

Labert draft statement.

Miscellaneous

DRAFT 2

USE T-107
P/A

16/11/91

PLS See alive Whitehouse
Re # 273 2199.

HOME SECRETARY'S STATEMENT ON BRIXTON ESCAPE
8 JULY 1991

WITH PERMISSION, MR SPEAKER, I WISH TO MAKE
A STATEMENT ABOUT THE ESCAPE OF TWO CATEGORY
A HIGH RISK PRISONERS FROM BRIXTON PRISON
USING A FIREARM ON THE MORNING OF 7 JULY.
THEY WERE AWAITING TRIAL AT THE CENTRAL
CRIMINAL COURT FOR SERIOUS OFFENCES INCLUDING
CONSPIRACY TO MURDER AND CONSPIRACY TO CAUSE
EXPLOSIONS.

YESTERDAY MORNING, THE TWO PRISONERS NAMED
PEARSE GERRARD MCAULEY AND NESSAN QUINLIVAN
ATTENDED THE FIRST ROMAN CATHOLIC MASS OF
THE DAY. THE SERVICE BEGAN AT 9.15 A.M. AND
FINISHED AT ABOUT 10.05 A.M. SINCE BOTH
WERE HIGH RISK PRISONERS, THEY WERE SUBJECT
TO THE USUAL SECURITY PRECAUTIONS.
ACCORDINGLY, THEY UNDERWENT A RUB-DOWN SEARCH
BEFORE LEAVING THEIR SECURE UNIT FOR THE
CHAPEL. THEY WERE ESCORTED THERE BY THREE
OFFICERS.

AFTER THE SERVICE, AND AGAIN IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE USUAL PROCEDURES, THE PRISONERS WERE ESCORTED BY THREE PRISON OFFICERS TO RETURN TO THEIR UNIT. EN ROUTE, AND IN A NARROW PASSAGEWAY, MCAULEY PRODUCED A FIREARM AND TOOK ONE OF THE ESCORTING OFFICERS HOSTAGE, HOLDING THE GUN TO HIS HEAD. HE FIRED A SHOT ABOVE THE OFFICER'S HEAD, AND QUINLIVAN TOOK THE KEYS OF THE HOSTAGE OFFICER AND USED THEM TO GAIN ACCESS TO THE PRISON CENTRE. IN THE CENTRE, A FURTHER SHOT WAS FIRED WHICH PASSED THROUGH THE CLOTHING OF ANOTHER OFFICER. THE PRISONERS AND THEIR HOSTAGE WENT THROUGH TWO OTHER GATES ENTERING A BUILDING YARD.

IN THE YARD, ANOTHER SHOT WAS FIRED TO KEEP PURSUING STAFF AT BAY, AND THE PRISONERS REACHED THE PRISON WALL AT A POINT WHERE THEY WERE ABLE TO SCALE IT DESPITE THE RAZOR WIRE AT THE TOP. THEY THEN DROPPED INTO THE MARRIED QUARTERS AREA OUTSIDE THE PRISON AND THREATENED A PRISON OFFICER WHO

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WAS CLEANING HIS CAR, AND TOOK POSSESSION OF IT, BUT ABANDONED IT WHEN THEY FOUND THEIR ROUTE THEY WAS BLOCKED.

THEY WERE AT THAT POINT WITHIN A FEW YARDS OF BRIXTON HILL, WHERE THEY STOPPED A PRIVATE CAR. THE DRIVER WAS ORDERED OUT AND SHOT IN THE UPPER RIGHT LEG AND THE WOMAN PASSENGER GOT OUT UNHARMED. I AM PLEASED THAT THE DRIVER IS RECOVERING IN HOSPITAL. THE CAR WAS DRIVEN INTO BRIXTON AND ABANDONED IN A SIDE STREET. WITH THE MONEY THEY HAD STOLEN FROM THE CAR DRIVER. THEY HIRED A TAXI TO BAKER STREET TUBE STATION.

I AM DEEPLY DISTURBED BY THIS GRAVE LAPSE OF SECURITY, AND BY THE ASSOCIATED RISK TO MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC. I HAVE DECIDED THAT WE MUST HAVE A SWIFT AND INDEPENDENT INQUIRY INTO THE CIRCUMSTANCES OF THIS DEPLORABLE INCIDENT, SO THAT ANY NECESSARY LESSONS CAN BE LEARNED PROMPTLY.

I HAVE THEREFORE ASKED HM CHIEF INSPECTOR OF PRISONS, HIS HONOUR JUDGE TUMIM, TO CARRY OUT A FULL INQUIRY WITH THE FOLLOWING TERMS OF REFERENCE:

"TO INQUIRE INTO THE CIRCUMSTANCES OF THE ESCAPE OF PRISONERS MCAULEY AND QUINLIVAN FROM HM PRISON BRIXTON ON SUNDAY, 7 JULY, AND IN PARTICULAR TO REVIEW THE SECURITY ARRANGEMENTS FOR HANDLING HIGH RISK PRISONERS IN THIS PRISON; TO ASSESS HOW THOSE ARRANGEMENTS WERE APPLIED IN THE CASE CONCERNED, AND TO MAKE RECOMMENDATIONS".

I SPOKE TO JUDGE TUMIM THIS MORNING, AND HE TOLD ME THAT HE WILL BE STARTING THE TASK IMMEDIATELY. HE WILL BE ASSISTED BY THE POLICE, AND I ASKED HIM TO SUBMIT AN INTERIM REPORT BY THE END OF THIS MONTH. SUBJECT TO THE NEED TO PROTECT SENSITIVE SECURITY MATERIAL, AND TO THE POSSIBILITY OF CRIMINAL CHARGES BEING LAID, I INTEND THAT THE CHIEF INSPECTOR'S FINDINGS SHOULD BE PUBLISHED.

WHEN JUDGE TUMIM INSPECTED BRIXTON LAST YEAR, HIS REPORT REFERRED TO CERTAIN COMMENTS ON SECURITY MATTERS WHICH HE HAD PUT DIRECTLY TO THE DIRECTOR-GENERAL OF THE PRISON SERVICE. THESE DEALT WITH MATTERS OF PHYSICAL SECURITY, INCLUDING THE POSITION AND COVERAGE OF CLOSED CIRCUIT TELEVISION. I SHALL BE ASKING THE INQUIRY TO PAY PARTICULAR ATTENTION TO THE PROGRESS MADE IN THESE AREAS. IN ADDITION, JUDGE TUMIM RECOMMENDED THAT WE SHOULD RECONSIDER HOLDING CATEGORY A HIGH RISK PRISONERS IN BRIXTON WHEN NEW ACCOMMODATION BECAME AVAILABLE AT THE NEW PRISON AT HMP BELMARSH IN WOOLWICH AND IN THE LIGHT OF SECURITY CONSIDERATIONS GENERALLY. WE ACCEPTED THIS RECOMMENDATION, AND THE NEW UNIT AT BELMARSH WILL BE AVAILABLE FOR ALL CATEGORY A PRISONERS WHO ARE DESIGNATED AS A HIGH RISK IN LONDON BY NOVEMBER.

IN THE MEANTIME, I HAVE TAKEN THE FOLLOWING ACTION. ALL GOVERNORS OF PRISONS WHICH HOLD CATEGORY A PRISONERS, OTHER THAN DISPERSAL PRISONS, HAVE BEEN ASKED TO REVIEW URGENTLY

THEIR PROCEDURES FOR HANDLING CATEGORY A HIGH RISK PRISONERS WHENEVER IT IS NECESSARY FOR THEM TO LEAVE THEIR SECURE UNITS. IN PARTICULAR THEY MUST CONSIDER IMMEDIATELY WHETHER RELIGIOUS SERVICES CAN BE PROVIDED FOR THEM IN THEIR LIVING AREAS AS OPPOSED TO ALLOWING THEM TO MOVE TO CHAPELS. I HAVE ASKED THE DIRECTOR-GENERAL OF THE PRISON SERVICE TO REPORT TO ME ON THIS AS A MATTER OF URGENCY.

I HAVE GIVEN INSTRUCTIONS THAT OTHER PRISONERS AWAITING TRIAL ON TERRORIST CHARGES SHOULD BE MOVED IMMEDIATELY FROM BRIXTON TO HIGH SECURITY DISPERSAL PRISONS.

THIS WAS A VERY SERIOUS INCIDENT AND NO TIME MUST BE LOST IN FINDING OUT EXACTLY WHAT HAPPENED AND ENSURING THAT SUCH AN EVENT DOES NOT OCCUR AGAIN.

TUMIM RECOMMENDATIONS

I HAVE BEEN ADVISED BY THE DIRECTOR-GENERAL
THAT THEY HAVE ALL BEEN CONSIDERED AND
ACTION HAS BEEN TAKEN. IT IS FOR THE
INQUIRY TO CONSIDER WHETHER FURTHER ACTION
SHOULD HAVE BEEN TAKEN.