

From: THE PRIVATE SECRETARY

CONFIDENTIAL - POLICY



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26 SEP 1997

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Dear John,

IRISH PRISONERS

Thank you for your letter of 22 September.

The Home Secretary shares the Prime Minister's view that the handling of the changes in the arrangements which come into force next Wednesday, 1 October should be as low key as possible. He is therefore minded to include a passage on the new transfer arrangements in the general press release covering the introduction of the Crime (Sentences) Act 1997 as a whole.

The changes in temporary release arrangements which are linked to the new transfer arrangements are significant and we will need to guard against the criticism that these have been introduced without reference to Parliament. Given that Parliament is in recess, the Home Secretary proposes that on the return of Parliament arrangements will be made, by way of a PQ, to bring the new policy to the attention of the House.

It will of course be necessary to inform those prisoners affected by the new arrangements of their introduction, but as a result of this the arrangements are likely to come to the attention of those with an interest in Irish prisoner issues.

The Home Secretary set out these plans in his letter of 25 September (copy attached for ease of reference).

None of the foregoing arrangements are dependent on the Home Secretary's meeting with the Irish Minister for Justice, the purpose of which is to discuss repatriation arrangements between England and Wales and the Republic of Ireland. That meeting is planned for 9/10 October although I have heard a suggestion today that Mr O'Donoghue may want to speak to the Home Secretary before then. I will of course keep you and Ken Lindsay informed of these discussions before the Home Secretary takes final decisions on the handling of the cases which involve repatriation to the Republic.

I am sending a copy of this letter without the enclosure to Ken Lindsay.

*Yours sincerely,
Ken Sutton*

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