

## MASS ESCAPE - HMP MAZE CELLULAR - SUNDAY 25 SEPTEMBER 1983

1. At 1645 hours whilst at Armagh on private business I was advised by the Duty Officer, Stormont, of an incident at Maze. I contacted the prison and was informed that there had been an escape in which firearms had been used. I immediately proceeded to HM Prison, Maze Cellular, where I arrived at 1740 hours.

2. On arrival I was informed that H7 Block had been taken over by armed prisoners who had hijacked the kitchen lorry and had proceeded to the main gate. Precise details are contained later in this report.

3. In company with the Governor I visited H7 and the main gate, speaking to a number of the officers involved in the incident. We also visited the Hospital Block and H8 Block where we observed the transfer of the inmates from H7.

4. The Governor and I went to the RVH to speak to Mrs Adams who was awaiting the result of surgery on her husband - Officer Adams - who had been wounded in the head. We also visited relatives of the late Officer Ferris.

5. On return to the Maze we learned that 15 escapees were back in custody leaving 23 still at large. I left the Maze at 0130 hours on 26.9.83.

6. On Monday 26 September 1983 I proceeded to the Maze accompanied by Governors Scott, O'Loughlin and P/Officer Hanna to establish in detail the events prior to and during the mass escape.

6.1 The following is a summary of the events in H7 Block on Sunday 25 September 1983 from unlock until prior to the commencement of the incident -

0800 hours staff on duty checked numbers correct -  
night duty staff went off duty.

Numbers in wings at 0800 hours -

"A" Wing	-	31
"B" Wing	-	31
"C" Wing	-	30
"D" Wing	-	33
		<hr/>
TOTAL		125
		<hr/>

Prisoners unlocked for washing and breakfast. Exercise took place in the respective exercise yards during the forenoon.

At 1020 hours Prisoner 216 Kerr "D" wing refused to be transferred to Ward 18 Musgrave Park Hospital.

1115 hours Fr Rooney, Roman Catholic Priest, was admitted to H7 Block "C" Wing to celebrate Mass. 54 prisoners attended Mass in the Dining Hall "C" Wing. Prisoners returned to their respective wings following attendance at Mass at 1210 hours.

Dinner was served in the Dining Halls at 1215 hours.

All prisoners were returned to their cells and locked at 1240 hours. Prisoner 129 McCourt was committed to "C" wing from Ward 18 Musgrave Park Hospital.

Day staff went off duty to lunch at approximately 1300 hours. Nothing untoward was reported during the lunch period. Chief Officers Bowers, Senior Officer Buick and Trades Class I Kitchen were present in H7 during lunch-time carrying out a key check.

The Day Staff resumed duty at 1400 hours and carried out a numbers check.

Numbers in Wings at 1400 hours -

**CONFIDENTIAL**

"A" Wing	-	31
"B" Wing	-	31
"C" Wing	-	31
"D" Wing	-	33
		<hr/>
TOTAL		126
		<hr/>

Following the numbers check                      prisoners were unlocked for association which takes place in the Dining Halls.

At 1415 hours 5 prisoners from "D" wing went to the Medical Inspection Room for medication and returned to the wing.

At 1420 hours 4 prisoners from "C" wing went to the Medical Inspection Room for medication and returned to the wing.

#### 6.2 STAFF ON DUTY IN H7 PRIOR TO THE INCIDENT

NAME		POST DETAILED	LOCATION AT TIME OF INCIDENT
R George	A/PO	i/c H7	PO's Office
G Smylie	SO	2 i/c H7	Circle
McFaul	Off	Main Gate (H7)	Main Gate (H7)
Ward	Off	"A" Wing	"A" Wing
Brown	Off	"B" Wing	"B" Wing
Law	Off	"B" Wing	"B" Wing
Harra	Off	"D" Wing	"D" Wing
Reid (1)	Off	"C" Wing	Mess
Hutchinson	Off	"B" Wing	Crossing Circle to toilet
Murphy	Off	Circle	Circle
Hayes	Off	Fatigues	Mess
Smith (17)	Off	"D" Wing	"D" Wing D/Hall
Reynolds	Off	Fatigues	Mess
Palmer	Off	Hall Guard	"A" & "B" Grille Gates
McVeigh	Off	Main Gate (H7)	C & D Grille Gates
Goldstraw	Off	"C" Wing	"C" Wing D/Hall

**CONFIDENTIAL**

NAME		POST DETAILED	LOCATION AT TIME OF INCIDENT
Williams	Off	"C" Wing	"C" Wing
Leak	Off	"A" Wing	Toilet
Adams	Off	Control	Control
Porter	Off	"A" Wing	?
Gwilt	Off	"C" & "D" Grille Gates	Hall Guard
Molloy	Off	"A" and "B" Grille gates	?
Graham (1)	Off	"D" Wing	?
Doherty (3)	Off	Fatigues	?

6.3 APPROXIMATE LOCATION OF PRISONERS AT THE START OF THE INCIDENT -

NAME		WING LOCATION	LOCATION AT START OF INCIDENT
51/80 Mead		"C" Wing	Circle - Medical Orderly
185/82 Storey		"C" Wing	Circle - "C" Wing Orderly
448/76 McFarlane		"C" Wing	Yard - Yard Orderly
323/79 McAllister		"C" Wing	Officers' Mess - Stores Orderly
Unidentified		"A" Wing	Between A & B Grilles - "A" Wing Orderly
216/79 Kerr		"C" Wing	Between C & D Grilles - assumed returned from MI room
907 Smyth		"B" Wing	"B" Wing Ablutions
385 Murray		"B" Wing	"B" Wing
285/78 McDonnell		"C" Wing	"C" Wing
333/82 Russell		"C" Wing	"C" Wing
183/82 Finnuacane		"C" Wing	"C" Wing
138/77 McCann		"C" Wing	"C" Wing
446/76 Clarke		"D" Wing	"D" Wing
58 Kelly		"D" Wing	Circle - Reason not clear

It is assumed that all other prisoners were located in their respective wings.

## INCIDENT

7.1 On Sunday 25 September 1983 at approximately 1445 hours prisoners in H Block 7 overpowered staff on duty and took control of the Block. Various weapons were used including guns. The prisoners commandeered the prison meals delivery van and 38 prisoners forced the prison officer driver to drive the van from the block through Segment Gates I and 8 to the prison main gate/Tally Lodge. The prisoners overpowered the staff on duty at this location and although eventually the alarm was raised the prisoners managed to get out of the prison proper. The prisoners at this point disappeared and fled in different directions.

Prison Officer Mr Ferris was stabbed and died and Prison Officer Mr Adams was shot in the head and is seriously ill. 6 other Officers were injured and taken to hospital.

7.2 The following is the sequence of events. At approximately 1445 hours Prisoner 51/80 Mead approached Senior Officer Smylie in the Circle area H Block 7 and requested to see the Principal in charge of the Block. Senior Officer George who was the Acting Principal Officer was in his office and Mr Smylie took Mead to see him. On entering the office Mead produced a gun. Mr Smylie attempted to disarm Mead and in the struggle Mead struck Mr Smylie across the face with the gun. Sounds of a disturbance could be heard coming from the Circle area. Prisoner 185/82 Storey entered the Principal Officers office carrying a gun and pointed same at Mr Smylie's head. Storey then took charge. Mr Smylie was tied up and Mr George ordered to sit and answer the telephone in a normal manner.

## CIRCLE AREA

8.1 Officer Murphy who was on duty in the Circle area and controlling the grille gates leading to the wings was called to the Officers Tea Room by Prisoner 323/79 McAllister. McAllister produced what appeared to be a gun and forced Mr Murphy into the tea room.

Prisoner Storey also produced a gun and Mr Murphy and Officer Reid (1), Hutchinson, Hayes and Reynolds were overpowered and tied-up and hooded. The Circle keys were taken from Mr Murphy.

#### CONTROL

8.2 Officer Leak was in the toilet when he heard two shots. He left the toilet and saw Prisoner 58 Kelly pointing a pistol into the Control Room. Kelly turned the gun on Leak and forced him into the Officers tea room. Mr Leak was tied up and hooded. This would establish that prisoner Kelly shot Officer Adams who was on duty in the Control. It is not clear at this stage if the control grille was locked before Mr Adams was shot.

#### MEDICAL INSPECTION ROOM

8.3 Hospital Officer Nevins was on duty in the Medical Inspection Room when Prisoner Storey entered and forced him at gun-point to the Officers tea room. Whilst in the tea room he heard 2 shots and shortly afterwards was ordered by a masked prisoner to attend to the medical needs of Mr Adams. Initially the treatment was carried out in the Control and then at Mr Nevin's request it was carried out in the toilet area.

#### A & B GRILLE

8.4 Officer Palmer was on duty at "A" and "B" Grille Gates when a prisoner, identified only as an "A" wing orderly, approached him from the Circle area. The prisoner produced a long bladed screw driver and forced Mr Palmer to hand over the Grille keys. He was then taken to A and B Classrooms and tied, hooded and stripped.

#### C & D GRILLE

8.5 Officer McVeigh was on duty at "C" and "D" Grille Gates and was admitting Prisoner 216/79 Kerr into "D" Wing. It is assumed that Kerr was at the MI room as he was listed as in need of medication, when Kerr produced a gun. Mr McVeigh was forced to hand over the

Grille keys. He was taken to "D" wing stripped and then to "C" and "D" classrooms and tied.

#### A WING

8.6 Officers Ward and Porter were on duty in "A" Wing when they were overpowered by inmates, unidentified at this stage. They were then stripped and taken to "A" and "B" Classroom, tied and hooded.

#### B WING

8.7 Officers Brown and Law were on duty in "B" Wing. Mr Brown was in the ablutions area when he was forced to the ground by Prisoner 907 Smyth and another unidentified prisoner. A metal object was held at his head. He was taken to cell 26 and stripped. Mr Law observed the Officer at "A" and "B" Grille Gate being held at knife point but Mr Law was over-powered by Prisoner Murray. His keys were taken and he was hooded and stripped. Both Mr Law and Mr Brown were taken to "A" and "B" classroom and tied.

#### C WING

8.8 Officers Williams and Goldstraw were on duty in "C" Wing. Mr Williams was standing at the Dining Hall Grille gate when he was overpowered by 285/78 McDonnell, 333/82 Russell and another unidentified prisoner. He was taken to a cell and stripped and then taken to "C" and "D" classroom and tied. Mr Goldstraw was in the Dining Hall when he was overpowered by a number of prisoners, as yet unidentified. He was taken from the Dining Hall and forced to the ground by Prisoners 183/82 Finnucane and 138/77 McCann. He was taken to a cell and stripped and then taken to "A" and "B" classrooms and tied.

#### D WING

8.9 Officers Harra and Smith were on duty in "D" wing. Officer Graham was detailed duty in "D" Wing but it is unclear where he was located at the time of the incident.

Mr Harra was standing in the ablutions area when Prisoner 446/76 Clarke ordered him to lie on the floor. This he did and he was hooded. Prisoner Storey then took Mr Harra to the Control Room and ordered him to answer all telephone calls in a normal manner. Storey said he would be shot if he tried to raise the alarm.

Mr Smith entered the Dining Hall and had a knife put to his throat. He was ordered to lie down and was hooded, tied and stripped and then taken to "C" and "D" Classrooms.

#### LOCK GATES

8.10 Officer McFall was on duty at the lock gates. He was approached from the yard side of the gates by Prisoner 448/76 McFarlane. McFarlane informed Mr McFall that he had been sent to clean the Sentry Box, which is located within the lock. Mr McFall opened the inner gate to admit McFarlane when 2 prisoners, as yet unidentified, appeared from the side of the gate. Each of these prisoners had guns. Mr McFall was forced at gun-point by MrFarlane to walk to the Block. Mr McFall was taken to the Officers tea-room and hooded, stripped and tied. He was then taken to "C" Wing Dining Hall.

#### KITCHAN VAN DRIVER

8.11 Officer McLaughlin was on duty as kitchen van Driver. At approximately 1525 hours he passed through the lock gate of H Block 7 to deliver the tea meal; he reported that everying appeared to be normal. As Officer McLaughlin started to unload the meal from the van, Prisoner Storey put a gun to his head and forced him into the Medical Inspection Room. Whilst at this location he was threatened by Prisoner Kelly who told him to do as he was told or he would be "blown away". Mr McLaughlin was then forced to drive the van from the Block to the Main Gate/Tally Lodge via Segment Gate I and the Admin Gate.

**HALL GUARD**

8.9(a) Officer Gwilt who was on duty at this location was overpowered by an inmate in similar circumstances to those which applied in the Lock Gates (paragraph 8.10).

**SEGMENT GATE I**

8.12 The van proceeded through Segment Gate I unchallenged.

**ADMIN GATE**

8.13 Officer Ireland was on duty at the Admin Gate. He identified the van driver to be Officer McLaughlin. The van was allowed to proceed through this gate without being searched.

**MAIN GATE COMPLEX**

After the van left the Admin Gate area the driver was forced to take the vehicle to the Transport Parking area where most of the uniformed prisoners disembarked making their way to the Tally Lodge. They rushed into the gate area where they succeeded in taking over the controls of the main gate. However the staff in the Tally Lodge resisted strongly and in the ensuing affray one officers was stabbed and died shortly afterwards. A number of other members of staff were injured.

In the meantime the driver was forced to take the van to the inner main gate where it was permitted to enter the air lock area. It has not been clearly established whether Officer Scott personally admitted the van (under threat) or was removed from the post to the Tally prior to the van entering the area.

The outer main gate was opened by a prisoner at the Controls but by this time the alarm had been raised and two officers sitting

in their cars outside the gate drove into the area blocking the exit. Other staff returning from their meal breaks attempted to prevent the escape and again some were injured including one receiving a gunshot wound to the leg.

#### THE CULMINATION

9 An officer's car was hijacked by an escaping prisoner who crashed into the gate at the Halftown Road - the occupant was apprehended. Three inmates were prevented from leaving the gate area but the others ran across country chased by members of staff. A further seven, including prisoner Murray, who was wounded by the Army sentry, were apprehended. By 1100 on 26 September the Security Forces had apprehended another 6 inmates bringing the total returned to custody to 17. At the time of this report 21 inmates remain unlawfully at large.

#### CONCLUSION

10. There are aspects of this serious incident which give me cause for concern, including the following -

- (a) The fact that inmates were in possessions of firearms indicates that they and their supporters outside were able to breach the security measures in use at the prison.
- (b) The ease with which prisoners were able to gain access to the secure area at the doorway into the Block and to the double main gate at the perimeter fence.
- (c) The fact that the escaping prisoners were allowed to drive the hijacked vehicle through two segment gates without being challenged.
- (d) The fact that the block staff of 24 were overpowered without an alarm being raised.

**CONFIDENTIAL**

- (e) The fact that inmates were able to gain access to the communications room after the officer in charge there (this is a single post) had been shot and severely injured.
  
- (f) On a slightly different note I am concerned that staff supervision in the block permitted 5 officers (3 in the tea room, 1 in the toilet and 1 on his way to the toilet) to be off their posts at the same time and that an apparently abnormal number of inmates were in the central administrative area at the time of the take-over.

The Governor is preparing a comprehensive report on this incident which may provide an explanation for some or all of these points.

I wish to place on record my appreciation of the acts of considerable courage by officers who were involved in resisting this escape attempt.

*William J. Kerr.*

W J KERR

DIRECTOR OF PRISON OPERATIONS

26 September 1983

cc Mr Palmer  
Mr Jackson  
Miss Simmons  
Mr Ginn  
Mr Semple  
Mr Wilson - file

HM Chief Inspector of Prisons -  
6 copies

**CONFIDENTIAL**