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NORTHERN IRELAND OFFICE  
DUNDONALD HOUSE  
UPPER NEWTOWNARDS ROAD  
BELFAST BT4 3SU

Mr H N Cunningham  
Governor  
HM Prison  
BELFAST

11 September 1981

*Dear Governor*

REPORT OF INQUIRY INTO ESCAPE FROM HMP BELFAST -  
FOLLOW UP ACTION

In the above Report, HM Chief Inspector of Prisons drew attention to the apparent unauthorised absence of 5 named staff members from their designated posts at the time of the escape. In each case he has recommended (paragraph 11.04) that a de novo investigation should be made of the apparent absence. I am writing to you therefore to ask you to make preliminary enquiries to establish whether or not there are any grounds for formal disciplinary action and to report back to me your findings and recommendations for action in each case.

In making his recommendation, Mr Pearce indicated that such investigations should be made quite separately from the examination of the circumstances of the escape and that if any subsequent action under the Code of Discipline was warranted that it should concern itself with the absence per se and not the part that absence may have played in the escape. This is an important distinction since, as indicated in the press statement released on 4 September, it is not intended to take disciplinary action against any staff member in connection with the escape itself. I am sure you will be suitably circumspect in making your enquiries.

*Yours sincerely,  
Brian Palmer*

B D PALMER

cc PS/Mr Alison (B&L)  
Mr Blelloch  
Mr Truesdale  
Miss Simmons  
Mr Jackson

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