

From: THE PRIVATE SECRETARY



NORTHERN IRELAND OFFICE  
GREAT GEORGE STREET,  
LONDON SW1P 3AJ

Willie Rickett Esq  
10 Downing Street  
London SW1

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*There is nothing new in this*  
*pm*  
*Dear Willie*  
*LM ref 9*

NORTHERN IRELAND PRISON ESCAPE

You will wish to know the current position following the escape from the Maze Prison yesterday.

The escape took place from the Maze Cellular prison, starting at about 3pm and the alarm being raised at the gate just after 4 o'clock. The 38 prisoners concerned had obtained possession of guns and were also armed with knives. They overpowered their guards in the H Block, seriously wounding one of them by gunshot. They commandeered a food lorry to drive to the main gate. The lorry was prevented from leaving the prison but the escapers were able to make off after fatally stabbing one prison officer. During the course of the escape five other prison officers were also injured. An immediate and full scale operation was mounted to recapture the prisoners, involving the full resources of the RUC and of the Army. Last night 15 had been recaptured; a further 2 were caught during the course of today.

The Secretary of State issued a statement last night emphasising that no effort would be spared to recapture the fugitives and that he had called for an immediate full, rigorous and searching inquiry into all aspects of the escape. It has since been announced that the inquiry is beginning at once and that it will be conducted by the Chief Inspector of Prisons for England and Wales, Sir James Hennessey.

*Yours ever*

*Dave*

D A HILL