

From: THE PRIVATE SECRETARY

By Redhouse
cc JEH/11
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CONFIDENTIAL - POLICY

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Jon J. Th

DRAFT LETTER FROM QUENTIN THOMAS

You asked for comments on the draft passages on prisoners suggested by the Irish Government.

We are content - so far as it goes - with the additional sentence suggested for inclusion on page 5, last paragraph. There is, however, an ambiguity about the reference to "any significant diminution of the security threat". Before reducing the security classification of exceptional risk prisoners, we would need to be satisfied that the threat to prison security, in particular from an armed or assisted escape attempt, had diminished. The Whitemoor escape happened during the last ceasefire. The Home Secretary would like to see the addition of a sentence on the following lines: "But in this context such diminution of any security threat would have to include satisfactory evidence relating to the abandonment of escape attempts by these prisoners". If such a qualification is not entered, the ambiguity - and the potential for bad faith - remains.

We do not understand the suggested addition to the end of this paragraph. There are no prisoners in SSUs who meet the definition. We think this may be a muddle with the prisoners referred to in the following suggested insertion (the Balcombe Street 4), who are not in SSUs. We are content with that passage and we suggest conflating these passages in a single new paragraph:

"A particular concern is recognised to be the position of long-term prisoners, who have served over 20 years and who have applied for repatriations. In the case of four such prisoners, it is expected that the Home Secretary will very shortly set their tariffs. These prisoners have applied"

I am copying this letter to Ken Lindsay (NIO).

Yours

David

DAVID REDHOUSE

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