



Mrs Pitchard
To see + PA pl.
8/8/84

Northern Ireland Office
DUNDONALD HOUSE

PS/MR SCOTT (B) - with Minister's case files (London copies by
Nos 18 - 7 - 10 and 16 - 7 - 10 telecopier)

MAZE (CELLULAR) PRISON: CLOSED VISITS FOR TOP RISK PRISONERS

I attach draft replies to Bishop Cahal Daly and Cardinal O Fiaich, which I assume Mr Scott will sign as the Secretary of State is on leave. The Cardinal's letter related to the recaptured escapers, but the reply will need to deal with the introduction of top risk and the suspension of closed visits as a general requirement for those prisoners included in the new classification.

SCJ

S C JACKSON

7 August 1984

cc PS/Secretary of State (B&L) T
PS/Mr Scott (L) T
PS/Sir Ewart Bell
Mr Bourn
Mr Angel T
Mr Merifield
Mr Buxton
Mr Gilliland
Mr Lyon T
Mr Reeve
Mr Edis
Miss Simmons
Mr Kerr
Mr D McNeill

PS/PUS (B&L) T

DRAFT REPLY FOR SIGNATURE BY MR SCOTT

The Most Reverend Cahal B Daly
Bishop of Down and Connor
Lisbreen
Somerton Road
BELFAST
BT15 4DJ

Thank you for your letters of 18 and 24 July about the introduction of closed visits for some prisoners in Maze (Cellular) prison, which the Secretary of State acknowledged on 27 July. As the Secretary of State is now on holiday I am replying to your letters, but I understand that he may have had a brief word with you on the subject in the margins of the meeting early last week about the Black Report and the future of the training schools.

You will know from newspaper reports that the Secretary of State decided on Monday 30 July to review the arrangement under which all prisoners in the new top risk security classification were required to take their visits in closed conditions, and meanwhile that the requirement should be suspended. This review has now been carried out, and on present information we do not propose to reintroduce the general requirement for closed visits in this context.

It may be helpful if I set out briefly the background to the introduction of the new "top risk" classification. This was first introduced in Belfast prison in 1981 following the inquiry into the escape of eight prisoners from that establishment. The Hennessy

Report criticised the failure to introduce a similar arrangement in Maze Cellular, and after careful consideration the new category was introduced there on 23 July. It applies to less than 5% of the prisoners held in the prison; those concerned are subject to stricter control and supervision than other inmates.

The Secretary of State was grateful to you for taking the trouble to set out your anxieties in such a full and helpful way. He also received representations from other church leaders, and he took all these views fully into account in coming to his decision to drop the general requirement for closed visits. This will not, of course, affect the Governor's discretion to require any individual prisoner to take closed visits if he considers that this is justified in the particular case for reasons of security or in the interests of good order and discipline.

DRAFT REPLY FOR SIGNATURE BY MR SCOTT

His Eminence Cardinal O Fiaich
Archbishop of Armagh and
Primate of All Ireland
Ara Coeli
ARMAGH

Thank you for your letter of 13 July to the Secretary of State in which you expressed concern about the arrangements for closed visits for certain prisoners at Maze (Cellular). I am replying as the Secretary of State is now on holiday.

The background is that following the mass break-out from Maze last September the Governor decided as a security precaution that visits to those prisoners who had attempted to escape but had been recaptured should take place in closed conditions. This remained the position until 23 July, when the requirement for closed visits was lifted except in respect of those who had been included in the new top risk security classification introduced on that date.

The top risk category was first introduced in Belfast prison in 1981 following the inquiry into the escape of eight prisoners from that establishment. The Hennessy Report criticised the failure to introduce a similar arrangement in Maze Cellular and after careful consideration the new category was introduced there on 23 July. It applies to less than 5% of the prisoners held in the prison; those concerned are subject to stricter control and supervision than other inmates.

You may have seen reports in the newspapers early last week that the Secretary of State had decided to review the arrangement under which all prisoners in the new top risk security classification were required to take their visits in closed conditions, and meanwhile that the requirement should be suspended. This review has now been carried out, and on present information we do not propose to reintroduce the general requirement for closed visits in this context.

This will not affect the Governor's continued exercise of his discretion to require any individual prisoner to take closed visits if he considers that this is necessary for reasons of security or in the interests of good order and discipline. For the present, however, those prisoners who were involved in the escape on 25 September are again receiving their visits in normal open conditions.