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Press Notice

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in copy

NIO/10/15

Stormont Castle, Belfast
16 October 1974

MAZE PRISON

About 6 00 pm yesterday four prison officers in a Republican convicted prisoners compound at the Maze Prison were attacked by a number of inmates. Three were injured; one is detained in hospital with a suspected fracture of the skull.

The Governor of the prison took steps to have the men responsible for the attack removed from the compound. Other prisoners in the compound prevented them from leaving. While this was happening prisoners in this and other Republican convicted prisoner compounds were seen to be arming themselves with weapons made from broken beds and to be putting on masks and padding made from bedclothes.

Prison staff prepared to go into the compound to remove the prisoners responsible for attacking the prison officers but before they could do so a number of huts in Republican compounds were set on fire.

A number of prisoners broke out of their compounds and some attempted to reach the main gate but were prevented from doing so by prison staff. Other buildings were set alight including the prison hospital and kitchen. Prisoners attempted to set fire to the prison cell block where four prisoners were being held.

Prison staff rescued the four men and put out the fire.

All visits and privileges have been suspended until further notice.

At the request of the Governor during the evening, security forces immediately took action to ensure that the perimeter of the prison was secure. This did not involve any contact between security forces and the prisoners and no prisoners were hurt. At one stage however it was found necessary to use CS gas and baton

rounds to prevent prisoners from creating damage to the perimeter of the camp.

The authorities had made contingency plans against a major disturbance engineered for propaganda purposes and Army reinforcements were quickly brought in by helicopter from various parts of the Province.

A further statement will be issued during today. An assessment of damage will be carried out at the earliest opportunity and appropriate administrative arrangements following the disturbances are in hand.

NOTE:

This statement was telephoned to Belfast Offices early this morning.