

FINAL VERSION

STATEMENT BY SECRETARY OF STATE ON HENNESSY REPORT

I shall, with permission Mr Speaker, make a statement on the Report, published today, by Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Prisons, Sir James Hennessy, on his inquiry into security arrangements at HM Prison Maze bearing on the escape on Sunday 25 September 1983, and on action I have taken following that Report.

2. I should like first to record my gratitude to Sir James Hennessy and his colleagues for the way they undertook their inquiry and for their thorough and comprehensive report. I am publishing it in full save for a small number of deletions which are clearly marked, and which have been made for security reasons only.

3. The Maze Prison holds the largest concentration of terrorists anywhere in Western Europe. It is, in Sir James' words "a prison without parallel in the United Kingdom, unique in size, and in the continuity and tenacity of its protests and disturbances." "In no other prison that we have seen" he said, "have the problems faced by the authorities been so great". Sir James goes on to point out that its population is unlike that of any other prison, and he says that "nowhere else in the United Kingdom have there been such prolonged and wide scale protests of so horrendous a nature". He records that 22 members of the prison service have lost their lives through terrorist action, including a Deputy Governor and others from the Maze. I know the House will join

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with me in paying tribute to them. As we consider the lessons to be learnt from the blackest day in the troubled history of the Northern Ireland prison service, let us not forget the unique demands which we put on the service.

4. The report describes the escape from the Maze in detail. The broad outline which I gave the House on 24 October stands. The report draws attention to the careful planning of a small group of prisoners and to the outside help they received, particularly through the smuggling in of five guns. It also shows the ruthlessness of the prisoners, who stabbed one prison officer to death and seriously injured five others.

5. The Report is extremely critical of many aspects of security at the Maze. The House will regard these failings with the utmost seriousness. The Report points to three main areas where security was inadequate. First, physical weaknesses, in particular in the communications rooms in the H Blocks and at the main gate. Second, poor security procedures, in particular inadequate searching, unsatisfactory control of visits, and flaws in the control of prisoner movement, in the selection of orderlies, and in the arrangements for responding to alarms. And third, failures by individuals who were negligent or who did not carry out their duties. The report shows that staff at the Maze were complacent about security and that there was widespread laxness and carelessness in the performance of duties at both supervisory and other levels. This conclusion is a matter of the greatest concern.

6. There is one other specific point that I would draw to the attention of the House. The Report records that before the escape a Probation Officer seconded to the Maze Prison in January 1983 had admitted to being a member of the Provisional IRA in the early 1970s. He has since been dismissed from the Probation Service. Following investigations by the RUC, Sir James says there is no evidence that he had any involvement in the escape.

7. The report makes 73 recommendations covering each of the three areas to which I have referred:- enhanced physical security measures; improved security procedures; enhanced training and investigations with a view to possible disciplinary action in the cases of certain members of staff. I accept the analysis and all of the recommendations. The most urgent measures were implemented at once, as I informed the House on 24 October. Twenty-one recommendations have already been put into effect. Thirty-eight will be carried out as soon as possible. And the remaining fourteen, as the report proposes, will be the subject of urgent review.

8. As a result of the action taken, the control room in each H Block has been made secure against armed attack; an electric lock has been installed at the main gate; a control point secure from armed attack is in place and other security improvements have been made. Plans for a new main gate complex with a remote control locking system are being drawn up. A study of closed-circuit television linkage between each H Block and the main control room has been commissioned. Changes in the security

procedures, most notably searching, have already been implemented and action will follow in other areas. Discussions are being held this afternoon between my officials and representatives of both the Prison Officers Association and the Governors Association in Northern Ireland about the Report.

9. The report analyses the policy changes made at the end of the hunger strike and on other occasions and concludes that, taken singly or together, they played no significant rôle in facilitating the escape.

10. The report is critical of the oversight of security arrangements at the prison by the Prison Department of the Northern Ireland Office and recommends the strengthening of its staffing. This is being done. A team has also been set up dedicated solely to the urgent implementation of each of the recommendations. I have instructed it to report to me on the progress being made.

11. While recognising the enormous difficulties involved in running an establishment as large and complex as the Maze, the report concludes that the extent of the deficiencies in management and in the prison's physical defences amounted to a major failure in security for which the Governor who carries the ultimate responsibility for the state of the prison must be held accountable. In the light of the Report's observations the Governor has resigned and his successor is taking up his duties today. The Governor has served 34 years in the prison service with dedication and courage and that should not go unremarked;

I pay tribute to it. The Assistant Governor in charge of security has been moved today, and the Principal Officer concerned with security was replaced shortly after the escape. A Governor from headquarters has been appointed to investigate the actions of officers named in the Report, including the Assistant Governor and Principal Officer, and disciplinary measures will be taken if they are found to be justified.

12. Sir James' strictures do not extend to all staff at the Maze. As he says, the Service contains many men of ability and courage who respond well in a crisis and who are ready to risk their lives in doing their duty. A number of such officers, including Officer Ferris who lost his life, are specifically commended by Sir James Hennessy. Though for reasons of personal safety it is not right to publish their names I can assure the House that I have noted Sir James's comments and will be taking appropriate action.

13. As I said to the House in October, the escape of so many prisoners represents a considerable set-back to law enforcement in Northern Ireland. It is also a blot on the distinguished reputation of the prison service. This thorough report has uncovered a number of serious shortcomings and some grave operational mistakes for which the highest price has been paid. The recommendations are designed as far as possible to ensure that the shortcomings are rectified. I am determined to take them forward with urgency and resolution. The Northern Ireland Prison Service has an enormously difficult task but it is of the greatest importance to the community at large that it maintains

the highest standards of professionalism and discipline which will enable it to carry out its essential role in the maintenance of law and order in the Province. I commend Sir James' Report to the House.

E.R.

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Prime Minister
The latest draft of Mr. Prior's statement.
2
Passages included
since 3rd draft
are underlined
FRCB
25.1

SIXTH DRAFT

Much better
balance now

C. Press

STATEMENT BY SECRETARY OF STATE ON HENNESSY REPORT

1. I shall, with permission Mr Speaker, make a statement on the Report, published today, by Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Prisons, Sir James Hennessy, on his inquiry into security arrangements at HM Prison Maze bearing on the escape on Sunday 25 September 1983, and on action I have taken following that Report.

Combination
of paras
2 and 3

2. I should like first to record my gratitude to Sir James Hennessy and his colleagues for the way they undertook their inquiry and for their comprehensive report. I am publishing it in full save for a small number of deletions which are clearly marked, and which have been made for security reasons only.

3. The Maze Prison holds the largest concentration of terrorists anywhere in Western Europe. It is, in Sir James' words "a prison without parallel in the United Kingdom, unique in size, and in the continuity and tenacity of its protests and disturbances. In no other prison that we have seen "he said" have the problems faced by the authorities been so great". Sir James goes on to point out that its population is unlike that of any other prison, and he says that "nowhere else in the United Kingdom have there been such prolonged and wide scale protests of so horrendous a nature". He records that 22 members of the prison service have lost their lives through terrorist action, including a Deputy Governor and others from the Maze. I know the House will join with me in paying tribute to them.

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E.R.

Let us not forget the unique demands which we put on the service as we consider the lessons to be learnt from the blackest day in the troubled history of the Northern Ireland prison service.

4. The report describes the escape from the Maze in detail. The broad outline which I gave the House on 24 October stands. The report draws attention to the careful planning of a small group of prisoners and to the outside help they received, particularly through the smuggling in of five guns. It also shows the ruthlessness of the prisoners, who stabbed one prison officer to death and seriously injured five others.

5. The Report is extremely critical of many aspects of security at the Maze. The House will regard these failings with the utmost seriousness. The Report points to three main areas where security was inadequate. First, physical weaknesses, in particular in the communications rooms in the H Blocks and at the main gate. Second, poor security procedures, in particular inadequate searching, unsatisfactory control of visits, and flaws in the control of prisoner movement, in the selection of orderlies, and in the arrangements for responding to alarms. And third, failures by individuals who were negligent or who did not carry out their duties. The report shows that staff at the Maze were complacent about security and that there was widespread laxness and carelessness in the performance of duties at both supervisory and other levels. This conclusion is a matter of the greatest concern.

Previously
in para
12

Previously
para 11

6. There is one other specific point that I would draw to the attention of the House. It was discovered that a Probation Officer seconded to the Maze Prison in January 1983 had been a member of the Provisional IRA in the early 1970s. He has since been dismissed from the Probation Service. Sir James says there is no evidence that he had any involvement in the escape.

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7. The report makes 73 recommendations covering each of the three areas to which I have referred:- by enhanced physical security measures, by improved security procedures; by enhanced training and by investigations with a view to possible disciplinary action in the cases of certain members of staff. I accept the analysis and all of the recommendations. The most urgent measures were implemented at once, as I informed the House on 24 October. 21 recommendations have already been put into effect. 38 will be carried out as soon as possible. And the remaining 14, as the report proposes, will be the subject of urgent review.

8. As a result of the action taken the control room in each H Block is being made secure against armed attack; an electric lock has been installed at the main gate; a control point secure from armed attack is in place and other security improvements have been made. Plans for a new main gate complex with a remote control locking system are being drawn up. A study of closed-circuit television linkage between each H Block and the main control room has been commissioned. Changes in the security procedures, most notably searching, have already been implemented and action will follow in other areas. Discussions are being held this afternoon between my officials and representatives of both the Prison Officers Association and the Governors Association in Northern Ireland about the Report.

9. The report analyses the policy changes made at the end of the hunger strike and on other occasions and concludes that, taken singly or together, they played no significant role in facilitating the escape.

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10. The report is critical of the oversight of security arrangements at the prison by the Prison Department of the Northern Ireland Office and recommends the strengthening of its staffing. This is being done. A team has also been set up dedicated solely to the urgent implementation of each of the recommendations. I have instructed it to report regularly to me on the progress being made.

11. In the light of the Report's observations the Governor has resigned and his successor is taking up his duties today. The Governor has served 34 years in the prison service with dedication and courage and it should not go unremarked; I pay tribute to it.

The Assistant Governor in charge of security has been moved today, and the Principal Officer concerned with security was replaced shortly after the escape. A Governor from headquarters has been appointed to investigate the actions of officers named in the Report, including the Assistant Governor and Principal Officer, and disciplinary measures will be taken if they are found to be justified.

12. Sir James' strictures do not extend to all staff at the Maze. As he says, the Service contains many men of ability and courage who respond well in a crisis and who are ready to risk their lives in doing their duty. A number of such officers including Officer Ferris who lost his life are specifically commended by Sir James Hennessy. Though for reasons of personal safety it is not right to publish their names I can assure the House that I have noted Sir James's comments and will be taking appropriate action.

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13. As I said to the House in October, the escape of so many prisoners represents a considerable set-back to law enforcement in Northern Ireland. It is also a blot on the distinguished reputation of the prison service. This thorough report has uncovered a number of serious shortcomings and some grave operational mistakes for which the highest price has been paid. The recommendations are designed as far as possible to ensure that the shortcomings are rectified. I am determined to take them forward with urgency and resolution. The Northern Ireland Prison Service has an enormously difficult task but it is of the greatest importance to the community at large that it maintains the highest standards of professionalism and discipline which will enable it to carry out its essential role in the maintenance of law and order in the Province. I fully commend Sir James' recommendations to the House.

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Prime Minister

NORTHERN IRELAND OFFICE

WHITEHALL

LONDON SW1A 2AZ

This is a comprehensive and serious statement. The question is whether it does enough to disarm criticism of Mr. Prior and Mr. Scott. Would you like me to show it to the hard President tomorrow morning and get his view?

Tim Flesher Esq
10 Downing Street
LONDON SW1

24 January 1984

Dear Tim
Yes please.
mf
FERB
24.1

THE HENNESSY REPORT

I sent over copies of Sir James Hennessy's report into the Maze escape last September to Robin Butler yesterday. I now attach the first draft of a statement which Mr Prior proposes to make on Thursday 26 January. It is intended that the report should also be published (with some small deletions in the interests of security) on Thursday afternoon.

I should be grateful for your confirmation that the Prime Minister is content with these proposals.

I am sending a copy of this letter and its enclosures to the Private Secretaries to the Home Secretary, Secretary of State for Defence, Lord Privy Seal, the Chief Whips in both Houses and Sir Robert Armstrong.

Yours ever

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DRAFT STATEMENT BY SECRETARY OF STATE ON HENNESSY REPORT

I shall, with permission Mr Speaker, make a statement on the Report, published today, by Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Prisons, Sir James Hennessy, on his inquiry into security arrangements at HM Prison Maze bearing on the escape on Sunday 25 September 1983, and on action I have taken following that Report.

2. A small number of deletions which are clearly marked, have been made from the published report for security reasons only - to avoid identification of individual members of the Prison Service for reasons of personal safety; to protect the future security of the prison; and to remove certain detailed references to security vetting procedures.

3. I should like to record my gratitude to Sir James Hennessy and his colleagues for the way they undertook their inquiry and for their comprehensive report.

4. Sir James draws attention to the fact that the Maze Prison holds the largest concentration of terrorists in Western Europe. It is in his words "a prison without parallel in the United Kingdom, unique in size, and in the continuity and tenacity of its protests and disturbances. In no other prison that we have seen have the problems faced by the authorities been so great". He goes on to point out that its population is unlike that of any other prison, and says that "nowhere else in the United Kingdom have there been such prolonged and wide scale protests of so horrendous a nature". He records that 22 members of the prison service have lost their lives through terrorist action, including a Deputy Governor and others from the Maze.

5. The report describes the escape in detail. The broad outline which I gave the House on 24 October stands. The report draws attention to the careful planning of a group of prisoners and to the outside help they received, particularly through the smuggling in of five guns. It also shows the ruthlessness of

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of the prisoners, who stabbed one prison officer to death and injured five others. Only by good fortune and skilled medical attention did 3 of these survive.

Ambiguous: does this mean that 2 of the 5 died?
It is ambiguous - 1 of the 5.

6. The House will take this report very seriously. It is extremely critical of security at the Maze and exposes a number of deep seated failures. It points to three main areas where security was inadequate. First, physical weaknesses, in particular in the communications rooms of the H Blocks and at the main gate. Second, poor security procedures, in particular inadequate searching, unsatisfactory control of visits, and flaws in the control of prisoner movement, in the selection of orderlies, and in the arrangements for responding to alarms. And third, failures by individuals who were negligent or did not carry out their duties.

7. The report makes [73] recommendations covering each of these three areas: by enhanced physical security measures; by improved security procedures; and by investigations with a view to possible disciplinary action in the cases of certain members of staff. I accept the analysis and all the recommendations. The most urgent measures were implemented at once, as I informed the House in October. [] recommendations have already been put into effect. [] will be carried out straight away. And the remaining [], as the report proposes, will be the subject of urgent review.

8. As a result of the action taken work is in hand to make the control room in each H Block secure against armed attack; an electric lock has been installed at the main gate; a control point secure from armed attack is in place and other security improvements have been made. Plans for a new main gate complex with a remote control locking system are being drawn up. A study of closed-circuit television linkage between each H Block and the main control room has been commissioned. Changes in the security procedures, most notably searching, have already been implemented and action will follow in other areas. Discussions are being held this afternoon between my officials and representatives of both the Prison Officers Association and the Governors Association in Northern Ireland about the Report.

9. The report analyses the policy changes made at the end of the hunger strike and on other occasions and concludes that none played a significant role in the escape.

10. The report is critical of the oversight of security arrangements at the prison by the Prison Department of the Northern Ireland Office and recommends the strengthening of its staffing. This is being done. A team has also been set up to carry the recommendations forward urgently. I have instructed it to report to the Minister responsible for prisons and to me on the progress being made.

Does His sentence point a finger at Nick Scott?

It does lead to. It could be better put.

11. The report also refers to a specific and serious vetting failure. A Probation Officer seconded to the Maze Prison in January 1983 had been a member of the Provisional IRA in the early 1970s. Though he admitted his membership to a senior colleague in the Probation Service a month before the escape, it was not until after that the prison authorities were told. Sir James Hennessy says there is no evidence that he had any involvement in the escape and he has since been dismissed from the Probation Service.

12. The report shows that staff at the Maze were complacent about security and that there was widespread laxness and casualness in the performance of duties at both supervisory and other levels. This conclusion is a matter of the greatest concern. In the light of the Report's observations the Governor has resigned and his successor is taking up his duties today. I should like to take this opportunity to pay tribute to the Governor's contribution to the Prison Service over very many years. The Assistant Governor in charge of security has been redeployed today, and the Principal Officer concerned with security has already been redeployed. The supervision of security at the Maze is therefore now the responsibility of different people. A Governor from Headquarters has been appointed to investigate the actions of named officers, including the Assistant Governor and Principal Officer, and disciplinary measures will be taken if that is appropriate.

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13. Sir James Hennessy recognises that the weaknesses and failings he has identified to some extent derive from the recent history of the Northern Ireland Prison Service. Before the troubles it dealt with some 600 mainly petty criminals. Now, as he points out, it holds some 2,500, three quarters associated with terrorism. The expansion of the service from 300 to the present 3,000 in just over 10 years is without precedent anywhere. Staff had to be recruited quickly and in consequence standards were drastically reduced. Many inexperienced officers had to be promoted. This is not a criticism of those in charge at the time. There was no alternative. Neither is it a wholesale criticism of the Northern Ireland Prison Service today. As Sir James Hennessy says, the Service contains many men of ability and courage who respond well in a crisis and who are ready to risk their lives in doing their duty. A number of such officers are specifically commended by Sir James Hennessy. Though for reasons of personal safety it is not right to publish their names and actions I can assure the House that I have noted Sir James's comments and will be taking appropriate action.

14. As I said to the House in October, the escape of so many prisoners represents a considerable set-back to law enforcement in Northern Ireland. This thorough report indicates a number of serious shortcomings and grave operational mistakes. I am determined to take it forward with urgency and resolution. The Northern Ireland Prison Service has an enormously difficult job to do but it is of the greatest importance to the community at large that it maintains the highest standards of professionalism and discipline which will enable it to carry out its essential role in the maintenance of law and order in the Province.

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24 JAN 1984

