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CSB

File
John
12/3.

MEETING ON TUESDAY 11 MARCH 1997 AT 3:00pm
IN CONFERENCE ROOM D, CABINET OFFICE

ROISIN MCALISKEY

1. Those present:

Mr N Sanderson (Chairman)	Cabinet Office
Ms C Checksfield	Home Office
Mr D Dunleavy	Legal Secretary to the Law Officers
Mr A Walker	Prison Service
Mr J Heavens	Prison Service
Ms A Bharucha	Northern Ireland Office
Mr C Jude	Northern Ireland Office
Ms J Sear	Northern Ireland Office
Mr D Lamont	FCO
Ms K Vineall	FCO
Mr C Jones	Home Office
Miss A Mercy (Secretary)	Cabinet Office

Bail

2. Mr Dunleavy outlined advice from Counsel that the three main duties of the CPS in this case were:

- to act on behalf of the German Government;
- to present to the court all the relevant issues on the question of bail;
- to be guided by the laws and procedures laid down in the European extradition treaty of 1989.

3. The Chairman undertook to seek confirmation from the CPS that, in the light of this advice, they were content with the current line on bail.

4. A bail hearing had taken place that day in the High Court and the judge had, most unusually, requested the Prison Service's attendance, or the submission of an affidavit, on Friday 14 March at a continuation of the bail hearing. The judge was seeking reassurance on allegations made about Roisin McAliskey's health and prison conditions. The Prison Service reported that they would attend court in order to refute the allegations.

5. The Home Office reported that in light of the judge's apparent unhappiness, they had already developed a holding line against any adverse media coverage. The Chairman noted that this was to be used only as a defensive line if the need arose and that care would be taken not to appear to prejudice the hearing on 14 March.

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Announcements by the Prison Service

6. The Home Office reported that Baroness Blatch was answering an oral PQ on the 12 March and that she had been given a full and up-to-date brief.

7. The decision on whether Ms McAliskey would be able to keep her baby would be taken on Thursday 13 March, after an assessment had been received from Islington Social Services. On the timing of the announcement the Chairman suggested that it would be best to avoid possible accusations that public presentation had been put before Ms McAliskey's interest. It was noted that Ms McAliskey was aware that the decision would be made on 13 March and the Prison Service were invited to consider this issue further.

8. The Prison Service outlined the following relaxations in Ms McAliskey's prison conditions which they had already decided should be made:

- she would be offered the use of the pool and gymnasium along with other pregnant mothers;
- she would be allowed to worship in Chapel;
- her cell light would no longer be kept on throughout the night but switched on 2/3 times a night for security checks;
- she would be offered a change of location in which to exercise;
- she would be offered the opportunity to attend ante-natal classes.

9. The Prison Service said that they hoped to make an announcement on Friday 14 March. This would explain that these relaxations followed from the downgrading of her security status on 7 March. The Chairman said that there was a case for making such announcements as soon as decisions had been taken so as to avoid appearing to be making concessions in reaction to events which might intervene between the decision and its announcement. The Prison Service agreed to consider the timing further.

Briefing pack

10. It was agreed that the following amendments should be made to the briefing pack:

- there should be a list of positive bull points;
- the description of the strip search procedure should be expanded;

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- the reference to the frequency of strip searching should reflect the new, not the old, regime;
- a short description about how decisions on security status were reached, should be included in the brief;
- the brief should give examples of privileges given to remand prisoners;
- the line on extradition should make it clear that any delays resulted from Ms McAliskey exercising her legal rights;
- the lines on conditions of custody should be updated to reflect the decisions mentioned at paragraph 8 above.

Other business

11. The Home Office reported that they were addressing a request by members of Sinn Fein to visit Republican remand prisoners in Belmarsh. The handling of this had implications for Ms McAliskey's case and the group should be informed of the outcome.

cc Those present
Mr Holmes
Ms Polley
Mr Budd

Cabinet Office
12 March 1997

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