosul, said on Thursday.

Security forces "arrested 21 of them, but 14 others were able to escape from the prison", he said.

All 35 inmates were charged with terrorism-related offences, he said.

Al-Juburi said that an open-ended curfew was imposed in Mosul at 05:00 GMT on Thursday due to the jailbreak.

Colonel Rahim al-Shammari, spokesman for Nineveh police, said later on Thursday that the prisoners who escaped did so via a tunnel under the prison that was about 50 metres long.

Al-Juburi had said earlier that no clashes took place during the escape.

However, Mohammed Salem said that City Hospital, where he works in Mosul, had received two prisoners with bullet wounds to their legs.

Ministry confirmation

A police source said that the wounded prisoners were among the 21 arrested trying to escape.

An interior ministry official confirmed that 35 prisoners had attempted to escape in Mosul, but that 21 of them were apprehended.

The US military helped Iraqi authorities in the search for the escaped prisoners with helicopters and other surveillance aircraft, according to Colonel Brian Winski, commander of 4th Advise and Assist Brigade, 1st Cavalry Division.

The inmates who escaped were Iraqis from low-level cells with links to al-Qaeda's affiliate, Winski told reporters in Washington via video link from Iraq.

"None of them were foreign fighters. None of them were high-level leaders," Winski said.

The prison was a "transit detention facility" and not a site where inmates were held over a long period, he said.

"The search is still on for those few that do remain at large, and I'm quite confident, again, with some assistance from us, that they will find them," he said.

Officials said on August 6 that four prisoners and a guard were killed in clashes at a prison in the central Iraqi city of Hilla, during which eight inmates escaped.

Six Iraqi police and 11 inmates were killed in a Baghdad jail mutiny in May, while 12 suspected al-Qaeda members escaped from prison in the southern city of Basra in mid-January. At least two of the Basra escapees have been recaptured.

How to plan a successful jailbreak

Last week two prisoners made a daring escape from a Greek prison by helicopter - their second airborne jailbreak.

Convicted drug trafficker David McMillan, who spent two years plotting his escape from a Bangkok jail in 1996, told the BBC how much planning this kind of operation takes.

I had been planning [my escape] from the moment four policeman came into a travel agency and arrested me in Chinatown, in Bangkok.

A local resident captured part of the Greek escape on video

As soon as I actually got to the prison about a week later I started looking at bars and walls and electric fences and I began looking for the best place to be. I went to building six simply because it had the thinnest bars in the windows...

There were not a lot of prison guards per prisoner. Probably one prison guard to 120 prisoners. So it was really run by the trustees, who had their own little uniforms with epaulettes and aviators' wings and things like that.

The entire essence of [the escape] was secrecy. No-one in there was capable of keeping a secret I would say...

Planning is everything

The first thing to do was to get what you could call a private cell.

Most of the cells would be the size of a family garage and had 25 people in them, often sleeping like sardines packed into a tin, literally.

FROM THE BBC WORLD SERVICE

More from BBC World Service

And if they had chains on, which everybody did, there would be the rattling of the chains, lights would be left on all night.

I paid for a light switch which was another little luxury.

It sounds like I was doing a lot of paying, I mean I had an office, a cook and a cleaner and that kind of thing, but it's not an awful lot of money - for £500 a month (\$708) a person could live well.

But we have to bear in mind that most of the people in there were abandoned people. People who'd lost hope in a lot of their lives and had very few friends left. Most people got excited at the prospect [of escape], of course, but quite soon realised, 'hang on a minute, what am I doing here?' They remembered very quickly the five inmates who'd tried and failed.

They'd got as far as the outside wall. They were all put in the punishment cell, which was really a tin box the size of a small coat locker, and dragged out every day in elephant chains and slowly beaten to death.

Four of those five died.

I knew that here were 12,000 people absolutely lost in this world, and sentenced to a life of pretty much misery, and I thought, if nothing else I have to do it

I started at midnight with hacksaw blades that had been sent over in a care parcel, carefully hidden, so I took those out and began working on the bars. In fact only one bar was cut, and only partially at that. So my Swedish friend, he was built like a Viking, he had to stretch the thing out, as I squeezed through, oiled up, wearing nothing but my underwear and a pair of trainers.

Final stretch

I just got outside, and then I used a plank to get out and across the yard. It was a bookcase, in fact everything in the room had been built to assist the escape. Furniture turned into step ladders and shower curtains disassembled into long bits of rope.

I had six walls to go over. I assembled a ladder by breaking into a factory, and taking down some long bamboo pole and then I began the arduous haul over a number of these walls.

It was most eerie, I knew where all the guards were, they generally slept at night, but they could wander around, and in fact one did.

I had to hide in the shadows while that was going on. I had a few tricks to deal with that.

I was so exhausted by about 0330-0400 in the morning, that I didn't really feel anything, except wanting to keep going.

And I think that it was only that final thought as I looked around me, I knew that here were 12,000 people absolutely lost in this world, and sentenced to a life of pretty much misery, and I thought, if nothing else I have to do it.

I went across the road and looked back for a few minutes at this huge prison from an angle I'd only seen from that prison van

As I got to the very top wall where the electric fence was, and dawn was creeping

up, that soft orange glow was coming through. That meant that I was late. But I was tangibly outside.

[It was] a feeling I guess I haven't had since I was a child when you wake up and you know that there's something good in the world.

And then I more or less slid down the piece of rope I had. Burning my hands, I lost a bit of skin, but I was on the ground, I was outside.

And I went across the road and looked back for a few minutes at this huge prison from an angle I'd only seen from that prison van where a couple of hundred people had been squashed inside wearing the chains and prison uniform, and took a taxi.

David McMillan, author of *Escape: The True Story of the Only Westerner Ever to Break Out of Thailand's Bangkok Hilton*, was interviewed for the BBC World Service by Audrey Carville. A wanted man in Thailand and Australia, he lives legally in the UK.

How to Escape From Prison



How possible do you think it is to escape from prison? Most people would think it is the sort of thing that only happens in movies.. it actually happens more often than you'd think!

From escaping by helicopter, tunnelling out, mailing themselves out or simply walking out the front gate, I'm going to go through the most amazing and unbelievable prison escapes that actually happened!

I have always been fascinated with prison books and movies and escapes in particular. This will be a compelling and interesting read and I guarantee you will learn something that will amaze you!

Please Note:

This is not actually a guide to escaping prison..

This is 1: A history lesson on famous and fascinating prison escapes.

2: A bit of a parody of how one would escape from prison and a comical and unrealistic approach to the idea.

The Maze Prison Escape

1983, Northern Ireland



HM Prison Maze was a maximum security prison considered escape-proof compared to most prisons in Europe. It held prisoners who were convicted of taking part in armed campaigns during the troubles in Northern Ireland. On the 25th of September 1983, the biggest prison escape in British history took place. In total 38 Irish Republican Army members escaped. These were dangerous men who had been convicted of murder and terrorism. 20 prison guards were injured including two who were shot by smuggled guns and one officer died after having a heart attack brought on by the brazen escape.

The Escape!

At 2.30pm on the 25th of September, 38 prisoners in block H7 simultaneously held their guards hostage by overpowering them. They had 6 handguns which had been smuggled in and successfully took control of the entire block without any warning being sounded. Several inmates changed into the officer's uniforms and inmates armed themselves with chisels and craft knives. One officer was shot in the head but miraculously survived the incident and others were beaten and non fatally stabbed.

At 3.25 a lorry delivering food stopped at H7 to unload. The unlucky driver was apprehended by prisoners and forced back into his lorry. His foot was tied to the clutch and he was held at gunpoint by one prisoner hiding in the footwell. Leaving one man behind to hold the hostages, the 37 prisoners piled into the back of the lorry which was then driven to the front gate.

At the gatehouse roughly 10 prisoners jumped out of the back of the lorry and

apprehended the gatehouse officers. They took them hostage and began working to get the gate open.

It was at this point that things started to go wrong as the officers began fighting back and one even managed to sound an alarm.

With officers closing in from around the prison, the inmates finally got the gates open and drove out but their drive to freedom was cut short when officers used their cars to block the road.

The prisoners scattered by foot from the lorry and made it to the outer fence where they climbed over it to freedom. Four prisoners hijacked a car which they then crashed. Abandoning the car, two escaped and two were caught by officers.

After the escape

35 prisoners in total had successfully escaped from a high security prison by using brute force in broad daylight. Due to their involvement in the IRA, they had the infrastructure in place to make good their escape but due to a miscalculation in timing, their arranged transport failed to arrive.

Over the next few days many escapees were recaptured including 15 on the first day. 4 of which were found hiding underwater using reeds to breathe. 4 more were captured over the next few days.

As of 2013, all prisoners have been either recaptured or accounted for with the exception of two who have disappeared entirely.

Helicopter Prison Escapes



It may seem utterly ridiculous but hiring a helicopter is one of the most popular methods of escaping from prison.

You'd think that such a brazen attempt would fail for sure. There is no subtlety in

landing a huge helicopter in the middle of exercise time and climbing aboard but it is proven to work surprisingly well. Due to the capability of helicopters to fly vertically and in tight spaces, they make the perfect pick-up vehicle. Then as they fly away at high speed, they can travel in any direction and to any hideout imaginable. It is such a ridiculous idea that seems to work more times than it fails.

In fact, in the greek prison Korydallos, escapee Vassilis Paleokostas used the trick not only once but twice! And from the same prison! Pascal Payet used the trick on three separate occasions from three different prisons.

France is the country with the most helicopter prison escapes at 11 and includes one of the most famous. In 1986, the wife of a bank robber studied for months to obtain her helicopter licence. She then rented a helicopter and plucked her husband from a fortress style prison in Paris.

The method is getting so popular that many prisons are now installing wire cables or nets above outdoor areas.

It just goes to show that sometimes a prison escape doesn't have to be discreet, you just have to have a good friend with a helicopter!

Did you know?

Since 1971 there have been at least 40 documented prison escapes by helicopter, 30 of which were successful!

Alcatraz Prison Escapes



One of the fabricated fake heads



One of the tunnels

One of the most famous prison escapes in history took place in Alcatraz, one of the most secure prisons in the world. Most people

would've heard of Alcatraz and even seen movies surrounding the famous escapes from the tiny island prison off the Californian coast.

At least 36 inmates attempted to escape from Alcatraz using 14 different strategies. There is much controversy over how many people have actually made good on their escape from "the rock". The general view is that of all the escapees, none have survived the swim to shore. The fact that no bodies were found after several escape attempts creates the mystery and intrigue behind the Alcatraz escapes. It is completely possible that nobody escaped and lived, it is also possible that escapees could've made it to shore and successfully remained free men. We may never know for sure.

June 1962 Alcatraz Escape

By far the most infamous Alcatraz escape was by Frank Morris, Allen West and the Anglin Brothers, John and Clarence.

In 1961, the group began planning their escape from Alcatraz. Using stolen spoons, they began digging tunnels behind the air vents in their rooms. The vents led to an unused service corridor which ran behind the cells. Leading up to the night of their escape, they spent the time to build and decorate dummy heads made from toilet paper, soap and real hair. These heads were placed in their beds to fool prison officers making night inspections. On the night of June 11, they escaped from their cells by crawling through the holes they had made. Allen West failed to make it out of his cell but Morris and the Anglin brothers met up in the service corridor.

From there, they climbed up a ventilation shaft and reached the roof.

After climbing down from the rooftop, the trio evaded the guards and then scaled the prison's fence. Once down by the water, they were basically out of sight of the prison guards and began work assembling a raft from the standard issue raincoats and contact cement. Their raft would've been small and unstable and the waters there are cold, choppy and shark infested. To this day it is unknown whether Morris and the Anglin brothers ever made it to shore or not. I suppose we'll never know!

Auschwitz Escape

Rudolf Vrba and Alfréd Wetzler



In April 1944, Rudolf Vrba and Alfréd Wetzler were prisoners in the worst concentration camp of World War 2. It was documented later that both men had discovered that they had discovered the real purpose behind Auschwitz and therefore had more reason to escape while they had the strength. The two men hatched a very simple plan to escape and on the 7th of April 1944, they put it into motion. Using the help of other prisoners, they simply hid in a large pile of wood. To stay hidden they sprinkled the area with tobacco soaked in gasoline which would hide their scent from the guard dogs. Their absence was reported that night and the guards quickly began their hunt.

The two men knew that the guards would search non stop for 3 days after their absence was reported. Instead of leaving the prison, they remained hidden in the logs for the full 3 days. It was an ingenious move as no guards were searching for them inside the grounds of Auschwitz. On the fourth night, the two men crawled from their hiding spot timed their escape through the fence. Their destination was the Slovakian border, 80 miles away. They wore Dutch suits which they had taken from the camp and used a child's atlas to navigate their way to safety.

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xNG5HHI_3tw&feature=player_embedded

http://www.youtube.com/watch?feature=player_embedded&v=KCsqIloWYnY

Taliban Help Nearly 500 Escape From Afghan Prison



An Afghan policeman peers into the opening of a tunnel at the Sarposa prison in Kandahar city. More than 480 inmates used the 1,000-foot tunnel to escape in a prison break that began late Sunday and early Monday.

Allauddin Khan/AP

During the long Afghan winter, Taliban insurgents were apparently busy underground.

The militants say they spent more than five months digging a tunnel more than 1,000 feet long to the main prison in southern Afghanistan, bypassing government checkpoints, watchtowers and concrete barriers topped with razor wire.

The diggers finally poked through a concrete floor at Sarposa prison in Kandahar city Sunday and spent 4 1/2 hours ferrying away nearly 500 inmates without a shot being fired, according to the Taliban and Afghan officials. Most of the prisoners were Taliban militants.

A Taliban spokesman, contacted by phone, bragged that the jailbreak was an unqualified success, emptying out the section that holds political prisoners. While the Taliban often exaggerate their claims, this time their propaganda wing announced the breakout before Afghan government authorities even seemed to be aware the prisoners were gone.

The spokesman, Zaibullah Mujahid, said the Taliban had suicide bombers standing by to divert the guards' attention, but the tactic proved unnecessary. He said the prisoners — including more than 100 Taliban commanders — began moving out through the tunnel at 11 p.m. local time and finished at about 3 in the morning.

The tunnel passed underneath the main Kandahar-Kabul highway to a house at the other end.

NATO officials declined to comment about how many of the escapees are considered Taliban leaders, but Afghan officials are concerned that many seasoned fighters may now return to the war. Since last summer's American troop surge into Southern Afghanistan, hundreds of Taliban fighters and commanders have been killed or captured. Most of them are turned over to Afghan authorities and kept in prisons such as the one in Kandahar.

The highest-profile Taliban inmates would most likely not be held at the 1,200-inmate Sarposa prison. The U.S. keeps detainees it considers a threat at a facility outside Bagram Air Base in eastern Afghanistan. Other key Taliban prisoners are held by the Afghan government in a high-security wing of the main prison in Kabul.

Pentagon spokesman Col. Dave Lapan told The Associated Press that the military command in Afghanistan had "not been asked by the Afghans to provide any assistance" such as intelligence help in looking for the escaped inmates.

Afghan authorities said they are investigating who might be to blame for security lapses at Sarposa, and local authorities said they had recaptured more than a dozen prisoners.

Wahid Omar, spokesman for Afghan President Hamid Karzai, admitted the jailbreak was a disaster.

"This is a blow," Omar said. "A prison break of this magnitude of course points to vulnerability and we need to accept this, what made this incident of this magnitude to happen. We'll come back with more details as to what exactly happened and what we're doing to correct it."

But the Afghan government has tried to fix the problems at Kandahar's prison before, notably after a June 2008 jailbreak. Then it was a Taliban truck bomb that breached the walls, and allowed about 1,000 prisoners to run free. Both the Canadian and U.S. military assisted in refitting the prison with new guard towers, prison cell doors and gates to prevent any future car bomb from getting close to the prison walls.

Accounts of the latest prison break, carried out in the dead of night, suggest collusion with prison guards, officials or both.

There are guard towers at each corner of the prison compound, which is illuminated at night and protected by a ring of concrete barriers topped with razor wire. The entrance can be reached only by passing through multiple checkpoints and gates.

Government officials corroborated parts of the Taliban account of the escape. They confirmed the tunnel was dug from a house within shooting distance of the prison

and that the inmates had somehow gotten out of their locked cells and disappeared into the night. Kandahar remains relatively warm even during winter and the ground would not have frozen while insurgents were digging the tunnel.

Police showed reporters the roughly hewn hole that was punched through the concrete floor of the prison cell. The opening was about 3 feet in diameter, and the tunnel dropped straight down for about 5 feet and then turned in the direction of the house where it originated.

But access was denied to the tunnel itself, and it was unclear how the Taliban were able to move so many men out of the prison so quickly. Also unclear was why guards would not have heard the diggers punch through the concrete floor, and whether they supervise the inside of the perimeters at night.

A man who claimed he helped organize those inside the prison told the AP by phone that he and his accomplices obtained copies of the keys for the cells ahead of time from "friends." He did not say who those friends were.

"There were four or five of us who knew that our friends were digging a tunnel from the outside," said Mohammad Abdullah, who said he had been in Sarposa prison for two years after being captured in nearby Zhari district with a stockpile of weapons. "Some of our friends helped us by providing copies of the keys. When the time came at night, we managed to open the doors for friends who were in other rooms."

Abdullah said the diggers broke through Sunday morning and that the inmates in the cell covered the hole with a prayer rug until the middle of the night, when they started quietly opening the doors of cells and ushering prisoners in small groups into the tunnel.

He said they woke the inmates up four or five at a time to sneak them out quietly. They also didn't want too many people crawling through the narrow and damp tunnel at one time because of worries that they would run out of oxygen, Abdullah said.

The AP reached Abdullah on a phone number supplied by a Taliban spokesman. His account could not immediately be verified.

The Taliban statement said it took 4 1/2 hours for all the prisoners to clear the tunnel, with the final inmates emerging into the house at 3:30 a.m. They then used a number of vehicles to shuttle the escaped convicts to secure locations.

Reporters were not allowed into that building, but officials pointed out the mud-walled compound with a brown gate and shops on either side.

Asked if the incident would prompt a rethinking or delay in the planned June turnover of the Parwan detention operation in the east to Afghans, Lapan said: "I

think it's still too soon to tell. I have not gotten any indications of that, but it's too soon to tell."

The Kandahar escape is the latest in a series of high-profile Taliban operations that show the insurgency is fighting back. Over the past year, tens of thousands of U.S. and NATO reinforcements routed the Taliban from many of their southern strongholds, captured leading figures and destroyed weapons caches.

The militants have responded with major attacks across the nation as the spring fighting season has kicked off. In the past two weeks, Taliban agents have launched attacks from inside the Defense Ministry, a Kandahar city police station and a shared Afghan-U.S. military base in the east. In neighboring Helmand province on Saturday, a gunman assassinated the former top civilian chief of Marjah district. That's where U.S. Marines started the renewed push into the south early last year.

Afghan militants attack Kandahar prison and free inmates



The destroyed entrance gate of the Kandahar prison that was attacked by Taliban militants. Photograph: Allauddiin Khan/AP

Up to 1,000 prisoners, including 400 Taliban militants, were on the run in Kandahar last night after a dramatic Taliban assault on the southern Afghan city's main prison.

The militants blew the prison gates open with a massive truck bomb and flooded inside, attacking the guards and freeing the inmates. A jubilant Taliban spokesman said the group had deployed 30 motorcycle mounted attackers and two suicide bombers.

Ahmed Wali Karzai, brother of the president Hamid Karzai and head of Kandahar's provincial council, said that "all" the prisoners had escaped.

Authorities in Kandahar declared a state of emergency as police and soldiers swarmed across the city in an attempt to round up the fugitives.

The Taliban said the attack on the prison, the biggest in southern Afghanistan, had been in preparation for two months. "Today we succeeded," Qari Yousaf Ahmadi told the Associated Press, adding that the escapees were "are safe in town and they are going to their homes".

The first explosions were heard at 9.30pm local time when insurgents rammed a tanker truck filled with explosives into the front gate of Sarposa prison, killing several guards, said director Abdul Qadir. "All of the guards at the gate have been killed and they are under the rubble," he told Reuters a few hours later. Gunfire could be heard in the background as he spoke.

Moments later the militants launched a multi-pronged assault on the facility. Qadir said a suicide bomber blasted a hole in the rear wall. There were also reports of rocket-propelled grenades hitting the perimeter from several directions.

Several Taliban fighters entered the prison, sparking gunfights with guards. Several militants were reportedly killed.

Accounts differed about exactly how many prisoners escaped under cover of darkness but all agreed that the jailbreak was substantial.

Reuters quoted unnamed local officials who said nearly all of the 1,150 prisoners fled, including 400 Taliban fighters. The prison director could not say how many guards had been killed or injured.

Local traders reported seeing prisoners fleeing into nearby pomegranate orchards. Ahmed Wali Karzai said the orchards offered good cover. The escapees included many "important" Taliban including several intended suicide bombers who were captured before they could detonate their vests, he said.

Hours later, several rockets slammed into a base used by foreign troops elsewhere in Kandahar, triggering the sound of sirens from inside the base.

No further details were immediately available. Officials with Nato's International Security Assistance Force said they were aware of the attack but couldn't immediately provide any details.

Last month about 50 prisoners went on hunger strike at Sarposa, sewing their mouths shut in protest. Conditions are extremely poor in Afghan jails with prisoners often held for months or years without their case being heard in court.

The hunger strikers ended the weeklong protest after a parliamentary delegation promised their cases would be reviewed.

The US military has captured hundreds of people since its forces helped to topple the Taliban regime in late 2001.

It handed some Taliban prisoners to the Afghan authorities last year as part of a programme to transfer detainees into Afghan custody.

Kandahar city was the headquarters of the Taliban's five-year rule in Afghanistan from 1996 to 2001. After being initially written off as a spent force by Nato and Afghan commanders, the militants have staged a resurgence in recent years.

The renewed insurgency is concentrated in the south and east of the country. Kandahar, where mostly Canadian troops are stationed, and Helmand, where more than 7,000 British soldiers are deployed, have borne the brunt of the recent fighting.

The militants have been strengthened partly by the failures of western military tactics and reconstruction in Afghanistan, and partly thanks to their rear bases in neighbouring Pakistan.

Tensions along the border area are increasingly. This week the Pakistani military accused the US of bombing one of its border positions, killing 11 Pakistani soldiers.

The jailbreak will further dent international confidence in the Karzai government, which suffers rampant corruption, much of it related to the drug trade.

On Thursday in Paris international donors pledged another \$20bn for Afghan reconstruction over the next five years.

How Sobhraj tried another jailbreak with a ballpen

Incredible escape plot by Greece's most notorious criminal ends in failure after he falls 10ft from a helicopter in a hail of bullets

By Paul Milligan

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Greek prison guards have foiled an audacious escape attempt via helicopter by the country's most notorious prisoner.

This is the fourth time convicted murderer and racketeer Panagiotis Vlastos, 43, has tried to escape from his life sentence.

Authorities said the chartered helicopter, carrying two armed passengers, a pilot and a technician, first tried to rip off the chicken-wire fence surrounding Trikala prison with a hook dangling from a rope. When that failed a rope was lowered down to pull Vlastos away.

Scroll down for video



Police investigators at the scene of the audacious escape plan at Trikala prison in Greece

At the same time, the armed passengers used AK-47 assault rifles to fire on the prison guards.

Guards returned fire, injuring Vlastos, who had managed to climb into the helicopter, as well as the helicopter's technician.

Vlastos fell from 10 feet into the courtyard, and the helicopter was eventually grounded in the parking lot.



The main subject of the helicopter escape plan was convicted murderer and racketeer Panagiotis Vlastos

Prison officials told TV stations Mega and NET they recovered more than 500 bullets fired from the helicopter.

The Ministry of Justice, in statements describing the escape attempt, added that the helicopter passengers also carried, but did not use, 'improvised explosive devices.'

Vlastos is currently being treated in the prison hospital for leg wounds.

The helicopter was hired from an Athens suburb and was supposed to fly to Thessaloniki, in northern Greece. But it deviated from its flight path to head to the prison.

It is unknown if the helicopter and its pilot were flying against their will or were willing participants in the escape plan.

This is the third time a helicopter has been used in an attempted prison escape in Greece.

Convicted criminals Vassilis Paleokostas and Alket Rizaj were whisked by helicopter from the high-security Korydallos prison in Athens in June 2006.

They were caught, but escaped for a second time, again using a helicopter, in February 2009. Paleokostas is still at large.



The helicopter at the centre of the bold escape plan can clearly be seen flying above Trikala prison



More than 500 bullets were fired from the helicopter towards prison guards

Vlastos was first arrested in 1994 in the murder of two members of a rival criminal gang. He was convicted last year as the behind-the-bars mastermind of the kidnapping of shipping tycoon Pericles Panagopoulos.

Panagopoulos was kidnapped in January 2009 and released after eight days, when a ransom of €30 million was paid.

While awaiting trial for the kidnapping, Vlastos tried to escape in December 2011 from Korydallos prison along with three members of armed anarchist group Conspiracy Nuclei of Fire.

The four used a pistol and knives to take three prison guards and 25 visiting relatives of other prisoners hostage, before eventually surrendering to authorities after a five-hour standoff.

Cell Phones in Prisons

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- Cell Phones Are a Widespread Problem
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- Shutting Down Cell Phones
- Federal Government Rules
- Countering the Problem

Introduction

A widespread technology that allows people to connect with anyone, anywhere, has created concerns for corrections officials. The use of inexpensive, disposable cell phones has changed the age-old cat-and-mouse game of controlling whom inmates communicate with in the outside world and is creating serious problems for public safety officials.

In the 1990s, cellular phones were larger and heavier and had audio capabilities only. Today they are lightweight, can be thinner than a match- book, and can send both audio and data, including written messages and streaming video. Although these advances are welcome in society in general, they have had a negative impact on the law enforcement community, as criminals have taken advantage of cellular technology to conduct illegal activities.

Cell Phones Are a Widespread Problem

The issue of cellular phone use by criminals, especially prison and jail inmates, gained national attention when a death row inmate used a cell phone to threaten a Texas senator. In Nevada, prison officials fired a dental assistant for helping an inmate get a cell phone to plan a successful escape. In New York, an inmate used a

cell phone to orchestrate an attempted escape while on a medical transfer. In Tennessee, prison officials banned jars of peanut butter after learning that an inmate accused in the shooting death of a guard had used a jar to hide the cell phone he used to coordinate his escape. Prisoners have also used cell phones to harass and threaten their victims. In Texas, courts have convicted more than a dozen corrections officers in recent years for accepting bribes in exchange for cell phones or phone parts.

Cell Phones as Contraband

The number of contraband cell phones being confiscated is also noteworthy. For example, in California, correctional officers seized 1,331 cell phones in the first six months of 2008. Corrections officials in other states have also reported finding hundreds of cell phones.

Corrections officials have spent millions of dollars to outfit prisons and jails with metal detectors, but the detectors do little to stem the flow of cell phones from the outside. Some cell phone parts are made of plastic and go undetected.

Shutting Down Cell Phones

Blocking cell phone service involves using technologies to stop the transmission or reception of other radio signals. In some cases, blocking signals can be tuned to leave specific frequencies open, which would allow for communication among corrections personnel, or they can block almost all signals. The power of the blocking signal determines how large an area is affected. The area could be as small as a cell block or large enough to cover an entire prison. Blocking systems can cost as little as \$1,000, but more powerful systems can cost tens of thousands of dollars.

Another technology allows for spoofing cell phone signals. Spoofing involves intercepting selected cell phone transmissions and preventing them from reaching the intended recipient. Spoofing uses sophisticated software and is possible without the active participation of the cell phone network providers. A drawback to selective blocking and spoofing is the potential for inmates to use approved cell phones that belong to staff members.

A report by the National Telecommunications and Information Administration — developed in collaboration with NIJ the Federal Communications Commission and Federal Bureau of Prisons — discusses the characteristics and capabilities of the various technologies and the potential interference effects that they may have on authorized radio services, including commercial wireless, public safety communications and 9-1-1 calls. [1]

Technologies discussed in the report include:

Combating Contraband Cell Phone Use in Prisons: Summary of Technological Approaches

Approach	Strengths	Weaknesses	Cost	Effectiveness	Privacy	Other
Jamming	Prevents all outgoing calls; simple to implement; low cost.	Does not prevent incoming calls; may be illegal in some jurisdictions; requires regular updates.	Low	High	Low	None
Managed Access Systems	Prevents incoming and outgoing calls; prevents use of cell phone apps; prevents use of cell phone cameras; prevents use of cell phone microphones.	Requires regular updates; may be illegal in some jurisdictions; requires regular updates.	Medium	High	Medium	None
Detection	Identifies cell phone use; identifies cell phone use; identifies cell phone use.	Requires regular updates; may be illegal in some jurisdictions; requires regular updates.	High	Medium	High	None
Standardized Protocols	Prevents use of cell phone apps; prevents use of cell phone cameras; prevents use of cell phone microphones.	Requires regular updates; may be illegal in some jurisdictions; requires regular updates.	Medium	High	Medium	None
Hybrid Systems	Prevents incoming and outgoing calls; prevents use of cell phone apps; prevents use of cell phone cameras; prevents use of cell phone microphones.	Requires regular updates; may be illegal in some jurisdictions; requires regular updates.	High	High	High	None
Non-Linear Junction Detectors (NLJDs)	Identifies cell phone use; identifies cell phone use; identifies cell phone use.	Requires regular updates; may be illegal in some jurisdictions; requires regular updates.	High	Medium	High	None

[opens in pop-up window]

Summary of Technological Approaches to Combating Contraband Cell Phone Use in Prisons

View the full [table](#). [opens in pop-up window]

- A **jamming device** transmits on the same radio frequencies as the cell phone, disrupts the communication link between the phone and the cell phone base station, and essentially renders the hand-held device unusable until such time as the jamming stops. Learn more about jamming (pdf, 58 pages).
- **Managed access systems** intercept calls in order to prevent inmates from accessing carrier networks. The cell signal is not blocked by a jamming signal, but rather, is captured (or re-routed) and prevented from reaching other network base stations, thereby preventing the completion of the call. Learn more about managed access systems (pdf, 58 pages).
- **Detection** is the process of locating, tracking, and identifying various sources of radio transmissions — in this case, cell phone signals from prisons. Learn more about detection technologies (pdf, 58 pages).
- **Standardized protocols** rely on "sets of instructions" communicating with the hand-held device by essentially locking the device and making it unusable. Learn more about standardized protocols (pdf, 58 pages).
- **Hybrid systems** use a combination of both managed access and detection techniques to locate and control contraband cell phone use. Learn more about hybrid systems.
- **Non-Linear Junction Detectors (NLJDs)** are hand-held devices that require staff to physically search a prisoner's cell for the contraband phone. Learn more about non-linear junction detectors (pdf, 58 pages).

Federal Government Rules

The Communications Act of 1934 and the Telecommunications Act of 1996 prohibit the operation of cell-phone-jamming equipment by any person, including state and local officials. Specifically, Section 333 of the Communications Act prohibits willful or malicious interference with any licensed or authorized radio communications equipment or with radio equipment operated by the United States government. In

addition, the Act prohibits the manufacture, importation, marketing, sale or operation of devices deliberately designed to jam or disrupt wireless communications.

Legislation in Congress titled the Safe Prisons Communications Act of 2009 would let prisons and jails use cell-phone-jamming technology.

Countering the Problem

As they await legislative relief from the problem, corrections officials are using various technologies that detect and find cell phones. Both high-technology and low-technology approaches are being tested and used. Several agencies have installed sensors that detect and find cell phones when in use. One such device tested in a Pennsylvania prison signaled cell phone location to within four cells on two tiers. Some sensors can even detect cell phones that are turned off, but they only work when in close proximity to a phone, cost between \$15,000 and \$20,000, and require trained staff. Others use new detectors that can identify nonmetallic objects to conduct searches. For smaller facilities, the use of specially formulated paints and coatings that block radio frequency signals may help.

Some correctional institutions use specially trained dogs to sniff out hidden cell phones. These efforts have not been rigorously evaluated. Dog training can cost tens of thousands of dollars. Dogs must be close to the phone, and anecdotal evidence suggests that the phone must be left in the same place for a considerable time to be found.

Most of these solutions are expensive and labor intensive. Each would benefit from a thorough evaluation.

Man caught using fake penis to pass drug test

A prosthetic, known as a Whizzinator, was spotted by his probation officer, he was charged with possessing a forging instrument

Associated Press

ST. CHARLES, Mo. — A St. Louis-area man is facing criminal charges alleging that he used a prosthetic penis to try to pass a drug test.

Authorities say 34-year-old Sydney Levin was submitting a urine sample last week as part of his probation when an officer allegedly spotted him using a prosthetic, known as a Whizzinator. The device has been advertised as way to pass drug tests by using someone else's urine.

KMOV-TV reported that Levin, of Lake St. Louis, was charged last week with possessing a forging instrument. He was arrested and released after posting \$25,000 bond, and pleaded not guilty on Monday.

Levin was on probation for possession of a controlled substance and felony stealing in 2009. Authorities say Levin's probation required that he submit a urine sample as part of drug test.



PRISON SECURITY GOES HIGH-TECH

With more than **2.3 million inmates** in state, federal, and local prisons across the nation and some prisons housing more inmates than their official capacities, prison facilities are turning to sophisticated technology to keep control.

Many modern prisons are built with a Panopticon design, a concept from the late 1700s that allows prison staff to observe inmates without the incarcerated being able to tell they are being watched. The design concept still is being used today, says Denny Powers, Criminal Justice program director at **South University – Columbia**. The layout usually includes a central control room or tower that provides corrections personnel a 360-degree view of inmates.

“This coupled with video surveillance makes prisons safer and requires fewer correctional personnel for surveillance,” Powers says.

Many of the cameras used to monitor inmates are more sophisticated than those used by gas stations and shopping malls. Newer prison cameras are bullet resistant and able to withstand the force of a sledgehammer, and this sturdier design prevents inmates from disabling cameras during a fight or escape.

However, today’s prison administrators are taking the monitoring of inmates beyond camera surveillance. A **recent article** in *Popular Mechanics* explains how some prisons are using radio-frequency identification tracking (RFID), a monitoring process where an inmate wears an electronic bracelet that tracks his or her movement throughout a facility.

Keeping some inmates safe require they be locked up, segregated, and isolated.

If an inmate wearing a RFID bracelet enters a prohibited area, an alarm will sound. RFID tracking also can make it easier to count prisoners, and prison staff can react quicker when inmates try to escape. An **article published** in 2009 by a branch of the U.S. Department of Justice describes other uses for RFID in prisons.

“A few correctional institutions have used the systems to provide information on prisoners' movements and to alert staff if there is an unusual concentration of people in a certain area,” states the article in the *National Institute of Justice Journal*. “Movement information can be stored in computers and could prove useful in investigations to determine who was present in a certain part of a building at a particular time.”

Other, more advanced tracking mechanisms exist, such as biometric entry points that scan an inmate’s iris or fingerprints. However, cost is a major hurdle with

biometric technology, especially considering the large number of inmates that would have to be monitored at overcrowded facilities.

In some cases, technology is isolating more dangerous prisoners as a method of protecting prison staff and other inmates. **Some prisons** conduct inmate visits using electronic audio/video technology, such as closed-circuit televisions. Teleconferencing and videoconferencing are used to allow inmates to appear in court remotely. In addition, advancements in packaged food technology enable many prisoners to remain in their cells during meal times.

Technology is also changing health care in prisons. Some prison medical facilities are now equipped with cameras and remote medical tools, allowing inmates to receive virtual checkups from doctors. The University of Texas Medical Branch (UTMB), in a partnership with Texas Tech University, has a **sophisticated telemedicine program** where doctors can use cameras to remotely look down an inmate's throat or listen to a prisoner's heartbeat over headphones.

"The most widely recognized cost-saving benefit of the use of telemedicine comes from reducing the need for travel which, in the correctional arena, has broad implications," states a **position paper** from the National Commission on Correctional Health Care. "The need to transport an inmate outside the confines of a correctional facility can be a significant barrier to providing medical care."

Critics argue that relying on technology to limit face-to-face contact dehumanizes inmates and inflicts psychological damage through constant isolation.

"Psychiatric research embodied in study after study as well as correctional standards recognize that depriving individuals of human contact creates conditions of extreme isolation that go on to either exacerbate existing mental illness or create mental illness in folks who were previously healthy individuals," says Amy Fettig, staff counsel with the ACLU's National Prison Project.

However, Powers says this isolation is necessary in order to keep other prisoners safe from more dangerous inmates.

"Keeping some inmates safe require they be locked up, segregated, and isolated," Powers says. "Hiring more corrections officers with higher standards costs more money, and taxpayers are reluctant to spend money on convicted criminals."

But what happens when technology falls into the hands of inmates?

Corrections officers across the country have seen an increase in the number of cell phones being smuggled into prisons, and the devices let inmates contact people outside of prison. Some of these calls have enabled inmates to commit illegal acts, such as contacting other criminals outside of prison to organize crimes, harassing lawmakers, and even threatening and mocking the families of their victims.

In many prisons, cell phones have become a more valuable contraband than drugs. According to a **recent article** in *Time* magazine, during a sting operation in Texas, an undercover officer was offered \$200 by a prisoner for a cell phone and only \$50 for heroin.

"Smuggling in cell phones speaks to the poor procedures of the individual prison," says Powers. "Unfortunately, members of the prison workforce are often corrupt and assist inmates by smuggling in drugs and other contraband."

Time reports that a California prison staff member admitted to making more than \$100,000 by selling cell phones to inmates.

While the cell phone problem can be addressed by cracking down on corrupt prison staff, technology is also being used to reduce the number of phones being smuggled into facilities. Full body scanners can locate contraband on prisoners more efficiently than body searches performed by prison staff.

In addition, new technologies allow prisons to jam or block cell phone signals. The Senate has passed the **Safe Prisons Communications Act**, a measure that allows prisons to jam cell phone signals. However, the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) forbids the practice, and cell phone companies are fighting signal blocking.

What will prisons of the future look like? Powers says advancing technology will lead to inmates being monitored with more elaborate audio and video devices. Powers also believes inmates of the future will get even less human-to-human interaction. He predicts that the overcrowding problem will change the way prisoners are punished.

"I see more segregation and isolation for violent offenders and fewer non-violent offenders going to prison," says Powers. "The general public will determine whether we put more in prison or put them in community service types of punishment."

Jacques Mesrine (French pronunciation: [mɛʁin] or [mɛʁsɛin]; 28 December 1936 – 2 November 1979) was one of the most infamous criminals in modern French

history. He was responsible for numerous murders, bank robberies, burglaries, and kidnappings in France and Canada. Mesrine repeatedly escaped from prison and made international headlines during a final period as a fugitive when his exploits included trying to kidnap a judge who had sentenced him. An aptitude for disguise earned him the moniker "The Man of a thousand Faces" and enabled him to remain at large while receiving massive publicity as a wanted man. Mesrine was widely seen as an anti-establishment 'Robin Hood' figure. In keeping with his charismatic image, he was rarely without a glamorous female companion. A pair of films which came out in 2008 were based on Mesrine's life.

Early life and criminal career, through 1965

Jacques René Mesrine was born in Clichy-la-Garenne near Paris on 28 December 1936 to a couple of blue collar origin who had moved up in social class. As a child he witnessed a massacre of villagers by German soldiers. His parents had great aspirations for their son and sent him to the prestigious Catholic Collège de Juilly where his friends included the likes of musician and composer Jean-Jacques Debout. Mesrine was an extremely unruly pupil, and he was expelled from Collège de Juilly for attacking the principal. He went on to be expelled from other schools and fell into the lifestyle of a juvenile delinquent, much to the dismay of his family. In 1955 at age 19 he married Lydia De Souza in Clichy; the couple divorced a year later. Drafted into the French Army, he volunteered for special duty in the Algerian War as a parachutist/commando. While participating in ruthless counter-insurgency operations, Mesrine's duties are said to have included the killing of prisoners. Although he disliked military discipline, Mesrine enjoyed action and was decorated with the Cross of Military Valour by General Charles de Gaulle before leaving the army in 1959. His father was later to claim that the time in Algeria had brought about a noticeable deterioration in Mesrine's behavior.^{[1][2][3]}

In 1961 Mesrine became involved with the Organisation de l'armée secrète. He married Maria De La Soledad; they had three children but later separated in 1965. In 1962 Mesrine was sentenced to 18 months in prison for robbery (his first prison sentence although he had been a professional criminal for a number of years). After being released Mesrine made an effort to reform: he worked at an architectural design company where he constructed models, showing considerable ability. However a downsizing in 1964 resulted in him being made redundant. His family bought him the tenancy of a country restaurant, a role in which he was quite successful, but this arrangement ended after the owner paid a visit one evening to find Mesrine carousing with acquaintances from his past. The lure of easy money and women proved impossible for him to resist and he returned to crime. Overcoming some suspicion about his relatively middle-class background, Mesrine began to establish a reputation in the underworld as a man who was crossed at one's peril.^{[3][4]}

In December 1965, Mesrine was arrested in the villa of the military governor in Palma de Mallorca. He was sentenced to six months in jail and later claimed that Spanish authorities believed he was working for French intelligence.^[3]

Canary Islands, Canada, Venezuela, 1966–1972

In 1966, Mesrine opened a restaurant in the Canary Islands. In December of the same year he robbed a jewellery store in Geneva and a hotel in Chamonix. The following year, Mesrine robbed a fashion store in Paris. In February 1968, he fled to Québec with his then mistress Jeanne Schneider and worked as a cook and chauffeur for grocery and textile millionaire Georges Deslauriers for a few months before an argument Schneider had with Deslauriers' long-time respected gardener led to them being dismissed. They then attempted to kidnap Deslauriers, but it went wrong due to the fact that the 'knock out drops' they used were inert, and on June 26, 1969, Mesrine and Schneider fled to the US. On June 30 Evelyne Le Bouthillier, an elderly lady who may have given them refuge, was found strangled. A couple of weeks later, on July 16, Mesrine and Schneider were arrested in Arkansas on information supplied by an accomplice and extradited back to Québec.^[5]

Mesrine was sentenced to ten years in prison for the bungled kidnapping but escaped a few weeks later, only to be reaprehended the next day. Mesrine and Schneider were acquitted of the murder of Le Bouthillier in 1971. With Jean-Paul Mercier, Mesrine cut through the wire to escape again on August 21, 1972 with five others from the Saint-Vincent-de-Paul prison. Mercier, a wanted murderer, and Mesrine then robbed a series of banks in Montreal, sometimes two in the same day. It was at this time that it became apparent that Mesrine did not have a normal criminal orientation towards minimizing the danger of being caught. Deeply resenting the way he had been treated in the prison, Mesrine and Mercier made an extremely risky attempt to precipitate a mass break out from the maximum security block of Saint-Vincent-de-Paul on September 3, 1972. However, their own break-out had caused perimeter security to be greatly increased and they found the area swarming with armed guards. There was a shoot-out in which two guards were seriously injured and Mercier was wounded before they managed to get away. The effrontery of escaped convicts returning to attack a prison infuriated Canadian law enforcement; the escapade predictably led to a hugely increased effort to apprehend the duo.^[4]

[edit] Murder of Médéric Cote and Ernest Saint-Pierre

A week after their foiled attempt to free the prisoners, Mesrine and Mercier went for a target practice session, taking Mercier's girlfriend along. But the location, though three miles down a dirt track through the forest, was far from being truly remote and the noise of them blasting away at targets all afternoon could be heard in Plessisville where there was a Ministry of Natural Resources and Wildlife station. When Mesrine and company drove back along the track, two forest rangers, Médéric Cote, aged 62, and Ernest Saint-Pierre, aged 50, were waiting. The rangers were armed but their jobs had mainly involved enforcing hunting and firearms

regulations, and in any case there was no reason for them to expect that the men who had been making themselves conspicuous by such a disturbance would actually be wanted escapees. Realizing they were not policemen, Mesrine submitted to a search of the car, but on finding loaded guns in the rear, the rangers informed them that they would have to follow their car back to Plessisville. While Mesrine was trying to talk them out of this, Cote, possibly alerted by the sight of the arsenal of weapons, suddenly recognised the pair, whereupon Mesrine and Mercier shot both officers dead.^[4]

Mesrine continued robbing banks in Montreal, and even covertly gained access into the US again for a brief stay at the Waldorf Astoria Hotel in New York City, before moving to Caracas, Venezuela.^[3]

[edit] Return to France: 1972-1977

By the end of 1972 Mesrine had returned to France where he resumed robbing banks. On March 5, 1973, during an argument with a cashier in a coffee bar, Mesrine brandished a revolver and seriously injured a police officer who tried to intervene. He was arrested 3 days later. In May, he was sentenced to 20 years imprisonment – which, considering his record, was lenient for the time and place – to be served at *La Santé* maximum security prison where escape was thought to be impossible. In a plan likely formulated even before his arrest, Mesrine took a judge sentencing him on another matter hostage with a revolver (recovered from the courthouse lavatory where it had been hidden by an accomplice) and escaped. After being at large for four months, he was arrested in his new Paris apartment on September 28, 1973, on information supplied by an associate who wanted a reduced sentence. Mesrine was returned to *La Santé* where he covertly wrote and smuggled out an autobiography, titled *L'Instinct de Mort* ("Killer Instinct"),^{[6][7]} in which he claimed to have committed upwards of forty murders, (thought by some to be a considerable exaggeration). The publication of Mesrine's book resulted in France passing a "Son of Sam law", a law designed to keep criminals from profiting off the publicity of their crimes.

[edit] Escape from La Santé

La Santé was seen as escape proof. In his escapes from his Canadian prisons, Mesrine had required little more than wire cutters and a very high degree of audacity, now he faced security far better than any he had defeated before. A report noted that Mesrine had been seen doing exercises in his cell and was behaving like a man who had received good news. On May 8, 1978, he produced a gun, stole keys, and, with François Besse (a highly accomplished escaper in his own right), and another man, Mesrine got out of a cellblock and into a fenced-off yard walkway. They had a grappling iron with them and Mesrine forced some workmen with an extending ladder to bring the ladder along. The trio unlocked a yard gate in an inner wall; an armed guard was taken by surprise at his post. The men then reached an isolated part of the 14 metre (46 ft) high exterior wall (which would have presented a considerable challenge without the ladder). They hooked the grappling iron onto the top of the ladder and slid down the rope. The third man

over the wall was shot dead by police in the street outside. Mesrine and Besse hijacked a car and evaded the police cordon; they had become the first men to escape from La Santé.

[edit] Mesrine as fugitive

Mesrine and Besse robbed a Paris gunsmith four days after their escape from La Santé. On May 26, 1978, the duo robbed the Deauville Casino of 130,000 francs, but the police arrived as they exited. Around 50 shots were exchanged and Mesrine was wounded, but the duo made a getaway. Mesrine and Besse eluded the subsequent massive sweep of the area by taking a farmer and his family hostage and forcing him to drive them to safety. Subsequently, the kidnapping of a banker netted them 450,000 francs in ransom. Despite his position as "French Public Enemy Number One" (*L'Ennemi Public Numéro Un*), Mesrine was featured on the cover of the 4th August 1978 Paris Match. In an interview inside he threatened the Minister of Justice. By remaining at large in the Paris area, despite his notoriety, Mesrine appeared to be making a fool of the law and the state; the *Paris Match* interview was the last straw. The police agencies hunting Mesrine were pressured for results from the highest echelons of government.

This proved to be difficult, not least because of rivalry between the various agencies. The usual informants were of little use as Mesrine generally avoided contact with the criminal underworld. Moreover, he was adept at disguising his appearance and allaying suspicion from members of the public: he reportedly went for a drink with his neighbours and laughed when one said he "looked like Mesrine".^[8] Mesrine travelled to Sicily, Algeria, London, and Brussels, and back to Paris in November 1978, where he again robbed a bank. Objecting to Mesrine's proposed kidnapping of a senior judge, and not sharing his desire for revenge against the system, François Besse disassociated himself from Mesrine and later disappeared. Besse was finally captured in 1994; he was paroled in 2006.^{[8][9]}

[edit] Public Enemy No. 1

Mesrine's next exploit occurred in November 1978. It was a daring attempt to kidnap a judge (who had sentenced him) as part of a campaign to get maximum security prisons closed. His accomplice was captured but Mesrine escaped by running downstairs past several policemen telling them "Quick! Mesrine's up there!" A young policeman posted outside was found handcuffed to a drainpipe weeping. On June 21, 1979, Mesrine kidnapped millionaire real estate mogul Henri Lelièvre and received a ransom of six million francs.^[8]

Mesrine made good copy for the press, clowning for the camera and asserting that his criminal activity was politically motivated.

Jacques Tillier (a former Directorate of Territorial Security policeman) had written disparagingly about Mesrine in the French newspaper *Minute* but on September 10, 1979 he went, rather incautiously, to a clandestine meeting with Mesrine on the

promise of an interview. The incensed Mesrine had other plans: he shot Tillier in the face, leg and arm. However, during his contact with Mesrine, Tillier had discovered the identity of Mesrine's accomplice.^[8]

[edit] Death

The special gendarme unit tasked with finding and capturing Mesrine found it impossible to track him down directly. Eventually, by utilizing information supplied by Tillier, they ascertained the licence number of the car that a female named Sylvia Jeanjacquot, believed to be Mesrine's mistress, had used and checked parking tickets which it had received months previously. These tickets indicated that she had been frequenting a certain district without any obvious cause. Undercover patrols combed the area and a man fitting Mesrine's description was spotted walking with a woman believed to be Jeanjacquot on October 31, 1979. One officer who had seen Mesrine at court confirmed the identification by noting Mesrine's distinctive build. The couple were followed home and their building watched around the clock.^{[4][8]}

Three days later, on November 2, 1979, the couple left the apartment for a weekend in the country, taking Jeanjacquot's pet poodle with them. Mesrine and Jeanjacquot had reached Porte de Clignancourt on the outskirts of Paris when the gold BMW they were driving was boxed in at the entrance to an intersection and police marksmen in the rear of a lorry immediately in front of their car threw open a tarpaulin. Reportedly, in the instant before the gendarmerie opened fire Mesrine's eyes were described as being so shocked they seemed to be bursting from his head as he realized he was trapped. Twenty rounds were fired at point blank range; Mesrine was hit 15 times. A coup de grâce was then administered with a pistol. Sylvia Jeanjacquot lost one eye and suffered lasting damage to her arm. Her pet dog was killed.^[3]

[edit] Aftermath

French police announced that their operation was a success and received congratulations from then President Valéry Giscard d'Estaing. There were suggestions in some media publications that Mesrine may have been shot without warning in a way which amounted to extrajudicial killing, but the police pointed out that he had sworn that he would never surrender and that, as well as having a gun on him, Mesrine had been armed with two grenades which were taped together and adapted so they could be brought into action instantly.

Sylvia Jeanjacquot was not charged with any crime. Mesrine's former defense attorney, Maître Malinbaum, continued for 30 years to fight for a judicial investigation into the events surrounding Mesrine's death at Porte de Clignancourt and to have the French state held accountable for what she saw as the assassination of her client.^[2]

[edit] Murder of Gérard Lebovici

By law Mesrine could not profit from *L'instinct de Mort* but the publishers had received a threatening letter from him in 1979 demanding payment nonetheless. *L'instinct de Mort* was republished in 1984 by Champ Libre Editions,^[10] The founder of Champ Libre, Gérard Lebovici, was a gifted entrepreneur, influential in the French film industry, and known for his fascination with criminals. Lebovici adopted Mesrine's daughter after her father's death.

On March 5, 1984, the body of Gérard Lebovici was found in the Avenue Foch underground car park. He had been shot dead, with the bullet wounds forming a square: a traditional underworld sign for a contract that has not been fulfilled. One theory is that Lebovici may have been killed by a close associate of Mesrine's who Lebovici may have had an appointment with on the day of his death.^[11]

San Quentin Six

The **San Quentin Six** were a group of six inmates at San Quentin State Prison in California (Hugo Pinell, Willie Tate, Johnny Larry Spain, David Johnson, Fleeta Drumgo and Luis Talamantez) who were accused of participating in an August 21, 1971 escape attempt that left six people dead, including George Jackson, founder of the Black Guerrilla Family prison gang. Costing California taxpayers more than \$2 million, their 16-month trial was the longest in the state's history at the time and was dubbed "The Longest Trial" by *Time* magazine.^{[1][2]} Of the six defendants, one was convicted of murder, two were convicted of assault on prison guards, and three were acquitted of all charges.

During the escape which sparked a riot on the cellblock, Jackson had a 9 mm automatic pistol, allegedly smuggled into the prison by attorney Stephen Bingham (immediately after the incident, Bingham went on the run and fled the country for 13 years; he returned in 1984 to stand trial, and was acquitted of all charges in 1986). During the riot, caused by Jackson and two dozen other prisoners, three corrections officers and two inmates were tortured and killed.

In addition to Jackson, those killed in the altercation were guards Paul E. Krasenes, 52, Frank DeLeon, 44, and Jere P. Graham, 39, as well as inmates John Lynn, 29, and Ronald L. Kane, 28.^[3] Spain was found guilty in the shooting deaths of guards DeLeon and Graham, Pinell was convicted of cutting the throats of guards Charles Breckenridge and Urbano Rubiaco, Jr, and Johnson was convicted of assaulting Breckenridge.^[3] There were no convictions for the killings of Krasenes, Lynn, or Kane.^[3] Cleared of all charges, Drumgo, Talamantaz, and Tate were found not guilty on various counts of murder, conspiracy, and assault.^{[3][4]}

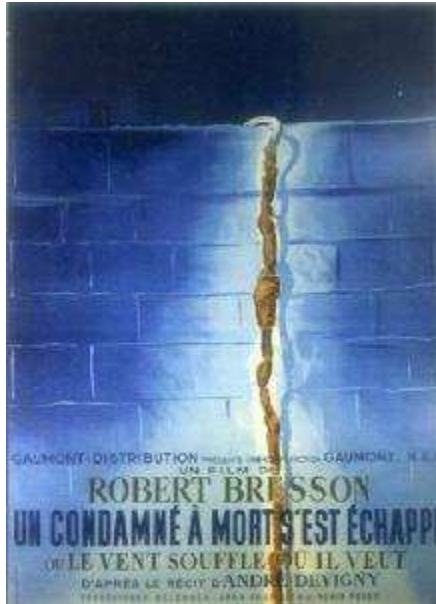
August 21, 1971

Prison officials stated that attorney Stephen Bingham and a female assistant arrived at San Quentin for a meeting with George Jackson at around 2:00 pm.^{[5][6]} The female handed a briefcase to Bingham after she was not permitted to enter the visiting room.^[5]

According to an Associated Press report based on interviews with prison officials, a cursory search of Bingham's briefcase was performed and a guard failed to open a tape recorder case that was in it.^[6] This report stated that the briefcase was returned to Bingham after he walked through a metal detector.^[6] An article in the *San Francisco Chronicle* based on the reports of officials provided a slightly different version by stating that Bingham had triggered the metal detector while carrying the briefcase through it.^[5] That report indicated that an officer opened the briefcase and found a cassette tape recorder, then inspected its battery compartment to determine if it was functional.^[5] Prison officials believed that the working components of the recorder had been removed to allow room for an automatic handgun with its grip handles removed.^[5] Initial reports described the weapon as a 9 mm pistol made by the Spanish manufacturer Llama firearms.^[6]

Jackson was strip searched in San Quentin's Adjustment Center then escorted to the visiting room.^{[5][6]} He sat across from Bingham at a wooden table that had no barriers between the two, and was intermittently observed watched by guards.^[6] Officials speculated that during this time Bingham passed the gun to Jackson who concealed it in his hair under a watch cap.^[5] The meeting lasted about 15 minutes.^[6] Around 2:35 pm, Jackson was escorted back to the Adjustment Center by officer Frank DeLeon where another office performed a second search prior to returning Jackson to his cell.^[5] When that officer asked Jackson about what appeared to be a pencil in his hair, Jackson pulled the gun from his, pointed it at the officers, then engaged an ammunition clip in it.^[5] He reportedly shouted, "This is it!",^{[5][6]} and ordered all of the officers to lay face down on the floor.^[6] Jackson then ordered an officer to get up and activate a switch that opened all 34 cells on the first floor.^[6] According to the *Chronicle*, officer Charles Breckenridge's throat was slashed and was dragged to Jackson's cell.^[5] On top of him were thrown the bodies of officers DeLeon and Paul Krasenes, as well as those of two white inmates.^[5] Sergeant Jere Graham was killed by inmates when he came to the Adjustment Center to pick up DeLeon for another assignment.^[5] An alarm was eventually sounded and Jackson and Johnny Spain ran from the Adjustment Center.^[5] Initial reports indicated that at approximately 2:55 pm, Jackson was struck once in the foot and one in the top of the head as he attempted to flee.^[5]

A Man Escaped



A Man Escaped or: The Wind Bloweth Where It Listeth (French: *Un condamné à mort s'est échappé ou Le vent souffle où il veut*) is a 1956 French film directed by Robert Bresson. It is based on the memoirs of André Devigny, a prisoner of war held at Fort Montluc during World War II. The protagonist of the film is called Fontaine. The second part of the title comes from the Bible, John 3:8, and in English it is worded this way only in the Authorized King James Version (more recent translations using words like "wants" (which is the title in French) or "pleases" instead of "listeth"). Bresson, like Devigny and the character Fontaine, was imprisoned by Nazis as a member of the French Resistance.

The soundtrack uses *Kyrie* from Mozart's *Great Mass in C minor*, K. 427.^[1] The film was entered into the 1957 Cannes Film Festival.^[2]

Plot summary

After the establishing shot of Montluc prison, but before the opening credits, the camera rests on a plaque commemorating the 7,000 men who died there at the hands of the Nazis.





Fontaine in handcuffs after a failed attempt to escape.

On the way to jail, Fontaine (François Leterrier), a member of the French Resistance, seizes an opportunity to escape his Nazi captors when the car carrying him is forced to stop, but he is soon apprehended, beaten for his attempt, handcuffed and taken to the jail. At first he is incarcerated in a cell on the first floor of the prison, and he is able to talk to three French men who are exercising in the courtyard. The men obtain a safety pin for Fontaine, which gives him the ability to unlock his handcuffs. This turns out to be pointless because, in reassigning him to a cell on the top floor, the guards remove his handcuffs anyway.

Once in cell 107 on the top floor, Fontaine begins inspecting the door and figures out that the boards are joined together with low quality wood. Using an iron spoon he deliberately neglects to return after a meal, he begins to chip away at the wood. After weeks of work, he is able to remove three boards from the door, roam the hallway, get back in his cell and restore the appearance of the door.

Fontaine is not the only prisoner trying to escape. Orsini (Jacques Ertaud) makes an attempt, but fails to get very far because of the lack of hooks on his rope. Orsini is tossed back in his cell and beaten up by the guards, and is to be executed within a few days. Fontaine is not deterred from his plan; he makes hooks from the light-fitting in his cell. He then fashions himself ropes from old blankets and fastens the hooks to the rope with wires taken from his bed. The other prisoners grow somewhat skeptical of his escape plans, saying he is taking too long.

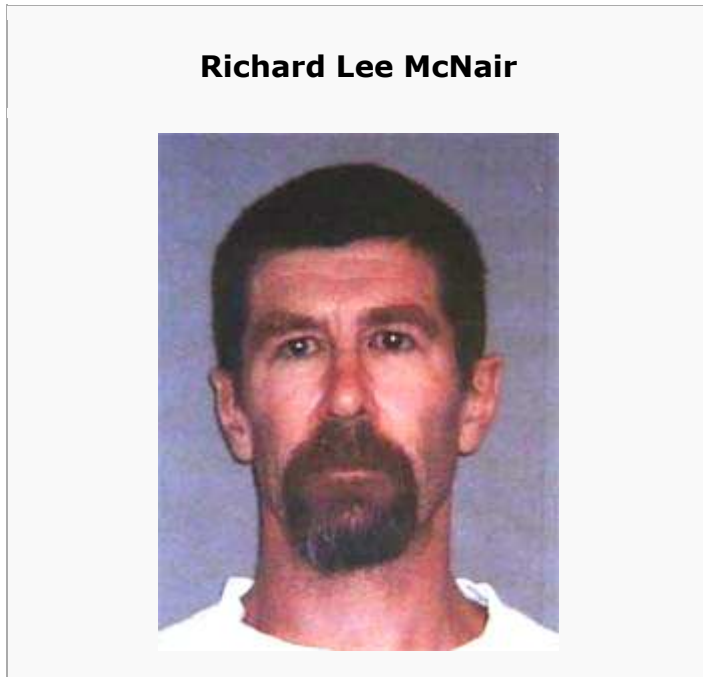
After being taken to headquarters to be informed that he is sentenced to execution, Fontaine is taken back to jail and put back in the same cell. Soon he gets a cellmate, François Jost (Charles Le Clainche), a sixteen-year-old young man who had joined the German army. Fontaine is not sure whether he can trust Jost (whom he sees speaking on friendly terms with a Nazi guard) and realizes he'll either have to kill him or take him with him in the escape. In the end, after Jost admits he too wants to escape, he chooses to trust the boy and tells him the plan. One night, they escape by gaining access to the roof of the building, roping down to the courtyard, killing the Nazi guard there, climbing the wall and then roping to an adjacent building. They walk away from the prison undetected, and the film ends.

Jail break

Less than two months after being sentenced, on 22 January 2003 Ted Maher and his cellmate, an Italian awaiting trial in Monaco on charges stemming from a robbery, sawed through the bars on their cell, and then, using a rope made of black garbage bags, climbed out and escaped overnight. Maher made it 15 miles to Nice, where he holed up in a hotel and made telephone contact with people in the US, including his wife, his lawyer and his priest; they gave him up to the police, who apprehended him seven hours later.^{[8][13]}

Parallels were drawn between Maher's escape and the one carried out by Billy Hayes, a previous client of Griffith, who had also made a daring escape while being held in an overseas prison in 1975. In Hayes's case, he was facing life in prison for possession of hashish, and, risking getting shot on sight, he escaped from a Turkish prison and made his way to Greece and freedom.^[12]

Richard Lee McNair



Richard Lee McNair (born December 19, 1958) is a convicted murderer known for his ability to escape and elude capture. In 1987, McNair murdered one man, and shot a second man four times, during a botched robbery, and is currently serving two terms of life imprisonment for that crime.

After McNair's arrest, he escaped three times from three different institutions using various creative methods. On his first attempt he used lip balm to squeeze out of a pair of handcuffs. He escaped a second time by crawling through a ventilation duct. In his last escape from a federal prison in April 2006, he mailed himself out of prison in a crate.^[1] This resulted in his being featured a dozen times on the TV show *America's Most Wanted*, and made him one of the top fifteen fugitives wanted by US Marshals. McNair traveled to Canada twice in order to evade capture, traveling across the country for over a year before being apprehended in a random police check. Much of what the public knows about McNair's escape and his time as a fugitive is through McNair's prison correspondence with a Canadian journalist, Byron Christopher.^[1]

Overview

On November 1987, while attempting a burglary in Minot, North Dakota, McNair was surprised by two men and murdered one of them.^[1] McNair's murder of Jerry Thies occurred at a grain elevator operated by the Farmers Union Elevator Co. while McNair was a sergeant posted at the nearby Minot Air Force Base. A second man was shot four times, but survived. When the police called McNair in for questioning, McNair surrendered a concealed handgun.^[2] He was later sentenced to two life sentences for murder and attempted murder, and a thirty-year prison sentence for burglary.^[1]

McNair's first escape attempt occurred at the Minot municipal police station in 1988, shortly after he had been arrested. McNair's first period as a fugitive lasted only a few hours, after which McNair was quickly recaptured.^[3] After his initial arrest, McNair was handcuffed to a chair and left in a room with three detectives. McNair used lip balm, which he had in his pocket, as a lubricant to squeeze his hands free from the handcuffs. McNair then led police on a footchase through the town, eventually being chased up a three-flight stairway in an effort to evade capture. After becoming surrounded by police on the roof of a three-story building downtown, McNair attempted to jump to a tree branch to escape arrest, but the branch broke. McNair landed on the ground and hurt his back, after which he was easily apprehended. After McNair was released from the hospital, he was moved to the Ward County Jail in Minot. In February 1988, sheriff's deputies discovered another escape attempt when, after moving McNair to another cell, they found two cinder blocks partially chiseled out from the cell in which he was being held.^[2]

In October 1992 McNair escaped with two other prisoners from the North Dakota State Penitentiary in Bismarck, North Dakota by crawling through a ventilation duct. One of the prisoners who escaped with McNair was apprehended within hours, and the other within days. After his escape, McNair grew out his hair and dyed it blonde in an attempt to disguise himself. Much of his time on the lam was spent roaming the United States in stolen cars. McNair remained free for ten months, until he was eventually arrested in Grand Island, Nebraska in 1993. After his second recapture, the North Dakota Department of Corrections deemed McNair a problematic inmate, and requested that he be transferred to the custody of the Federal Bureau of Prisons. McNair remained in federal custody until his final escape, over a decade later.^[2]

[edit] Final escape

[edit] First day

On April 5, 2006, McNair escaped from a United States Penitentiary in Pollock, Louisiana.^[3] McNair's duties in prison included work in a manufacturing area, where he would repair old, torn mailbags. He held this position for several months, throughout which McNair plotted his escape. McNair escaped by hiding himself in a specially-constructed "escape pod" (which included a breathing tube), which was buried under a pile of mailbags. The pallet was shrink-wrapped and forklifted to a nearby warehouse outside of the prison fence. After prison staff delivered McNair's pallet and went for lunch, McNair cut himself out of his "escape pod" and walked

through the unsecured area to freedom. Federal investigators believed that McNair must have received help from other inmates to escape,^[2] but McNair has always maintained that he acted alone.

McNair's pallet was shipped out of the prison around 9:45am, and he was able to exit the pallet around 11:00am. McNair was aware that it would not be until 4:00pm that the prison would find him missing. McNair's plan was to move to the nearby town of Alexandria, Louisiana, where he would then steal supplies and transportation.^[4]

Hours after his escape from Pollock, McNair was stopped while jogging on a railroad track near Ball, Louisiana by police officer Carl Bordelon. The location of where he was stopped is 31.409,-92.417. This incident was captured on a video camera mounted in Bordelon's patrol car. McNair had no identification and proceeded to give Officer Bordelon the alias of Robert Jones. When asked again five minutes later, he gave a different alias, Jimmy Jones. Bordelon did not pick up on this. McNair laughed and joked with the officer, and even as the officer got a matching description of the inmate, McNair appeared collected and calm. He successfully convinced Bordelon that he was jogging and in town to help on a post-Katrina roofing project, allowing him to go back to 'jogging' within 10 minutes.^[5]

Several factors made it easier for McNair to escape arrest: the photo provided to police was very low-quality and six months old, and the prison had told police that they were not completely sure that McNair had escaped. The extreme heat and humidity (114F/45C with 80% humidity), with the officer's black uniform and body armour, may have affected the officer's concentration.^[4] Bordelon himself claimed that he let McNair escape because the physical description of McNair given to police was completely different than how McNair actually appeared. Over the ten minutes that Bordelon questioned McNair, McNair remained cool and provided completely plausible explanations, eventually convincing Bordelon that his alibi was true.^[2]

McNair later wrote that he did not see the cruiser because it was blocked from view by trees, and that he planned to run if he was not able to convince Bordelon of his innocence. McNair later refuted the suggestion that he would have assaulted the police officer if confronted, claiming that he had renounced violence after his initial arrest. McNair described his escape as a "get out of jail free card", and described his feelings after the confrontation with Bordelon as "relief, disbelief, bewilderment." McNair agreed that he did not resemble his prison picture.^[4]

Fugitive in Canada

On April 13, 2006 US Marshals added McNair to their 15 Most Wanted list. They noted that McNair was the first prisoner to escape from a federal prison since 1991.^[2]

Later that April, about two weeks after his escape, McNair successfully crossed into British Columbia from Blaine, Washington.^[4] On April 28, 2006, RCMP in Penticton,

British Columbia confronted McNair while investigating a stolen car that he was driving, which was parked at a local beach. The officers asked McNair to step out of the car to be questioned, which he did, but he ran across a nearby field and outran the officers soon after being confronted. The police impounded the car, but did not realize the identity of McNair until two days later, when one of the officers recognized him from an episode of *America's Most Wanted*. Subsequent investigation found a digital camera full of self-portraits, which police determined were probably for the purpose of producing a fake ID. When authorities examined the car, they found McNair's fingerprints, confirming that he was in Canada.^[2]

After escaping arrest in Penticton, McNair rode a bike to Kelowna. Because it took several days for the police to confirm his identity, it was relatively easy for McNair to escape the area. In May 2006 McNair travelled back to the United States, when he drove a Subaru Outback from Vernon, British Columbia to Blaine, Washington.^[4] McNair then traveled across the United States, and eventually crossed back into Canada from Minnesota. After arriving back in Canada, McNair traveled through southern Ontario, then traveled west, to Vancouver.

Early on, McNair developed a plan to buy land in central BC, around Williston Lake, after seeing ads for the property. He changed his mind after visiting the area and finding that a drought and pine beetle infestation had devastated the area. The fact that there was only one road in and out of the property also made McNair feel uncomfortable.^[4]

In 2007 McNair travelled to eastern Canada. He drove through the Laurentian Highlands in Quebec, where he enjoyed mountain biking. He spent a lot of time around Lac Saint-Jean. McNair nearly attempted to cross back into the United States again at Derby Line, Vermont, but the high security on the American side convinced him that attempting to cross back would be too risky. He eventually travelled through Halifax, Nova Scotia, and Saint John, New Brunswick. McNair spent about two months in Fredericton, New Brunswick, before he was again confronted by police.^[4]

[edit] Attempts to avoid recapture

On April 8, 2006, three days after McNair's escape, *America's Most Wanted* ran its first profile of McNair. The program would go on to detail McNair a total of twelve times on television, and nine times on radio. The last time McNair was featured was November 24, 2007, a month after his recapture.^[2] Over the period of McNair's time in Canada, Canadian viewers made over 50 reports to the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP), confirming that the fugitive had been seen north of the border.

McNair watched *America's Most Wanted* intently, describing the show as a "thorn". McNair confirmed after his capture that, whenever a new episode of *America's Most Wanted* aired, he would buy food and fuel his vehicle, "then if featured would keep it low for a couple of days".^[4]

Throughout his time as a fugitive, McNair tracked his own story on the internet. After his recapture, McNair commented that the ongoing coverage of him was "for the most part true". Louisiana Marshal Glenn Belgard attempted to capture McNair online with the help of a criminal profiler. McNair suspected that the Louisiana police had attempted to contact McNair by posing as a woman online, who said that "she would like to hide [McNair] in her basement." McNair was surprised by the media coverage that focused on him, especially the eleven-page article that appeared in *The New Yorker*, written by Mark Singer, on October 9, 2006.^[1]

McNair owned several laptops while living as a fugitive. After having his laptop seized in Penticton, he began to store most of his information on USB sticks. With the help of a scanner, digital camera, photoshop, and a pet ID website, McNair was able to produce a passable fake Alaska driver's license. He learned how to rig his video camera to his laptop so that he could cut his own hair.^[4] One of McNair's laptops was dedicated solely to monitoring a Louisiana-based website, [/www.wesawthat.blogspot.com/](http://www.wesawthat.blogspot.com/), which closely followed all Media coverage of McNair.

In order to support himself, McNair stole vehicles and cash from car dealerships. Because he had once worked as a car salesman himself, McNair knew where to find cash and keys at such dealerships, and how to avoid security. McNair only stole new vehicles: they had window stickers indicating whether a vehicle was equipped with a GPS-style tracking system (if it did, he wouldn't touch it). McNair avoided driving conspicuous-looking vehicles, preferring white vehicles that "everybody has". He once considered stealing a 3/4 ton truck/camper, "but one of the supposed sightings of [McNair] was in North Dakota (of all places) in a truck with camper", so he eventually settled on a van instead.^[4]

In one incident, while McNair was staying in a motel near Chilliwack, British Columbia, he left to buy something and returned to find the motel surrounded by a police SWAT team. McNair began to flee in his car, but later found on a local AM radio station that the police were responding to a hostage situation at the motel. McNair then returned to the scene and filmed the standoff with a Sony HD video camera which he had recently purchased. The episode lasted for another twenty minutes.^[4]

[edit] Recapture

On October 24, 2007 near Nash Creek, New Brunswick, off-duty RCMP constable Dan Melanson spotted an expensive-looking white cube van with "crappy looking" tinted rear windows and an Ontario licence plate. Suspecting that the van was stolen, and/or being used to smuggle alcohol or cigarettes, Melanson noted the plate number and noted that the van was headed to Campbellton, a nearby town. Melanson did not attempt to apprehend McNair, but his report alerted other RCMP in Campbellton of the presence of McNair's vehicle.^[1] (McNair had in fact tinted the windows himself in a London, Ontario park).^[4]

The next day Constable Stephane Gagnon, a six-week rookie, spotted McNair's van by chance in downtown Campbellton, and pursued it. Following a low-speed car chase and a subsequent foot chase, McNair was successfully arrested by Gagnon with the help of his field coach, Constable Nelson Lavesque. In October 2008 the US-based International Association of Chiefs of Police awarded Melanson the *Looking Beyond the Licence Plate* Grand Prize for his role in apprehending McNair. McNair himself described his capture as simply the product of bad luck: as he put it, it was "just one of those days."^[1] McNair was transferred to the Atlantic Institution, a Canadian federal maximum security penitentiary, while awaiting extradition to the United States.^[6]

Mounties later told the media that McNair was cooperative after his capture, and even joked with them. When one officer asked McNair what the reward was for his capture, McNair replied "\$25,000." "That's not much," said the officer. McNair replied that was because "all of the government money is tied up in Osama Bin Laden's reward." McNair later described the Campbellton RCMP as "good men doing their job."^[4]

Escape tunnel

An **escape tunnel** is a form of secret passage used as part of an escape from siege or captivity. In medieval times such tunnels are usually constructed by the builders of castles or palaces who wish to have an escape route if their domain is under attack. In the case of prisoners, escape tunnels are dug to be free of captivity.

In road and rail tunnels, narrower escape tunnels are provided to enable people to escape on foot in the event of a fire or other accident in the main tunnel. For example, between the two main bores of the Channel Tunnel is an access tunnel large enough to take a fire engine.



Medieval escape tunnels

Throughout the British Isles and much of northern Europe escape tunnels were often part of the intrinsic design of fortified houses and palaces. The tunnel would typically be one half to two kilometers long and open in a location not readily visible to attackers. Examples of these tunnels are at Muchalls Castle (Scotland) and the Bishops Palace at Exeter (England).

Prison escapes

Successful escapes

The following escapes were at least a partial success, with prisoners escaping via tunnels:

Successful Tunnel-Based Prison Escapes

Prison Location	Year	Number of Successful Escapees	Length of Tunnel	Details
Stalag Luft III	1943	3	30m	"The Wooden Horse", Lieutenant Michael Codner, Flight Lieutenant Eric Williams, and Flight Lieutenant Oliver Philpot
Stalag Luft III	1944	76	102m	Led by Roger Bushell during World War II. The story was made into a film: <i>The Great Escape</i> .
Island Farm	1945	70	21 m	[2]
<u>Carandiru prison</u> , São Paulo Brazil.	2001	100 (approx)	<i>unreported</i>	Moises Teixeira da Silva, a convicted robber
Dugaluft, Frankfurt	1941	1	<i>unknown</i>	Peter Butterworth was an English comic actor.
Kirsehir	1988	18	118m	Turkish & Kurdish political prisoners (Bektas Karakaya, Hasan H. Yildirim, Selman Altinoz, Adem Kutuk, Sait Keles)
Vellore Fort, India	1995	43	TODO	<u>Tamil Tiger</u> inmates.
Yemen	2006	23	TODO	Inmates of Political Security Organization, including convicted mastermind of the <u>USS Cole Bombing</u> Jamal al-Badawi.
Burail Jail	1998	3	TODO	Escapees: Jagtar Singh Hawara, Jagtar Singh Tara, Paramjit Singh

Successful Tunnel-Based Prison Escapes

Prison Location	Year	Number of Successful Escapees	Length of Tunnel	Details
				Beora
<u>Sarposa Prison</u> , Kandahar, Afghanistan	2011	476	320m	All but one were Taliban members. [3]

INLA Mass Escape From Long Kesh 1976, Cage 5

There has been no shortage of articles and documentaries chronicling the various escapes from prisons by Republican prisoners, however, there has been little written about the INLA escape from Cage 5 in 1976, which ranks as the very first mass escape from Long Kesh prison camp! The first mass escape from Long Kesh in 1976, occurred on the 5th of May, a date that ironically doubly ties it to Irish Republican penal history, as by grim coincidence Bobby Sands died on Hunger Strike some 5 years later, in 1981. The Irish Republican Socialist POW's who successfully made that first mass escape from the infamous Long Kesh concentration camp were:

1. Seamus O'Kane,
2. Cahir O'Doherty,
3. John-Eddy McNicholl,
4. Harry Flynn,
5. Gerry Clancy,
6. Hen Doherty,
7. Jake McManus,
8. Joe Kelly
9. Gerard Steenson.

The Republican Socialist jail-breakers chose tunnelling as their means of escape and brought new meaning to the term 'Red Moles!' An even more remarkable fact, about the 1976 Republican Socialist mass escape, was that the Irish Republican Socialist Movement had only been formed 2 years earlier, at the IRSP's inaugural convention at the Spa hotel, Lucan. Unlike the Provisionals, who have made a cottage industry and travelling roadshow, based around the second mass escape from Long Kesh in 1983, Republican Socialists have been relatively reticent about their successful jail-breaking methodology. In contrast to others, they have been quietly modest about being the sole authors of the very first spectacular mass escape from Long Kesh.

The Long Kesh prison of 1976 was very different from the prison of the H-Blocks era, which the general public would be more familiar with. Following a Hunger Strike by Billy McKee, by the time of the first mass escape the British Government had given de jure POW status to Republican and Loyalist prisoners and the prison regime was reminiscent of a World War 2 camp for captured combatants, something similar to that seen in the Hollywood movie The Great Escape. The similarities did not end there, as like any other era in Irish Republican penal history, the POWs spent much of their time devising ways to go under, over and indeed through the perimeter fence! Like the POW camps depicted in movies, the Republican prisoners were allowed to, more or less, control their own time, with the command structures of the various organisations being officially and legally recognised by their 'opposites' within the prison guards and indeed by the state itself.

There were in fact 10 "Red Moles" who emerged at the end of the Cage 5 tunnel, but the tenth tunneller, Dessie Grew, injured his leg at the final wall-scaling stage of the escape and had to return via the subterranean passage to his Nissan hut. The Republican Socialist escapees had to morph into Communist Kangaroos to successfully clear all the rolls of barbed-wire, chain-link fences and the formidable perimeter wall, despite it being bathed in the glare of searchlights every few seconds!

Unfortunately, two of the Irp escapees were captured some 10 miles away, later the following day by the British Army and RUC. The remaining seven Republican Socialist prisoners made good their escape, by a variety of ingenious methods. As an interesting postscript to the Great Irp Escape from Long Kesh, several SAS death-squads were dispatched to track down and kill the Republican Socialist escapees. Their deployment had been authorised at cabinet level by the British government of the time and the death-squads were armed with a variety of non-standard issue weapons, including shotguns and Ingram Sub-machine pistols. Their use of 'unconventional' weaponry added weight to the widely held belief, that if the SAS had made good on their heinous manhunt, the escapees would have been murdered in cold blood, MRF-style. One of the SAS death-squads, travelling in an unmarked van, were stopped at a joint Gardai-Free State Army checkpoint, 2 days later on the 7th of May. In contrast to the immediate imprisonment Republicans routinely received at the hands of the Gardai, the 8 man SAS death-squad were quickly flown back to their lairs, following a brief court appearance.

Hopefully, in the not too distant future, the story of the great Long Kesh escape of 1976 will be told in greater detail and to a wider audience. It is a fascinating story and a very important piece of Irish Republican penal history.

- Written by Alex McGuigin

The 1976 Escape From Cage 5

The following first-hand account of the 1976 INLA escape from Long Kesh is reproduced with the kind permission of Willie Gallagher, who was then an 18 year old political prisoner in Cage 5 within the infamous concentration camp.

"The tunnel in Cage 5 resembled nothing like what you would see in the movies and was indeed quite narrow in parts which required literally for us to wriggle through in parts. Looking back now, it was quite dangerous and on a number of occasions we had a number of cave-ins when various degrees of parts of the ceiling of the tunnel collapsed and a number of times diggers had to be pulled out by the feet. The majority of us who dug the tunnel were all fairly young and had no sense of danger. I had just turned 18 at that time and in the interview I done I described that escape as an amazing experience and one of the best experiences I ever had whilst in prison."

"The previous May five Irps from Cage 14 escaped from Town Hall Street when appearing for a remand hearing. There were at least two other near successful attempts from Cage 14 that same year and towards the end of '75 we were moved to Cage 6 and then to Cage 5 by the screws in an attempt to frustrate escapes. I'm sure some of us, who took part in the escape, have different recollections. For example, in the interview I done I said I thought the tunnel took three weeks, four at most, to dig whereas Micky Smith thought it took six weeks. Even though I covered this in the visual/audio interview, I'll give some of my memories on this event which has been practically air-brushed out of Republican history".

"The tunnel in Cage 5 actually began in my pad/cell/cubicle, as it was the second last pad from the end of the hut which was nearest the fence which surrounded our Cage. Each living hut was divided in two with a narrow corridor in the middle of the hut. This was partitioned off into what we called pads, others called them cells or cubicles. They were in effect wooden cells with a curtain covering the entrance of each pad. The hut were Nissan huts made up of sheetings of corrugated paper-thin metal. At the entrance of each hut was a boiler and a small ring like cooker for making toast and cooking. At the other end was a TV and small toilet."

"I can recall Frank Gallagher from Beechmount who was the OC of the Cage convening a meeting of those selected to take part in the escape. Some prisoners were moved out of our hut and others who were selected moved in. Escape plans were nothing unusual for the Irps but this one had a greater sense of excitement as it was the first tunnel plan as this Cage was closer to the perimeter wall than the other Cages we were previously in. Materials such as chisels and the ingredients for making a small concrete block were smuggled in. Light bulbs were stolen from the hospital quarters which was in a different place in the camp. Blow heaters which were in the huts were converted into pumps for putting oxygen down the tunnel though this was used in the latter stages. Cooking utensils and food trays were converted into digging equipment. Much of this was done by Cahir O 'Doherty from the Bone who was one of the eldest prisoners in the Cage. I think he was only 40 then though he looked about 70 to

us at the time. Cahir was a genius in improvising and played a crucial role in the escape."

"We got into action immediately after the next big search with the first part of the operation being the entrance of the tunnel which would be located under my bed. Four floor tiles were removed intact which measured, give or take a few inches, 18 square inches. This area was chiseled out and was, I think, maybe 8 inches deep. During this loud music was played from record players playing LPs which wasn't unusual with look-outs placed strategically throughout the Cage to spot any unusual activity from the screws. The screws were not allowed into the Cage except at night time, 9pm, to do the head counts and lock us in the huts and in the morning to unlock and do head counts. The only other times they were allowed in was during big searches and what they called tunnel searches. Tunnel searches consisted of two screws being accompanied by a member of the Cage staff who would do a bit of tapping on floors with hammers listening for an echo which would indicate a tunnel. I'm not sure how long this took to complete but it wasn't long. If I had have brought you into my pad and said there's a tunnel in here, there's no way you'd pinpoint it. The entrance was visually perfect and was a work of art. Basically you flipped a corner of the tile, pulled it back and there was a handle made of rope like material imbedded into a constructed concrete block and it was just a matter of lifting the whole lot up intact. It literally fitted like a glove."

"We dug about 6 foot down and headed towards the perimeter wall. We divided up into teams and worked almost 24/7 in the digging. We would stop an hour before lock up/head-count at night and an hour before unlock/head-count in the morning. Each team throughout the day and night got breaks for food and sleep with smaller breaks for cups of tea and a smoke. As the tunnel progressed a stick with a white hankie would be poked up through the ceiling of the tunnel to gauge the distance and direction of the tunnel itself. We normally went down the tunnel wearing just football shorts as it was quite warm despite the wetness and flooding at times from rain falls. A number of photographs were taken but I never ever seen any of them and the camera may well have been taken by one of the escapees."

"The ceiling and sides of the tunnel was shored up at various points which we thought were weak with bits of wood and sheets from the wooden pads. It was a patch work job and lengthy parts of the tunnel had no protection at all with nothing shoring up the walls and ceiling. There were a number of cave-ins of various degrees some freaky enough with a few being dragged out by the feet from underneath a pile of soil. The gases from the soil had a sickly impact as well as giving ones headaches and this became more intense as the tunnel progressed so this restricted the time each of us would be digging at the face of the tunnel. Some parts were very narrow which only required one person digging at the face with other parts wider allowing two to dig. We used improvised trowels for digging, the food trays for putting the soil in which would be relayed back up the tunnel by prisoners strategically placed along the length of the tunnel where a team at the entrance would bag the soil and hide the bags

between the corrugated sheets of the hut itself. The amount of soil was unbelievable and eventually every hut was filled with soil between those corrugated sheets. In the last days of the tunnel there was no more room for the soil and we had no other choice but store the bags inside clothes lockers which meant a search would uncover them."

"We were both lucky and unlucky during this period. For example I can recall the floors not being properly dried after a clean up in the morning which would be hugely suspicious. Also I recall a mucky handprint on a mug beside the boiler at the entrance of the hut which would have given the tunnel away if spotted by the screws. We never got the usual bed linen change which I think was every three weeks. Many of the bed sheets were used for bagging the soil and so many could not have been accounted for. We also got at least one tunnel search during that period but again luck was on our side."

"The original plan was to empty the whole Cage of those doing or facing big sentences but our luck had run out. The night before the escape there was a heavy rain fall which caused quite a bit of flooding in the tunnel. The next day however was like a summer day and a few of us were out the back taking a break. Some of the other lads actually took some mattresses out doing some sun-bathing. I can't remember who spotted a small hole appearing in the yard directly above the tunnel which caused great concern. The talk was the tunnel was fucked, it had fallen short of it's objective, was flooded and at the point of collapse from the yard. Some bright spark, whose name I can't recall, had the idea of putting one of the mattresses over the hole and hoping for the best. The hole wasn't too big but was very noticeable and would have definitely been discovered. It was the practice of the screws to walk around the yard just before the night time head-count and lock up. Up until that point we thought we needed at least another week maybe longer to complete the tunnel but the hole in the yard had changed those plans. It had to be that night or else it was fucked."

"The screws that night just walked around the mattress barely looking at it and then the head count was completed and we were locked up for the night. I'm not sure exactly what time the batch of 11 prisoners went at, 11pm perhaps midnight. Bags of clothes were prepared as you couldn't get through the tunnel without getting soaked due to flooding which was quite deep in parts and also money was distributed. Lookouts were strategically placed keeping an eye out for Brits patrolling the perimeter and watching the two Brit watch towers. We were all very conscience of the mass escape attempt from, I think, Cage 4, by PIRA at the end of '74 which resulted in Hugh Cooney being shot dead. The tunnel fell short of reaching the perimeter but I can't recall how far. We watched the first escapee pop his head up and crawl towards the wall. Grappling hooks were made from the tubular framework of the chairs and ropes from sheets. Dessie Grew fell from the wall on the inside of the perimeter badly hurting himself and another prisoner, whose name I can't recall either, brought him back through the tunnel which was caving in in parts."

"We waited up all night watching and listening for any indications of the escape

being rumbled but nothing untoward happened. Next morning the screws had come in for their usual unlock and head-count and no doubt were curious as they pulled each curtain back seeing prisoners fully clothed with big smiles. You could hear the odd snigger and when they got to my pad, which i obviously wasn't in, they would have seen a pile of soil and a hole in the floor. There was a scream of "fuck" and I think a shout of "escape" which was drowned out by the running of feet and all us laughing and cheering."

"Two of the lads were caught the following night, Cahir O'Doherty and Gerard Steenson. I think all of us were shattered for Cahir in particular as he put his heart and soul into escape plus he was the brains behind the improvised tools, lighting and supplying oxygen into the tunnel."

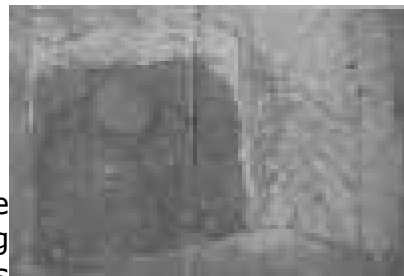
"About half an hour later the Cage was full of screws like a big black blanket of the cunts. They took us out one at a time, each of us refusing to give our names hoping to frustrate them getting the identities of the escapees for as long as possible. Each of us had to walk down to the canteen between a gauntlet of screws who were hissing and the usual remarks of scumbag etc. We were locked in the canteen for I think two days whilst they done a search and sealed the tunnel with all our possessions threw down it and sealed with concrete".

I think the above account is much more detailed than the one I gave in the interview and no doubt other recollections will come to me when seeing/hearing other accounts of that escape."

The Great Escape

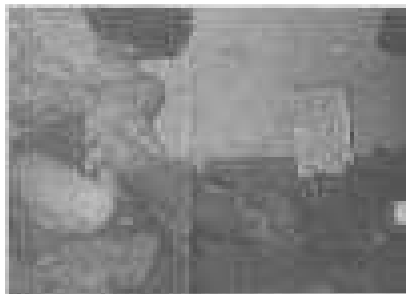


Keeping watch outside cage 5 whilst the digging goes on inside.



The digging begins as

a hole is cut into the floor.

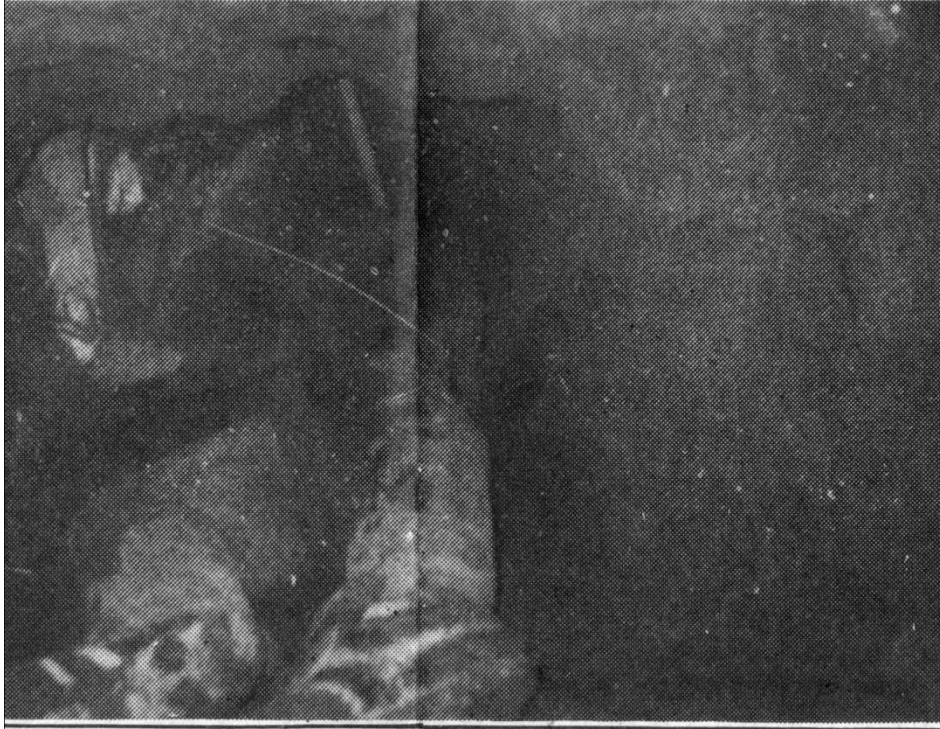


Prisoner helps with the removal of soil from the tunnel.



Freedom beckons. A begins the journey into the tunnel on his way to freedom.







The Great Escape

The Starry Plough May 1976 (Vol: 1 #14)

"ONE OF THE MOST CAREFULLY PLANNED AND CAREFULLY EXECUTED ESCAPES IN PRISON HISTORY " is how one newspaper described the recent escape from Long Kesh by nine IRSP members and supporters. Seven are still free. Meanwhile massive searches and harrasment by British troops is reported from Belfast and South Derry.

The nine men dug their tunnel from one of the four huts in Cage 5, known as "mole hill" because so many tunnels have been dug from there. Despite vigilant warders the escapees dug a 40 foot tunnel measuring only 18" inches in diameter. The entrance of the tunnel was concealed by tile glued to a block of wood.

"YOU'RE SUPPOSED TO BE IN LONG KESH"!

The escapers' first problem occurred when they emerged from the tunnel to find that they were still inside the prison. But they were prepared for such an eventuality. They cut through a perimeter barbed fence and scaled a 20 foot high wall with improvised grappling hooks and ropes made from sheets in full view of British Army observation towers. Then, as one British soldier put it, "they disappeared into thin air!"

The following morning their fellow prisoners refused to leave their huts to delay the discovery of the escape. It was only when CHARLES O'DOHERTY from Old Park, Belfast was caught by the RUC in a field eight miles away and checked out as routine, that the RUC discovered that they were supposed to be in Long Kesh! They immediately contacted Long Kesh Concentration Camp. It was only then

that the escape was discovered.

The following day GERARD STEENSON of West Belfast was recaptured on the M1 Motorway. The Northern Ireland Office then began to issue statements in an attempt to discredit the escape and save face. They claimed that if the escape had been better planned there could have been a mass break out, which is, of course, rubbish. Then they warned the public to be on the lookout for the escapers "some of whom are dangerous". They may be dangerous to British imperialism and its allies in Ireland but they are the friends of the people. They are not criminals but political prisoners. Of the escapers three were serving sentences, three were on remand and three were awaiting trial, all for either political 'offences' or because of frame ups.

In the past there have been other escapes from Long Kesh. November 1974 saw 30 Provos tunnel their way to the perimeter wire, only a few got away. One, HUGH CONEY was murdered by British troops, who could have easily captured him. There is some fear that the same could happen to the IRSP escapers, particularly if they should be discovered by the sectarian UDR which is made up of ex-B Specials. In 1972 FRANCIS MCGUIGAN walked out of Long Kesh dressed as a priest. JOHN FRANCIS GREEN did the exact same in September 1973.

Since Long Kesh was opened in 1971, 48 prisoners have escaped. Since they are political prisoners they usually continue to be active in opposition to British imperialism in Ireland whereas if they were mere criminals they would presumably leave the country altogether. This fact accounts for the recapture of 35 of the 48 escapers. There are over 1200 political prisoners in Long Kesh.

HENRY DOGHERTY, BRENDAN MCMANUS, HAROLD FLYNN, (all from Belfast), GERALD CLANCY (Tyrone), JOHN KELLY, JOHN EDDIE MCNICHOL and SEAMUS O'KANE (all from South Derry) are still at liberty as we go to press. We salute their ingenuity, courage and skill and hope that their freedom will be long and fruitful to the struggle against British imperialism in Ireland.

TWO ESCAPED BEFORE

Two of the men who are still free, 'Hen' DOGHERTY of Dock Row, Belfast and Harry Flynn of Springhill Avenue, Belfast, have escaped before and were only a few months in Long Kesh. Last May, while appearing in the Crown Court in Crumlin Road they stood on each others shoulders to reach the ceiling of their cell. They broke a hole in the skylight with a bench from the cell and went onto the roof. From there they entered the nearby firestation and nonchalantly four of them walked out the front door. Unfortunately, the last man out didn't know it was intended to walk out as the escape was an impromptu affair, and ran full speed up the Crumlin Road. The RUC saw him and shouted "halt", so that the other four scuppered up the road after their comrade with bullets whistling around their ears. They all got away. Dogherty and Flynn were recaptured about three months ago in Belfast."

From: The Starry Plough May 1976 (Vol: 1 #14)

The Great Escape from Supermax

Let me set the record straight. There has been at least one successful escape from our supermax prison. I was there when it happened... Eddie Griffin

Wednesday, May 27, 2009

President Barack Obama was wrong, factually and historically, when he proclaimed nobody has ever escaped from one of our federal supermax. *El Presidente* must have been about 13- or 14-years old at the time of the **Great Escape from Marion Federal Prison**. Nevertheless, he was President and should have had the keys to the closet where the real history is buried and hidden.

Marion was supposed to be as escape-proof as its predecessor Alcatraz. I distinctly remember it happened before the Bicentennial Hunger Strike at Marion on July 4, 1976. The reason I remember so well is because the escape almost disrupted our plans.

At the time, we needed a positive press and a sympathetic public. The government had characterized us as being "the worst of the worst" and this frustrated incarcerated Black Panther members who maintained that they were POW political prisoners.

"MARION is the most written-about prison in the world. One of the battle lines drawn in October, 1983, was for public opinion. The government is winning this battle hands down. The Bureau of Prisons utilizes a highly effective public relations strategy which revolves around the agitprop slogan 'the worst of the worse' to describe Marion prisoners," writes Ray Luc Levasseur.

When the escape jumped off, we cheered, but we also held our breaths, hoping the escapees would not hurt anybody. A murder of John Q. Public would hurt our political image as POWs and undo three years of planning and peacekeeping among

the inmates. But it was hard not to cheer them on. We were all POWs and, as POWs, we reasoned, that every man had a duty and obligation to escape if ever the opportunity presented itself. This was U.S. Military Code of Conduct, and many of us were ex-GIs. But there was also a greater code forged among inmates.

An ingenious inmate invented a magnetic device that could trip all the electronic gates inside the prison. He tried to get a patent for it and even offered it to the government through the Federal Bureau of Prisons. Everyone thought he was crazy.

But then, one night during a Historical Society meeting in the visiting room, where white inmates congregated with outsider patrons, the device was deployed. It was attached to the framework of the grill doors, half of which led to the outside, directly to freedom. The inmate triggered the device and announced, "Anyone who wants to go, let's go."

All of the grill doors were wide open, but only eight men bolted to freedom. They rest were dumbfounded and frozen in their seats.

The guard watching the Control Center monitor reported that when he looked up, all he saw were the feet of the last man out. This set off an area-wide manhood, first in the heavily wooded area of the prison, and later on the highways.

The eight men stuck together, one of the men I knew only as "Frenchy" because he was busted in the French Connection and spoke no English. The eight fugitives came up on a farm house, and found an elderly couple alone.

They took the couple hostage. In an interview afterwards, the couple testified that they were well treated by the escapees. They had cooked for the couple, cleaned the house behind themselves, and washed the dishes before they departed.

This was the code of conduct we had adopted, black, white, and brown inmates alike. We called ourselves Marion Brothers.

All eight fugitives were later captured, one making it as far as Canada. Throughout the manhunt, no one was injured.

<http://fullepisode.info/breakout-escape-from-supermax-season-1-episode-1/>

Supermax Psych: "Behavior Modification" at Marion Federal Prison

January 22, 2011 By James Ridgeway and Jean Casella 4 Comments

Eddie Griffin, a former Civil Rights Movement activist and Black Panther, spent 12 years in federal prison for bank robbery, beginning in the early 1970s. After he was injured doing prison labor at Terre Haute Federal Prison, and refused to return to work under unsafe conditions, he was labelled "incurable" and transferred to the U.S. Penitentiary in Marion, Illinois.

Built to replace Alcatraz in 1963, Marion is widely acknowledged to be the first modern "supermax," and was once the highest security and most notorious prison in the federal system. That distinction today belongs to ADX Florence in Colorado, but Marion is now home to one of the ultra-isolated federal Communications Management Units opened during the Bush Administration.

"Breaking Men's Minds: Behavior Control and Human Experimentation at the Federal Prison in Marion" is a remarkable article authored by Griffin and published in the *Journal of Prisoners on Prisons* in 1993 (vol. 4, no. 2). (H/T to Alan for alerting us to the piece.) In it, he discusses the realities of the "behavior modification program" instituted at Marion in the 1960s. Griffin begins by describing the control of every moment—and every movement—in the lives of prisoners.

In prisoners' words, it is 'part of the program'—part of the systematic process of reinforcing the unconditional fact of a prisoner's existence: that he has no control over the regulation and orientation of his own being. In behavioral psychology, this condition is called 'learned helplessness'—a derivative of Skinnerian operant conditioning (commonly called 'learning techniques'). In essence, a prisoner is taught to be helpless, dependent on his overseer. He is taught to accept without question the overseer's power to control him. This rebels against human consciousness, so some prisoners seek means of resistance. Others try to circumnavigate the omnipotent force via escape.

But the omnipotent is also omnipresent. Nothing escapes Marion's elaborate network of 'eyes'. Between television monitors, prisoner spies, collaborators, and prison officials, every crevice of the prison is overlaid by a constant watch. Front-line officers specially trained in the cold, calculated art of observation, watch prisoners' movements with a particular meticulousness, scrutinizing little details in behavior patterns, then recording them in the Log Book. This aid provides the staff with a means to manipulate certain individuals' behavior. It is feasible to calculate a prisoner's level of sensitivity from the information, so his vulnerability can be tested

with a degree of precision. Some behavior modification experts call these tests 'stress assessment.' Prisoners call it harassment. In some cases, selected prisoners are singled out for one or several of these 'differential treatment' tactics. A prisoner could have his mail turned back or 'accidentally' mutilated. He could become the object of regular searches, or even his visitors could be strip searched. These and more tactics are consistent with those propagated by one Dr. Edgar H. Schein.

Griffin goes on to tell the story of what he calls "the history of this behavior modification laboratory," which its inventors and practitioners did not hesitate to call "brainwashing."

At a Washington, DC conference in 1962 organized for the Federal Bureau of Prisons (BOP) by the National Institutes of Mental Health, Schein presented his ideas on brainwashing. Addressing the topic of 'Man against Man': Brainwashing, he stated:

In order to produce marked changes of behavior and/or attitude, it is necessary to weaken, undermine or remove the supports to the old patterns of behavior and the old attitudes. Because most of these supports are the face to-face confirmation of present behavior and attitudes, which are provided by those with whom close emotional ties exist, it is often necessary to break those emotional ties. This can be done either by removing the individual physically and preventing any communication with those whom he cares about, or by proving to him that those whom he respects aren't worthy of it and, indeed, should be actively mistrusted.

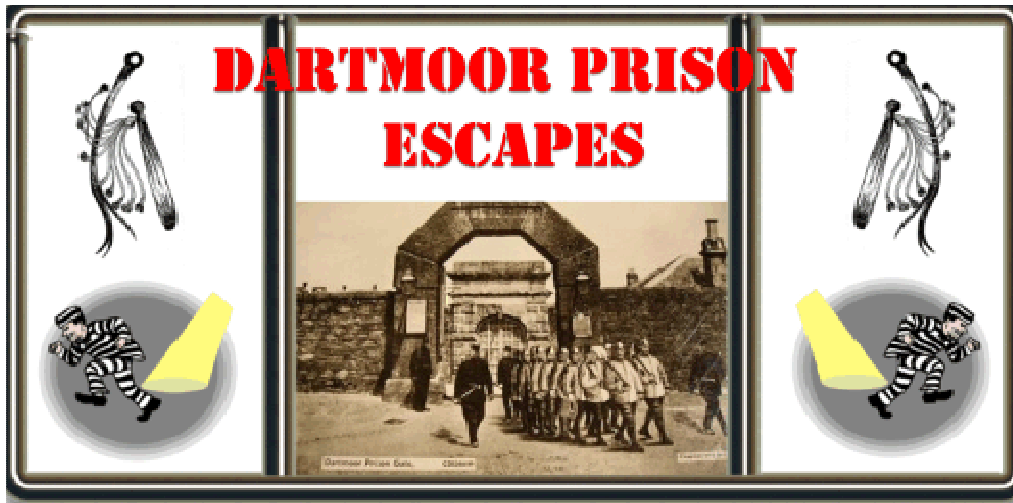
Dr. Schein then provided the group with a list of specific examples:

- Physical removal of prisoners from areas sufficiently isolated to effectively break or seriously weaken close emotional ties.
- Segregation of all natural leaders.
- Use of cooperative prisoners as leaders.
- Prohibition of group activities not in line with brainwashing objectives.
- Spying on prisoners and reporting back private material.
- Tricking men into written statements which are then showed to others.
- Exploitation of opportunists and informers.
- Convincing prisoners that they can trust no one.
- Treating those who are willing to collaborate in far more lenient ways than those who are not.
- Punishing those who show uncooperative attitudes.
- Systematic withholding of mail.
- Preventing contact with anyone non-sympathetic to the method of treatment and regimen of the captive populace.
- Disorganization of all group standards among prisoners.
- Building a group conviction among the prisoners that they have been abandoned by and totally isolated from their social order.
- Undermining of all emotional supports.
- Preventing prisoners from writing home or to friends in the community regarding the conditions of their confinement.

- Making available and permitting access to only those publications and books that contain materials which are neutral to or supportive of the desired new attitudes.
- Placing individuals into new and ambiguous situations for which the standards are kept deliberately unclear and then putting pressure on him to conform to what is desired in order to win favor and a reprieve from the pressure.
- Placing individuals whose willpower has been severely weakened or eroded into a living situation with several others who are more advanced in their thought-reform whose job it is to further undermine the individual's emotional supports.
- Using techniques of character invalidation, ie., humiliations, revilement, shouting, to induce feelings of guilt, fear, and suggestibility; coupled with sleeplessness, an exacting prison regimen and periodic interrogational interviews.
- Meeting all insincere attempts to comply with cellmates' pressures with renewed hostility.
- Renewed pointing out to the prisoner by cell mates of where he has in the past, or is in the present, not been living up to his own standards or values.
- Rewarding of submission and subservency to the attitudes encompassing the brainwashing objective with a lifting of pressure and acceptance as a human being.
- Providing social and emotional supports which reinforce the new attitudes.

...[F]ollowing Schein's address, then-director of the BOP, James V. Bennett, encouraged the administrators and wardens throughout the federal prison system to put Schein's techniques into practice. 'We can manipulate our environment and culture. We can perhaps undertake some of the techniques Dr. Schein discussed...There's a lot of research to do. Do it as individuals. Do it as groups and let us know the results'.

That was in 1962. Since then the results have been compiled and evaluated many times over, and all but one of Schein's suggested techniques have been left intact at Marion—along with the addition of several new features.



Dartmoor Prison has always had the reputation as being a dark foreboding place from which there is no escape. To do so would mean risking life and limb amongst the quaking bogs of the moor. However, recent research on some newspapers of the 1800's has revealed that not everybody was deterred from escape attempts. It is also interesting to note that the majority of gaol breaks occurred in and around Christmastime. The following list is by no means complete and I am sure there are other instances not recorded below. And it is funny how you seldom hear of many prisoners escaping these days, maybe things aren't as bad as they should, sorry typo, used to be?

1851 - 26th November.

"On Wednesday evening two convicts, named Samuel Baker and Edward Griffiths, made their escape from a cell in which they were confined in the prisons at Dartmoor. Intimation was immediately given to the authorities of this town (Plymouth) and on Thursday night, about 10 o' clock, the convicts were apprehended in Jubilee Street, coming into the town, but Police-constables Philips and Axworthy, and after a severe struggle, during which Griffiths cut Philips severely over the left eye with the staff, which he took from the officers pocket, they were taken to the station house. In order to disguise themselves, one had on two coats and two waist coats, and the other had no upper clothing but his shirt. On Griffiths were found two knives, such as painters use for their work. They were taken before Mr G. Coryndon on Friday morning, who stated that the police officers who apprehended them merited much praise for their vigilance and activity, and he

then directed that the two officers should convey them to Dartmoor. These men have escaped once before, and they were in close confinement in a cell, preparatory to being tried at the ensuing assizes for breaking out of prison, stealing clothes, &c."

1851 - 19th December.

"On Friday morning one of the convicts at Dartmoor Prison, named William French, made his escape, of which information soon reached our vigilant superintendent of police, Mr Baker, who on Saturday evening observed a man in Bridge Street, answering the description given of the escaped convict. On searching him Baker found two letters in his pocket addressed to William French, and on his shirt were the letters "D.P." with the broad arrow. The next day the officer took the prisoner back to Dartmoor, but was told by the governor that on Friday last the Secretary of State, Sir George Grey, had visited the establishment, when instructions were left that if the man was captured he was to be taken before a magistrate for recommitment on the charge of breaking prison. On Monday morning he was brought up at the Town-hall before Mr Henry Cartwright, and on the joint evidence of the deputy-governor of the Dartmoor Prison, Mr W. Morris, the warden, Blake, and Superintendent Baker, was committed to trial at the next assizes. The man's defence was that he had not broken prison but that the gate was open, and he passed the armed warder, who asked him where he was going. It appeared that the escaped convict had been assisted by some person unknown with clothes to disguise himself, and it was observed by the magistrate that it could not be too generally known, that a person who aids or assists a prisoner under sentence of transportation in making his escape is liable to the same penalty as the convict himself. The prisoner the same evening was taken by Superintendent Baker to the county gaol at Exeter."

1854 - February 5th.

"Last Sunday two convicts made their escape from Dartmoor prisons. They proceeded across the river Dart, and were making their way towards Ashburton, when seen by a farmer, who suspected they were convicts from their dress. Having procured assistance, he went in search of the fugitives, and succeeded in

apprehending them at a place called Newbridge. They were conveyed back to prison and have since been committed for trial at the Devon March Assizes."

1854 - July 20th.

I was delighted to find this report as it ties in beautifully with the story on the 'Convict Curate' and actually puts a name and date to the tale.

"One man was charged with three offences. He was a convict in Dartmoor Prison, and the first charge was breaking the gaol; the next for burglary in the dwelling house of the medical officer of the gaol; and the third was stealing on the same night a horse on which he was riding away when he was stopped by the owner. He had stolen from the house a saddle and bridle, and a great coat. John Smith pleaded "guilty" to three indictments - one charging him with breaking out of Dartmoor Prison; another with burglary; and a third with stealing a horse - all on the same night." The sentence of the court was, that he should be transported for a period of twenty years, to commence from the expiration of his previous sentence (making 35 years). The prisoner, who is a very fine man, 24 years of age, laughed heartily while the learned judge was recounting his different offences."

1854 - September 1st.

"On Friday last a convict named James Taylor, whose escape from Dartmoor Prison in company with another convict was apprehended by one of the police at Plymouth. It appears that, after making his escape Taylor broke into an outhouse and stole an overcoat and staff belonging to one of the officers of the prison; with these he went across the moor and, together with a prisoner called John Gray, who broke out on the same night, lay concealed in the neighbourhood in the hope of getting a passage to Australia. In this they were disappointed, and Taylor then went alone as far as Plymouth, where he was taken into custody with the officer's topcoat and staff in his possession. He had only recently been received into the establishment, and was under sentence of 21 years transportation. On being taken before the magistrates at the Plymouth Guildhall he was fully committed to trial. The other man has not yet been recaptured."

1855 - 25th August.

George Woodcock escaped see - George Woodcock.

1856 - 16th November.

"Two convicts escaped from prison at Dartmoor on Saturday night last. On arriving at Buckfastleigh they broke into a dwelling-house, threatened the inmates with violence if they made a stir, changed their apparel, and left their convicts dress behind them. They were, however, apprehended and committed for trial to the Devon County Gaol at Exeter. On arriving near the gaol, in the custody of Joseph Harris, one of the convicts slipped his handcuffs and bolted from the cab in which they were being conveyed; Harris put the cabman in charge of the remaining prisoner, and went after the fugitive. After firing a shot at him with his revolver and threatening him with another shot, the convict surrendered. While this was going on the other prisoner in the fly also succeeded in escaping with the handcuffs on, and without either hat or shoes. He was speedily pursued, but succeeded in eluding the vigilance of his pursuers until Monday, when he was apprehended at Cullumpton, a town about 12 miles from Exeter."

1859 - April 15th - 20th ?

"A convict effected his escape from the Dartmoor prisons a few days ago, but was hotly perused over the moor by the authorities. The fugitive was ultimately captured at Buckfastleigh, a distance of 14 miles from the prisons."

1860 - April 6th.

"Late on Thursday night (11th December 1863) George Ball, who escaped with two others from Dartmoor Prison on the 1st of April 1860, was captured at Woolwich. At the time of his escape he had served between two and three years of a sentence of 15 years penal servitude for having committed a burglary at Lewes. John Robinson and Joseph Hampshire, the two convicts who escaped with him, were captured soon after their escape; but Ball left his companions at Bridgewater and proceeded to Cardiff, where he sailed a few days afterwards to America. There until the past few months he has served as captain of a company of southern guerrillas, but was taken prisoner by the North and sent home. Immediately on his arrival in England he made his way to Woolwich, where he enlisted as a gunner in the Royal Artillery band, in which he served for the past few months. Last night he became embroiled in a drunken row, and was put into the hands of the police. While locked up at Shooter's-hill station Inspector Bell discovered who he was by his having "G.T." marked on his left arm, and that he was under the delusion that Prince Albert was

his personal enemy. Six years ago he broke out of Bethlehem Hospital twice, on one occasion taking with him a lunatic murderer."

A further report of the 19th of December 1863 added:

"At the Woolwich Police-court yesterday Charles Foster, alias George Ball, was placed at the bar before Mr Maude on a remanded charge of making his escape from the Dartmoor Convict Prison, where he was undergoing a sentence of 15 years' penal servitude for committing highway robbery with violence. Benjamin Sims, a convict warder at Dartmoor stated that the prisoner was sentenced to 15 years transportation at the Lewes assizes in December 1858. He was confined at the Dartmoor Prison in the same cell with two other convicts, Joseph Hampshire and John Robinson; and on the night of the 31st of March 1860, the prisoner and his companions made their escape, by removing the iron bars of the cell and climbing onto the roof of buildings which communicated with the outer wall of the prison Robinson was subsequently apprehended, but Hampshire is still at large. Police- constable Randall proved apprehending the prisoner at the Royal Artillery Barracks, and on telling him the charge the prisoner said, "As you seem to know all about it, it is of no use to deny it." It appears that since his escape from Dartmoor the prisoner sailed from Cardiff for America and enlisted in the Confederate Army. He was taken prisoner by the Federals, and through the interest of Lord Lyons was enabled to return to England. He appears to be a man of some education and about three weeks since he delivered a lecture upon "Africa" to the troops of the garrison."

1876 - December 19th.

"A convict at Dartmoor Prison was on Tuesday morning discovered to be attempting to escape by digging his way through the wall of the prison. He must have been engaged in the work for some weeks, and displayed considerable ingenuity in making away the extracted materials. Only one stone lay between him and success when he was detected. On the next visit of the Director of Prisons the man will undoubtedly be adjudged to be flogged. The officer who had charge of that part of the prison is suspended pending investigation into his alleged laxity."

1877 - August 21st.

"Another desperate attempt to obtain liberty has been made at the Dartmoor Prison. Two convicts named Morgan and Britton, while working in a field on Tuesday, suddenly rushed towards a wall, over which they vaulted, and went dashing along to get under cover. A warder loaded his rifle and fired over the wall in the direction the fellows had taken, but a yell of "Oh, murder! what are you at," delivered in an unmistakably Irish accent revealed the fact that he had struck a warder instead of the runaway, and that one of his shots had grazed the head of a fellow officer. A sharp run resulted in Britton being caught in a plantation, but Morgan made good his escape amongst the tors and bogs of Dartmoor, and is still at large. Britton will probably undergo a flogging - a punishment inflicted on Tuesday on some half-a-dozen mutineers who nearly murdered a warder a few days ago, and who were overcome only after a sharp struggle."

1882 - October.

"A plot among the convicts at Dartmoor to make a general escape is reported. A discovery has been made of skeleton keys, constructed out of the bones which the convicts have found in their meat at meal times. Two convicts were recently found in a closet, after having unlocked and escaped from their cells, their evident intention being to secrete themselves there until the opportunity presented itself for getting away. It is believed that many of the convicts have possessed themselves of these bone "keys" and it is even stated that not long ago a convict actually made an offer to one of the officers to unlock any door in the prison; while another is said to have informed the authorities that a general plan had been formed for breaking out of the prison. It was intended to make keys of bones to unlock the cells in one of the prisons, seize the warder in charge at night and when the night watchman, who carries a pistol and some of the keys, went his rounds, to overpower him and throw open the other prisons."

1890 - August 16th.

*"Joseph Denney, 44, a coloured man and a native of Barbados, is in custody at Tavistock, charged with breaking **into** Dartmoor Convict Prison for an unlawful purpose. He was discharged from there 18 months ago, having undergone eight years' imprisonment for felony in London, previous to which he served seven years for manslaughter in Liverpool. He got over the wall surrounding Dartmoor Prison at*

midnight on Saturday and in doing so caught himself in the wire of a bell at the main entrance. This drew the attention of the officers on duty, and of Captain Every, the governor, who had just entered the establishment to make his last inspection for the night. A search was made, and Denney was found secreted in a closet in the carpenter's shop. He made no secret that his object of being there was to have revenge upon Chief Warder Hardy, against whom he appears to entertain a bitter feeling, and to set the prison on fire to give him an opportunity to liberate two convicts, one named Dixon, and the other undergoing a life term. When formally charged before a magistrate yesterday, at Tavistock, for the purpose of remand, the prisoner said his real name was George Adolphus Gordon, but he served his imprisonment at Denney. He said while he was at Dartmoor he was treated worse than a wild animal, because he was a coloured man, and he told them that when liberated he would have his revenge, if not for 12 years and would do so yet if he had the chance. He declared he would mount the gallows with a contented mind if he had ridded the prison of the chief warder whom he referred to as the Duke of Wellington."

On the 4th December 1890, the prisoner was sentenced to 12 months hard labour at Exeter assizes and at the trial he was indicted on a separate charge for stealing the property of the Prison Commissioners, namely 1 sheep?

1896 - 24th December.

"Three convicts at the Dartmoor convict establishment at Princetown made a desperate attempt to escape yesterday morning, with the result that one was shot dead and a second man wounded. The third a man named Ralph Goodman, was last night still at large. It appears that about 11 o' clock the usual order was given to the convicts engaged in the boggy ground below the prison to "cease labour," and while the gang was being marched from the bogs back to the prison three of them broke away. They were instantly challenged, but as they continued to run the warders in charge of the gang fired several shots. They endeavoured not to inflict fatal injuries on any of the men, but the result was that one was killed immediately and another was inured so badly that any further attempt at escape on his part was out of the question. The third man, however, ran on and ultimately escaped, and up to the time when darkness set in he had not been captured. Any chance of tracing

him was greatly discounted by the fact that thick fog prevailed and obscured the whole country. Several armed parties were sent out in search of him, but in the darkness the task was a very difficult one. The captured convict was severely injured, having received several shots in the head."

A further report was then filed on the 29th of December which stated:

"... William J. Martin, William Carter and Ralph Goodwin made a bold dash for liberty, and attempted to scale a wall which bounds the road. The armed warders at once fired, both with the intention of deterring the convicts from their desperate attempt, and also to give warning to the other warders. Five of the guard are said to have fired, and one of the shots took effect upon Carter, who was probably scaling the wall when the bullet struck him. He was hit in the spine, and was found to be dead. Martin, another of the convicts, was quickly overtaken by one of the warders, but he resisted capture in a most determined manner, and a keen struggle took place between him and his pursuer. In the end the warder knocked him down, and held him until assistance came, when he was taken back to the prison. Goodwin, the third man, got away, and up to last night was still at large. Search parties were organised as soon as the affair was reported, and, some on foot, and some on horseback, searched the moor in all directions during the whole of Thursday, but without effect, and the efforts which were renewed yesterday were equally without effect. The body of the dead convict, Carter, was removed to the prison mortuary, and Martin, who had sustained injuries, it is said, in his fight with the warder, was removed to the prison infirmary, where he remains under treatment... A description of the escaped convict was telegraphed to Plymouth, Exeter, Devonport, and the towns on or bordering upon Dartmoor. He is described as Ralph Goodwin, alias John Thomas Hammond, aged 29 years, a mariner by trade. He was born at Liverpool, and was sentenced at the Hants. assizes in February last to five years' penal servitude for a burglary at Portsmouth in January. He was, of course, wearing the usual convict dress, but seems to have quickly discarded his boots, which were found near the spot from which his escape was made. Carter, whose death was due to accident rather than design, was one of the notorious Lewisham masked burglars, and was sentenced to 12 years' penal servitude and to 20 strokes of the cat. A mounted messenger arrived at the prison

yesterday morning and reported that the house of Mr. Warne at Post Bridge, about two miles from Princetown, had been entered by the convict. The family sat up late, and on awaking yesterday morning discovered that a pane of glass in the dining room had been smashed, the catch of the window drawn back, and the room entered from without. The burglar helped himself to the remains of supper, and provided himself with a long black overcoat, a pair of tan leather boots, and a child's sailor hat. His convict jacket and cap were left in the house. Goodwin was subsequently seen passing another house in the vicinity, and went in the direction of Mis Tor. A diligent search was made in that direction during the day, but the man was not discovered, and was believed to be waiting in hiding until darkness came on."

Goodwin was recaptured on the Sunday morning at Devonport. At the inquest of the shot convict a verdict of "justifiable homicide" was returned with instructions for a prison director to visit Dartmoor to inquire as to the incident and award Goodwin his punishment.

1897 - 9th December.

"Yesterday morning another attempted to escape from Dartmoor convict establishment. The man who is named Alfred Lincoln, was one of a gang of seven convicts who were engaged in building a wall, and made an excuse to separate from the rest of the men. He climbed the wall and darted off. Principle Warder Sillifaunt, who was on the other side of the wall, saw the man run off and gave chase. Lincoln made for a plantation about half a mile away, and where near it met the prison guard, who had heard the alarm. The guard fired twice, and the convict fell and was handcuffed by Sillifaunt. One of the shots touched the man, who was recaptured near the spot where a convict was shot dead when trying to escape last Christmas. Lincoln was sentenced to five years for manslaughter at Durham. He was let out on ticket of leave, but was again convicted of assaulting the police at Sunderland for which he was sentenced to three months imprisonment and to serve the remainder of his term."

1898 - 2nd January.

"Another convict escaped from Dartmoor convict establishment on Sunday night, but was recaptured last evening (Monday) after an exciting chase. The man, whose

name is John Morgan, alias Henry Harley, was serving his third term of penal servitude, his last conviction having been at the North London sessions in 1894, when he was sentenced to 10 years penal servitude for larceny. The alarm was raised at 8.40pm on Sunday by a night-watchman in the prison who saw a couple of knotted blankets hanging out of a cell window. It was found that the ventilator of the cell had been taken out as well as the pane of glass, and two outside iron bars broken through, probably by blows with a stool which was in the convicts cell. Morgan then squeezed himself through the small aperture and, using his blankets as a rope, reached the ground. He scaled the high boundary wall by means of a scaffold pole and, by the time he was missed, he had got clean away from the prison. Armed search parties were sent out, and mounted men and cyclists scoured the country in all directions. It was a bright moonlit night, but in spite of this and of the open nature of the county, Morgan managed to elude his pursuers throughout the night and until the following afternoon was well advanced, when he was run down near Chagford, a village about 12 miles on the Exeter side of Dartmoor..."

The following report then appeared in the newspapers on the 5th of January 1898:

"The capture of the convict John Morgan, who from Dartmoor on Sunday night, was, says our Plymouth correspondent, effected in exciting circumstances. Mr Perryman of Gidleigh, was out rabbiting with his dog and gun on Gidleigh Common, near Chagford, when towards evening, as he was near a plantation on the hillside, he saw a man of very suspicious appearance stealing along in the shadow of the trees. Mr Perryman, who had heard of the escape of a prisoner from Dartmoor, at once came to the conclusion that this was the man. He gave chase, but finding that he had no chance with the convict on foot, put his dog after him. Seeing a neighbour on horseback, he at once mounted the horse and rode after the convict, discovering on overtaking him that the dog had laid hold of him and was holding on. Mr Perryman immediately arrested Morgan and brought him to Chagford, handing him over to a constable, who took charge of him until the arrival of the warders."

I cannot end this page without relating a modern escape story from nearby Channing's Wood Prison that happened in the late 1990's. The poor chap must have been desperate and he wasn't the sharpest pencil in the box, bless him, because

whilst out on a work party he seized his chance and leapt on a tractor and sped off down the Devonshire lanes at about 10mph - needless to say he was soon recaptured.

BREAKOUT

<http://www.discovery.ca/episodeList.aspx?sid=28855>

"ESCAPE FROM SUPERMAX"

Fri., Feb. 1 at 10 p.m. ET/11 p.m. PT

On May 28, 2000, armed robber Roy Harper and his buddy, murderer John Woolard, achieve the impossible. They break out of Unit 32, Mississippi State Penitentiary's notorious supermax facility. The escape hinges on a single security weakness: for a few hours every day, guards grant inmates a degree of privacy by allowing them to hang sheets across their cell fronts.

Behind the sheets, Harper and Woolard cut through their cell windows undetected using hacksaw blades smuggled into the unit. On the night of the escape, they crawl across a floodlit courtyard and cut through two perimeter fences covered by gun towers before reaching freedom. They leave a trail of destruction as the police and FBI pursue them across the U.S. The manhunt climaxes with a dramatic shootout at an Indiana truck stop.

"THE REAL MACGYVER"

Fri., Feb. 8 at 10 p.m. ET/11 p.m. PT

Convicted murderer, Harold Laird is known in prison as "MacGyver" for his ability to repair things using everyday materials. He is moved to the Stiles Maximum Security Prison in Beaumont, Texas, where he is placed in a block that houses white supremacist gang members.

The gang puts out a hit on Laird after he denounces them, forcing him to face his toughest challenge yet. Can he break out of his maximum security cell before the gang succeeds and takes him down?

"TUNNEL BREAK"

Fri., Feb. 15 at 10 p.m. ET/11 p.m. PT

Three inmates hatch a daring plan to escape from Indiana State Prison, one of the toughest penitentiaries in the U.S. Convicted rapist Lance Battreal decides to break

out when he learns his father is terminally ill with only months to live. Battreal is determined to see him one last time - and beg forgiveness for his sins.

In 2009 he conspires with murderers Mark Booher and Charlie Smith to dig their way into a system of steam tunnels under the prison. They cut through a series of security gates to reach a narrow storm drain which leads all the way to 10th Street in Michigan City. They must crawl all the way, a long and torturous journey until they reach a manhole. Hours later, the escape is discovered and Deputy U.S. Marshal Mark Gregoline commands the massive manhunt.

"ISLAND FORTRESS"

Fri., Feb. 22 at 10 p.m. ET/11 p.m. PT

Sent to Parkhurst Prison, for conspiracy to cause explosions, Matthew Williams was determined to escape, but knew it was going to be difficult. Parkhurst was surrounded by a wire fence and a 24-foot high concrete wall and it was on an island. Even if he got out of the prison he'd have to find a way to get off the island. With the help of another prisoner, Keith Rose, he worked out that most of the prison could be opened with one key. Stealing a key was impossible, so Matthew decided to make one, taking what he needed from the metal workshop.

To get over the wall they'd need a ladder, so with the help of life prisoner Andy Roger, made one in the metal workshop. On the night of the escape the three men unlocked the gym door, ran to the metal workshop, assembled the ladder, cut through the fence and scaled the wall. Getting off the island was harder. After failing to steal a plane the three men headed inland to find a place to hide until the heat was off. As police searched the island, the three men holed up in a shed for days but eventually the pressure got too much. Convinced the police would find them, they decided to head to the coast to steal a boat. It wasn't long before police spotted the escapees. Keith and Andy were quickly arrested, and although Matthew ran to a nearby Marina, he too was discovered by police and arrested.

"THE CONNECTICUT CONSPIRACY"

Fri., Mar. 1 at 10 p.m. ET/11 p.m. PT

In Somers State Prison, Connecticut, Ronald Rutan, who is serving a 19 year sentence for burglary meets Frank Vandever, a former-stock broker and cross-dresser who is serving 40 years for murdering a former client. In spite of their differences, they share a common goal - getting out. They use their privileged positions working in the kitchens to smuggle in tools and check out security.

They use Rutan's quiet recycling area to cut their way through window bars, disguising the cuts with peanut butter before cutting through the prison fences and

making their escape. The cops spend weeks struggling with hundreds of false leads looking for Vandever dressed as a woman; until they're given a tip off that the pair have checked into a motel. FBI agents arrive to bring them in - but not without a chase.

"ESCAPE FROM INDIAN RIVER"

Fri., Mar. 8 at 10 p.m. ET/11 p.m. PT

At Indian River County Jail Florida, Rondell Reed is sent into Maximum Security, pending trial for murder. Almost as soon as he arrives in jail, Reed starts looking for a way to escape. He struggles to see a way through the jail's security until he meets Leviticus (Levi) Taylor, another prisoner also pending trial for murder.

Taylor already has a plan to bust out using a hacksaw smuggled into the jail. Using the blade the two men escape into the ventilation system, climb into a utility room, open a door that leads onto the recreation yard and climb over the perimeter fence. On discovering the escape, County police and US Marshals mount a full-scale manhunt. Taylor is quickly arrested but Reed evades the law for 5 days, hiding out in abandoned houses, and eventually leaves the county in a stolen car. Reed gets as far as Ohio before police catch him and send him straight back to Maximum Security.

"KEYS TO FREEDOM"

Fri., Mar. 15 at 10 p.m. ET/11 p.m. PT

This is the amazing story of how three men crafted wooden keys to unlock their way out of South Africa's most secure prison - Pretoria. Set against the backdrop of the notorious period of Apartheid in South Africa, the three 'terrorists', Tim Jenkin, Stephen Lee and Alex Moumbaris, considered themselves political prisoners and their duty to escape.

They approached this challenge with audacity and ingenuity, making and testing keys fashioned in wood work classes right under the noses of their captors and smuggling these parts around the prison. They devised a cunning mechanism with a broomstick to open their cells and over 17 months of trial and error, they unlocked their cells and then tested their keys on each of the ten doors that led to freedom, coming up with clever schemes to avoid patrolling guards. On the day of the escape in 1979, they literally walked out, undetected, to freedom and continued to fight against the racist government of South Africa from overseas.

"THE SOUTHSIDER GANG ESCAPE"

Fri., Mar. 22 at 10 p.m. ET/11 p.m. PT

Dangerous gang members Tommy Valdez, Jonathan 'Snoopy' Rodriguez and Arturo Torres plan to escape from Grant County Jail, New Mexico. They discover a pipe chase, out of view of the jail's CCTV cameras.

READ MORE >

Inside, they slowly cut their way through the metal prison roof. The escapees evade the police and make their way to a safe house

Supermax: The Faces of a Prison's Mentally Ill

ANDREW COHEN JUN 19 2012, 6:00 AM ET

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In a lawsuit filed yesterday, these inmates at America's most famous and secure prison allege a cycle of abuse and madness, neglect, and retribution. (The second in a three-part series.)



Index of Photographic Exhibits to Plaintiffs' Complaint, Bacote, et al v. United States Bureau of Prisons, et. Al

You don't get to be an inmate at ADX-Florence, America's most famous and secure prison, without having first achieved a measure of infamy in the nation's penal system. Name a convicted terrorist, foreign or domestic, and there is a strong likelihood that he is serving a life sentence without the possibility of parole at the maximum security federal facility in southern Colorado. Terry Nichols. Ramzi

Yousef. Ted Kaczynski. Zacarious Moussaoui. Eric Robert Rudolph. Richard Reid. They are all there -- all the eggs in one basket, you might say.

RELATED STORY



An American Gulag: Descending into Madness at Supermax

But there are hundreds of other prisoners at the federal prison complex known to the world as "ADX" or "Supermax" you likely have never heard of and who have made it to the facility because they have run into trouble at other prisons around the nation. The Aryan Brotherhood is represented at the prison, for example, and so are members of other notorious prison gangs. As a prisoner, you may be assigned to Supermax if you attack another inmate, or if you injure a guard, or if prison officials otherwise believe you present a particular threat to prison staff or other inmates.

Each of five prisoners named as plaintiffs in a new civil rights case filed Monday against the Bureau of Prisons fall into this category. So do the six other inmates whose stories are chronicled in the long complaint, which alleges that prison officials are failing or refusing to adequately diagnose and treat mentally ill prisoners in their care. In some cases, these men were mentally ill, or retarded, before they came to Colorado. In other cases, the inhumane treatment of the men has made them mad, or at least exacerbated their preexisting mental health problems.

The lawsuit, styled *Bacote v. Federal Bureau of Prisons*, seeks to force the federal officials to provide better mental health care for these inmates. But the litigation also raises fundamental questions about how the Bureau of Prisons treats these men. They are felons, violent felons in most cases, but even so they are entitled to be treated in a humane way by government officials. The Eighth Amendment, with

its prescription against "cruel and unusual punishment," commands this. And so do explicit federal laws and policies.

No evaluation of this new case, or of the fate of America's mentally ill prisoners more generally, can be complete without a look into the narratives of the lives of the men who are being punished in this fashion. It is a haunting view. Their madness begets cruelty and indifference from prison officials and doctors. And the cruelty and indifference from the officials and doctors begets more madness. In the meantime, the American taxpayer pays for all of it; the alleged abuse and neglect, and even torture, is done in our name.

In our name -- but not necessarily done for our own good. "One common misconception about ADX is that everybody there is never getting out of prison. That's not true, and it's one of the main problems with failing to treat the mentally ill while they are there," says Ed Aro, a partner at Arnold & Porter, the venerable law firm that brought the lawsuit, along with the Washington Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights and Urban Affairs. Aro adds:

We currently represent almost 50 inmates who are or recently have been housed at ADX. One is already in the community and was released with no transitional assistance whatsoever. 11 more will be released within 5 years, 18 within 10 years and 28 within 20 years. Without treatment, these people will have a very difficult time reentering society safely and successfully.

THE PLAINTIFFS

Part I of this series offered a close look at the story of Jack Powers, a current Supermax inmate who alleges in vivid detail how he went mad in custody because of the mistreatment he received from prison officials. Here, below, is a brief summary of the stories of each of the other 10 prisoners named in the complaint -- how they came to Supermax and why they allege that they are owed more from the law than their captors currently provide them. Judge for yourself whether these men should be in this place at this time.



Michael Bacote: He is the first named plaintiff in the

case. Age 37, functionally illiterate, and deemed "mildly mentally retarded" a decade ago by a prison psychologist, Bacote was sent to ADX in 2005 after pleading guilty to murder in a case involving the death of a fellow inmate at the federal prison in Texas. (Evidently, he did not kill the victim but rather stood guard while others did.) Bacote has been diagnosed as suffering from "major depressive disorder with psychotic features" as well as from "paranoid ideations," and he also may suffer the after-effects of severe closed-head injury.

Bacote refuses to take medicine that has been ground up from pill form by prison officials. And they, in turn, refuse to allow Bacote to take his medicine in pill form. Bacote has repeatedly tried to transfer out of Supermax. Over and over again, his requests have been denied. Despite the prior diagnoses from prison doctors, for example, paragraph 138 of the complaint alleges that ADX officials in April 2009 told Bacote that "a review of your file does not indicate you are mentally ill or mentally retarded."



Harold Cunningham: At age 41, Cunningham is

servicing a life sentence plus 380 years for a series of crimes, including murders and robberies. In 1996, representing himself in a state trial, he suddenly stabbed a witness -- in open court, in front of judge and jury. Long before that incident, Cunningham had been diagnosed with "conduct disorder, under-socialized aggressive needs, and major depression." Following the courtroom attack, Cunningham was diagnosed by a renowned psychiatrist with "paranoid schizophrenia," "antisocial personality disorder," and "borderline intellectual function."

Cunningham arrived at ADX/Supermax in 2001, was taken off his existing medication, and was promptly placed in the prison's ultra-secure Control Unit, a place where prisoners are not permitted to take psychotropic medication. Once, in 2004, he was given a "telepsychiatry" session whereby he was able to speak via video conference with an off-site psychiatrist. During the "session," Cunningham was allegedly handcuffed from behind with shackles on his legs and surrounded by corrections officers. He has received no mental health treatment since 2001, the Supermax complaint alleges.



Ernest Norman Shaifer. Age 49, with a family history

of mental illness that is both tragic and shocking, Shaifer has been in and out of prison for decades. Long ago diagnosed with bipolar disorder, in 2002 Shaifer attacked a prison chaplain at one of the ADX facilities next to Supermax. For that he was prosecuted -- and also reevaluated by several mental health experts, each of whom diagnosed him as mentally ill and recommended medication as a treatment for his disorder.

But after Shaifer was sent back to Colorado, he was soon was sent to its Control Unit and thus deprived of any psychotropic medication. As paragraph 165 of the complaint alleges, a Supermax prison psychologist who looked at the Shaifer family's history of major mental illness -- including suicide and murder -- decided that the inmate had used that history to "fabricate" his own symptoms. Barring any new incidents, Shaifer is expected to be released from prison in 2014 -- having been untreated for over a decade.



Jeremy Pinson. Age 26, with a history of epilepsy,

bipolar disorder, and schizophrenia, he is at Supermax for making threats against the president of the United States and others. When he was first sentenced, Pinson's trial judge recommended that he serve his sentence at a federal prison designed for mentally ill prisoners. Instead, the Bureau of Prisons assigned Pinson to another prison. Pinson then threatened another official. Again, he was convicted. This time, a federal judge "strongly recommended" that he be sent to a suitable facility. Again, the Bureau of Prisons rejected the recommendation.

Here, from paragraph 182, is a list of the medications Pinson has been given while in custody: "psychotropic medications, including Olanzapine, Quetiapine, Risperidone, Fluphenazine, Haldol and Perphenazine, antidepressants Amitriptyline, Bupropion, Mirtazapine and Sertraline, antimanic Depakote, and the anti-anxiety medication Buspirone." No mentally ill prisoners are supposed to be housed at Supermax pursuant to federal regulations. Yet prison officials there have repeatedly refused to transfer Pinson, who has not received adequate treatment for his illness.



John W. Narducci Jr. Now 43, Narducci was home with

his father at the age of four when the latter was shot and killed. At 11, Narducci was with his home alone with his mother when she had a heart attack and died. Since then, Narducci has had a long history of mental illness as well as a litany of violent episodes resulting in arrest, prosecution, and conviction. He has been diagnosed with a "mood disorder" and a "mixed personality disorder." In prison, he tries to dress like a woman.

As was the case with Pinson, the Bureau of Prisons ignored a judge's recommendation, in 2000, that Narducci be sent to a federal facility "which has programs sufficient to deal with his mental, emotional and psychological problems." Instead, Narducci was sent to a successive series of prisons where he lashed out at prisoners and guards. At Supermax now since 2007, Narducci alleges that he has not been treated for his mental illness. Untreated now for nearly five years, he is scheduled to be released in 2015.



Marcellus Washington. Age 39, functionally illiterate,

mentally retarded, and suffering from the "presence of a congenital brain impairment," Washington was treated in prison for mental illness as early as 1996. His condition did not improve, and by 2002 he sought medical care for suicidal tendencies. Prison officials did not immediately treat him and Washington shortly thereafter assaulted a prison guard. He was subsequently diagnosed again with mental illness, and he attempted suicide before he was transferred, in 2004, to Supermax.

At Supermax, where he again tried to kill himself, Washington was punished for cutting his wrists with razor blades -- but was not treated for his obvious mental illness. Placed into the Control Unit, where no psychotropic medicine is administered by prison staff, Washington has sought repeatedly to obtain mental health treatment. Supermax officials have consistently refused his requests. This is despite earlier prison diagnoses (at other prisons) that he suffers from a "severe antisocial personality disorder."



William Concepcion Sablan. Age 47, severely

mentally ill and suffering from post-traumatic brain injury after he was struck in the head by a machete, Sablan is a career criminal with a long history of arrests and convictions. In 1997, delusional and paranoid, he was diagnosed with "temporal lobe epilepsy" by a prison doctor. Despite this history, in 1999 when he arrived at the federal prison in Florence adjacent to Supermax, Sablan was given only a cursory mental health evaluation and his medication was not checked. A few days later, as the third man in a two-man cell, he killed one of his cellmates.

Mental health evaluations following the murder convinced a federal trial judge in 2004 to find Sablan incompetent to stand trial. But in 2005, Sablan did stand trial, was convicted of murder, and was sentenced by the same judge with a recommendation that he receive significant mental health treatment, including medication. The Bureau of Prisons ignored this recommendation, too, sending Sablan back to the U.S. Penitentiary adjacent to ADX, and then to Supermax itself, where paragraph 261 of the complaint alleges officials have continued to refuse to adequately treat him.



Jaison Leggett. Age 41, seriously mentally ill and with

a long history of suicidal ideation, Leggett has been at Supermax since 2002. In 2003, suffering from osteomyelitis in his leg, Leggett refused amputation and instead swallowed a razor blade after cutting into his leg. Later, he was transferred to a federal mental health prison in Missouri where his leg was amputated and he was placed on suicide watch. The prosthetic he received from prison doctors did not fit -- so he again tried to cut his leg and then damaged (and swallowed part of) his prosthetic.

Supermax officials have refused to replace his prosthetic. Paragraph 268 of the complaint alleges that prison officials force Leggett to hop around from place to place or simply to crawl on the floor or up and down stairs within the prison. All of this despite a finding, by a prison doctor in 2003, that Leggett suffers from a mental disorder. Prior to 2005, Leggett was routinely treated with psychotropic medicine. Paragraph 275 of the complaint alleges that he has not received this medication since 2005.



David Shelby. At 47, and diagnosed by state prison

officials as early as 1989 as suffering from acute psychotic episodes, Shelby has for decades believed that he hears voices, including the voice of God. In 1997, while in federal prison in Atlanta, he attempted to commit "suicide by cop" by taking a prison staff member hostage with a knife. Following the episode, he was repeatedly diagnosed as being mentally ill -- and his sentencing judge recommended he be placed somewhere where he could receive mental health treatment.

Once again, the Bureau of Prisons ignored the judge's recommendation and Shelby was transferred to Supermax and placed within the prison's general population. In 2009, he again tried to commit suicide and was again diagnosed with mental illness. Later that year, paragraph 296 of the complaint alleges, Shelby says he heard God's voice telling him to eat a finger. So Shelby amputated his left pinkie, cut the finger into small pieces, added it to a bowl of ramen soup and ate it.



Herbert Isaac Perkins. Age 36, suffering from serious

mental illness and perhaps the effects of closed-head injuries, Perkins as a young teenager was on the telephone with his father when his father shot himself in the head and died. Before Perkins came to Supermax in 2008, he was successfully treated at other prisons for with psychotropic medicine. At Supermax, however, he was refused mental health treatment. Predictably, his condition worsened.

In 2008, Perkins tried to commit suicide. After he returned from the hospital, he was placed back in the same cell in which he had made an attempt on his own life - his own blood was still splattered on the floor and the razor he had used to slash his throat was still resting on the sink. Later in the day, Perkins again tried to commit suicide. He was eventually given Zoloft, but then that medicine was revoked. Paragraph 304 of the complaint alleges that until he became involved in the new lawsuit, the Bureau did not provide him with mental health treatment. Instead, he alleges, he has been harassed by prison officials for his involvement in this lawsuit.

THE FUTURE PLAINTIFFS

Death, Yes, but Torture at Supermax?

A new federal lawsuit alleges that officials at America's most famous prison are legally responsible for the suicide of an inmate.



Jose Martin Vega's

body remains shackled post-mortem. (Fremont County Coroner's Office)

Jose Martin Vega was no saint. Convicted in 1995 of 15 counts of racketeering and armed drug trafficking, he was sentenced, at the age of 20, to four consecutive life sentences. Nine years after his conviction, and after a violent confrontation at another maximum security federal prison, Vega found himself at the United States Penitentiary -- Administrative Maximum ("ADMAX" or "ADX") near Florence, Colorado. As its name suggests, this lonely place is where America sends many of its most troublesome prisoners.

Vega first came to ADX on April 5, 2004. Six years and 26 torturous days later he was dead -- at the age of 35. On May 1, 2010, using a bed sheet, Vega hanged himself in his cell in the control unit of the prison, an especially isolating part of the facility. Although Vega was not shackled when he hanged himself, the photos contained in the coroner's report show an unconscious man shackled at the hands and feet while prison officials are administering rescue efforts. At ADX, in the control unit especially, even the dead or dying are shackled.

Fremont County Deputy Coroner Carlette Brocius estimated the time of Vega's death at 9:10 a.m., but she noted in her report that "the scene of the death was 'cleaned up' when I sought to go out to the prison to finish my investigation. Therefore, I was unable to go to the scene of the death, see the cloth utilized as a ligature or talk to anyone other than the attending PA [physician assistant] regarding the decedent." She had first seen Vega's body hours later, at a local hospital, where it had been brought, still shackled, by prison officials.

Brocius also noted in her report that she talked with two prison health officials about Vega and was told by Mark Kellar, ADX's health administrator, "that the decedent had a long psychiatric history. ... As to whether or not the decedent had ever attempted suicide previously neither men could tell me." That "psychiatric history," and how ADX officials dealt with it in Vega's case, is at the heart of an important new federal lawsuit that seeks to dig down deeper into ADX's mental health policies and practices.

Why should we care about how our most difficult prisoners are treated? Why should we interfere with a "prison code," expressed or implied, that emphasizes both the use of official force and the denial of official help to humiliate and ultimately control inmates? The answers are both simple and complex. Because we tell the world (and each other) that we are an enlightened nation of laws and not a medieval land of barbarism. Because even our harshest prison isn't supposed to be the Tower of London.

THE PRISON

You probably know ADX better by its stage name, "Supermax," the forbidding place that houses such criminal luminaries as Terry Nichols, Ramzi Yousef, and Ted Kaczynski as well as hundreds of other, less notable prisoners. When I visited the facility in 2007 as part of a media tour that was carefully choreographed by the Bureau of Prisons, I found the place sterile and soulless. But the hard-ass approach to incarceration was obvious, right down to the tiny circus-like cages where some of the men -- one at a time, of course -- are permitted to briefly exercise.

Today, Supermax is the most famous prison in America, a worthy if far less visible heir to Alcatraz out in California. When *60 Minutes* did a memorable piece on ADX in October 2007, Scott Pelley interviewed one of its former wardens, a man named Robert Hood. Pelley asked Hood why he had been so excited to come to Florence when the job opportunity presented itself. "In our system," Hood answered, "there's 144 prisons. And there's only one Supermax. It's like the Harvard of the system."

If anything, the past five years since Hood spoke those words have only heightened the national perception of ADX as some sort of forbidden fortress, America's chamber of secrets. Terrorist after terrorist has been deposited there since 2007-- most under Special Administrative Measures which largely preclude them from communicating to the world (or having it communicate back). Meanwhile, inside the prison, for the few guests ever allowed in, there is a place where you can buy ADX shirts and coffee mugs.

Supermax has nine different units, some more secure than others, and in that sense it's a microcosm of the nation's federal prison system. There is a unit for the terrorists, for example, and also one where prisoners have some measure of interaction with one another. But the Control Unit, where Vega lived and where his body was found, is the harshest. This is especially true for prisoners suffering from mental illness, who often are ostracized by other inmates even as they become more isolated by prison officials.

THE PRISONER

Generally speaking, unless you are an infamous terrorist, you have to do something bad in prison to make it to Supermax -- and then to its control unit. And Vega had. On March 13, 2003, while at the federal prison in Lewisburg, Pennsylvania, Vega attacked an associate warden with a razor blade at the late-morning meal. Vega was subdued after a struggle, given an injection to render him defenseless, stripped naked, and then "assaulted by prison staff for a duration of at least one hour," according to an unpublished federal trial court ruling.

The Lewisburg prison health officials who saw Vega after the incident neither treated him properly nor adequately recorded his injuries. That same day, Vega was transferred to the nearby Allenwood federal prison facility, where authorities saw fit to place him on "suicide status." Soon thereafter, Vega was sent to the U.S. Medical Center for Federal Prisoners, located in Springfield, Missouri (the same place where the Tucson shooter, Jared Loughner, was more recently sent for pre-trial competency tests).

In July 2003, while at the Missouri facility, Vega was charged in federal court for his attack upon the warden. He pled guilty and was given a 188-month sentence added to his existing life sentences. But he also had the nerve to complain, officially, about the way he had been treated by Lewisburg officials after they had gotten the razor blade out of his hand. Unsurprisingly, prison officials rejected his claims -- and then promptly shipped him to ADX, where he'd be subject to a whole other level of incarceration.

The facts about how Vega made it from Pennsylvania to Colorado are set forth in an opinion dated November 4, 2005, by U.S. District Judge William Caldwell, a distinguished Reagan appointee. Vega didn't stay at ADX long, however. Less than one year after he arrived in Colorado, and a few months after an ADX psychologist there diagnosed him with paranoid schizophrenia, Vega was sent back to the Missouri prison facility for more mental health evaluations. About one year later, after another diagnosis of severe mental illness, he was back in ADX Florence. And back in the control unit.

THE LAWSUIT



Fremont County

Coroner's Office

Exactly what happened next to Vega is the subject of a new lawsuit that has been filed in federal court in Colorado. Vega's brother, Raymond Vega, has brought a wrongful death action against ADX warden Blake R. Davis and other prison officials, alleging that they helped cause Vega's death by exhibiting a "persistent and deliberate indifference" to the prisoner's "serious mental illness." The lawsuit accuses ADX officials of giving Vega "cruel and unusual" punishment in violation of the Eighth Amendment.

Raymond Vega contends that mental health officials at the special Springfield facility concluded in 2005 or early 2006 that Jose Martin Vega (his family called him "Martin") had a "history of depression and antisocial personality disorder." This diagnosis, says the plaintiff, should have precluded Vega from being transferred back to ADX at Florence and from being assigned to the control unit. Once there, the complaint charges, Vega's continued presence in the control unit prevented him from receiving "medication to treat or ameliorate the effects of his mental illness."

It's not hard to predict what happened next. The worse Vega acted without his meds, the more prison officials in the Control Unit clamped down. And the more they clamped down, the worse he got. The complaint alleges that "ADX staff members repeatedly chained Vega unnecessarily, sometimes for periods of ten days or more." In the meantime, when he could, Vega was reportedly telling "other prisoners that he believed the ADX Florence guards were poisoning his food and spraying things into his vents."

Indeed, Vega's prison file, portions of which I have seen, reveal a delusional man. On January 18, 2008, for example, Vega complained in writing that a prison guard had "violated" his "bodily integrity" after drugging him following a "verbal altercation." The response from the feds? "Your allegations of staff misconduct have been referred to the appropriate Bureau component for investigation," wrote a

bureaucrat. "The results of the investigation and the action taken against staff, if any, are not disclosable to you."

THE LAW

The pending complaint alleges that Supermax officials mistreated Vega in contravention of Bureau of Prison policies governing the treatment of prisoners with mental health diagnoses. "BOP policies require that mentally ill prisoners be monitored on an ongoing basis to assess treatment compliance," the complaint states, but "BOP does not provide adequate mental health staffing at ADX Florence, given the size of the mental health caseload at that facility." Vega may be gone, in other words, but the problems his case highlight likely linger.

You probably won't be surprised to learn that federal law and judicial precedent make it tremendously difficult for the families of prisoners like Vega to win wrongful death claims brought against federal officials. In fact, the procedural and substantive hurdles make it virtually impossible. The right to bring such a claim -- a right that is contested by many conservative scholars -- was first recognized, in 1971, in a Supreme Court case styled *Bivens v. Six Unknown Fed. Narcotics Agents*.

In *Bivens*, the Court's majority ruled that an individual could recover money damages from federal officials for particularly odious conduct -- "flagrant and patently unjustified," is how Justice John Marshall Harlan put it. In the 41 years since *Bivens*, however, the lower federal courts have gone back and forth on the extent of the right. But this much is clear. The *Bivens* right to sue applies in the prison context. It extends beyond the death of the individual who is acted upon by government officials. And inadequate mental health care in prison can trigger actionable Eighth Amendment rights.

Raymond Vega, Jose Martin Vega's brother, is represented *pro bono* in the case by Ed Aro, a partner at Arnold & Porter, a revered white-shoe law firm with a history of *pro bono* work on behalf of the indigent and mentally ill. U.S. District Judge Richard Matsch, the fearless Oklahoma City bombing trial judge, has been selected to handle the litigation, which likely will take years to resolve. The federal government has not yet responded to the complaint -- it has not yet even been served -- but federal lawyers will almost certainly ask Judge Matsch to quickly dismiss the case.

When the feds react, I will write about their response to the complaint. *Vega v. Davis*, as the case now is styled, represents an enormous opportunity for all of us to gain some rare insight into one of the most secret places in America, a prison where hundreds of men go and are never heard from again. We want to be safe from our most dangerous criminals. But how we treat these men, and how are government treats them in our name, ultimately says more about us than it does about them.



Charles Sobhraj, the alleged serial killer, con man and prison escape artist who is serving a life sentence for murdering an American tourist in Nepal, may be up to his old tricks of bribery and manipulation to seek freedom.

Security guards at Kathmandu's Central jail recently discovered that Sobhraj was secretly trying to transfer NRS 500 inside a ballpen, which was gifted to his lawyer and "mother-in-law" Shanuntala Thapa.

The jail security found NRs 500 rolled inside the ballpen instead of refill when the lid was taken out, according to jail authorities.