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Woodward 'considering' response to application for killer's release

(Allison Morris, [Irish News](#))

Secretary of State Shaun Woodward is said to be "considering" his response to an application to have loyalist killer Stephen McClean released from prison just nine years into a double life sentence.

McClean (37), pictured, and LVF associate Noel McCready (40) are serving life sentences in Magha-berry prison for the murder of friends Damien Trainor and Philip Allen in Poyntzpass in Co Armagh in 1998.

The Sentence Review Commission (SRC) has recommended that McClean be freed on early release.

McCready's application was denied and he is expected to appeal the decision but will remain in prison for the foreseeable future.

A spokesman from the Prison Service said yesterday (Friday) that the preliminary findings of the SRC have now been sent to Mr Woodward's office.

"The secretary of state is aware of the preliminary indication they made on the application by Mr McClean for early release," he said.

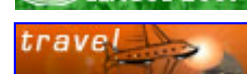
"He is currently examining what they have said, is considering the facts and will make a determination in the next few days."

The two LVF killers were sentenced to life in prison in February 2000. Under the terms of the Good Friday Agreement both were eligible for release in July of the same year.

Just days before their release date the pair were arrested while on parole and charged with the attempted murder of a Co Down man, brutally beaten following a row over paramilitary flags.

Both were later cleared of all charges but their release was stopped by the SRC after the then secretary of state Peter

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Mandelson intervened.

In July 2005 the House of Lords dismissed an appeal for release by McClean.

However, McClean, who is said by prison sources to now be a "model prisoner" is thought to have convinced the review panel that met on September 7, that he has turned his back on violence.

Mr Trainor's father Sean has called on the secretary of state to intervene in the case and ask the SRC to keep his son's killers behind bars.

"They should serve life for what they did. That's the way it should be," Mr Trainor said.

"The heartache they have caused you couldn't describe."

SDLP councillor Sharon Haughey said she was "shocked and deeply disappointed" that the killer had been recommended for early release.

"Stephen McClean and Noel McCready committed one of the cruellest killings of the Troubles," she said.

"They claimed two young lives, two innocent lives and they should serve their full sentences."

McClean is expected to be questioned by police ahead of his release in connection with the brutal murder of loyalist David Keys on the LVF wing of the Maze prison in 1998.

During a preliminary hearing this week into the death, Coroner John Leckey said the whereabouts of men imprisoned on the LVF wing of the jail should be traced.

September 17, 2007

This article appeared first in the September 15, 2007 edition of the [Irish News](#).

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