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NORTHERN IRELAND

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PRISON SERVICE

PRESS RELEASE

29 August 2000

NORTHERN IRELAND PRISON STAFF TO BE AWARDED SPECIAL MEDAL

Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, Peter Mandelson to-day confirmed that approval in principle has been granted by the Queen to the award of a special medal to prison staff in Northern Ireland.

Mr Mandelson said:

"As the Prison Service enters a new era in the wake of the Good Friday Agreement, this is a timely and well deserved recognition of the professionalism, bravery and commitment of prison staff in serving the community over the past difficult, and often dangerous, 30 years of conflict."

Robin Halward, Director General of the Prison Service, also welcomed the announcement. He said:

"Since 1976, 29 prison staff have been murdered by terrorists and many more have been seriously injured. Staff and their families have lived under the constant fear of attack and intimidation both at work and in their own homes. Prison staff still live under the threat of attacks as witnessed recently. In spite of this they have continued to do their jobs with the highest levels of courage and professionalism in circumstances which are not paralleled in any other Prison Service. I am delighted that their commitment and service is to be recognised by the award of this honour."

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Details of the medal, which is to be known as the Northern Ireland Prison Service Medal, are expected to be announced in the near future in the form of a Royal Warrant. It is expected that the medal will be awarded to all serving and former staff who have served with the Prison Service in Northern Ireland for at least 5 years.

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