

CONFIDENTIAL

7 MAR 1984

MR JACKSON OR.



PS/MR SCOTT (B & L) (MUFAX)

PRISONS: DEATH OF GOVERNOR McCONNELL

Following the killing of Governor McConnell by PIRA on Tuesday morning I cancelled my trip to the Scottish Governors Conference and returned immediately to the office. I was accordingly able to visit Mrs McConnell (whom I know personally). Both Mr Kerr and Miss Simmons also visited her as well as the Prison Service Welfare Officer from HQ. Mrs McConnell was remarkably calm and steady and in control of herself in spite of the appalling shock and horror of the event which she and her small daughter (3) witnessed.

2. There was no advance intelligence on this attack by PIRA and it was their first deliberate killing of a member of the Prison Service since late 1980. The PIRA statement issued afterwards claimed that the killing was not the restart of a campaign of murder of prison staff but that Mr McConnell was selected because of his involvement in the beating of Republican prisoners and the allocation of them to menial tasks.

3. The PIRA statement is the usual garbage and half truth. Governor McConnell was third in charge at the Maze. He was a vigorous and enthusiastic man always ready to speak his mind forthrightly to prisoners and staff alike. He would have been a well recognised figure in all the H Blocks.

4. During the move of prisoners from H7 to H8 after the escape he was in charge of H7. Allegations of staff brutality and bites by prison dogs during the move between H7 and H8 are being investigated by the RUC. There is no indication whatever that Governor McConnell had been involved in any way in this alleged brutal treatment.

5. As to work, the use of the term "menial tasks" is a standard PIRA term of denigration to describe prison industries. Governor

CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL



2

McConnell was in charge of the Maze Work Allocation Board at the end of the Republican "no work" protest in November 1982.

6. Governor McConnell appeared on TV recently at his own request as spokesman for the Governors about "political interference" and the Hennessy Report. He later felt that this appearance might have drawn him unfavourably to the attention of paramilitary organisations and wrote a letter to his wife to be opened on his death. He did not discuss his fears outside the family.

7. All prison staff are aware of the need to take careful security precautions at home and provision has been made for as much protection as possible to be available in line with the similar position of the members of other local security services, eg the RUC.

8. We have asked the RUC for their assessment of the threat to prison staff in the light of this attack.

9. Mr McConnell's funeral will be held on Thursday morning and I will be in touch again about the Minister's possible attendance.

*B D Palmer*  
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B D PALMER

7 March 1984

cc PS/S of S (B & L) M  
PS/PUS (B & L) M  
PS/Sir E Bell  
Mr Brennan M  
Mr Bourn  
Mr Buxton  
Mr Merifield  
Mr Angel M  
Mr Gilliland  
Mr Doyne-Ditmas  
Mr Norris M  
Mr Edis  
Mr Reeve  
Mr Boys Smith M  
Mr Wood M  
Mr Jackson  
Mr Kerr  
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Mr D McNeill  
Mr Ginn  
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