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DRAFT PRESS STATEMENT

The Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, Dr Marjorie Mowlam, today announced the setting up of an independent inquiry

"to examine the operation of HMP Maze and the political and operational framework in which it operates, taking into account recent serious breaches of security at the prison, and to report".

The inquiry will be headed by Lord Lloyd of Berwick.

This will complement the RUC investigation, the inquiry headed by Mr Martin Narey into the 2 recent incidents and the inspection by Sir David Ramsbotham, which have already been announced. The reports will be published and together will provide a full review of the role, functions and operational performance of the prison, and of the actions necessary to reduce the likelihood of any repetition of these security lapses.

Inevitably it will take some time to complete all of this work. In the meantime the Governor has introduced a series of measures to improve the security and safety of inmates and staff. The INLA and LVF prisoners are now housed in separate accommodation blocks, all exercise yards are being closed 2 hours earlier in the evenings, block searching has recommenced, arrangements for the searching of

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visitors and staff have been reviewed and new equipment and instructions have been issued.

I am satisfied that together these measures represent a substantial and appropriate response to a most serious situation.

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