

NORTHERN IRELAND 1969-1993 INTERACTIVE

IRA ESCAPE FROM THE MAZE PRISON

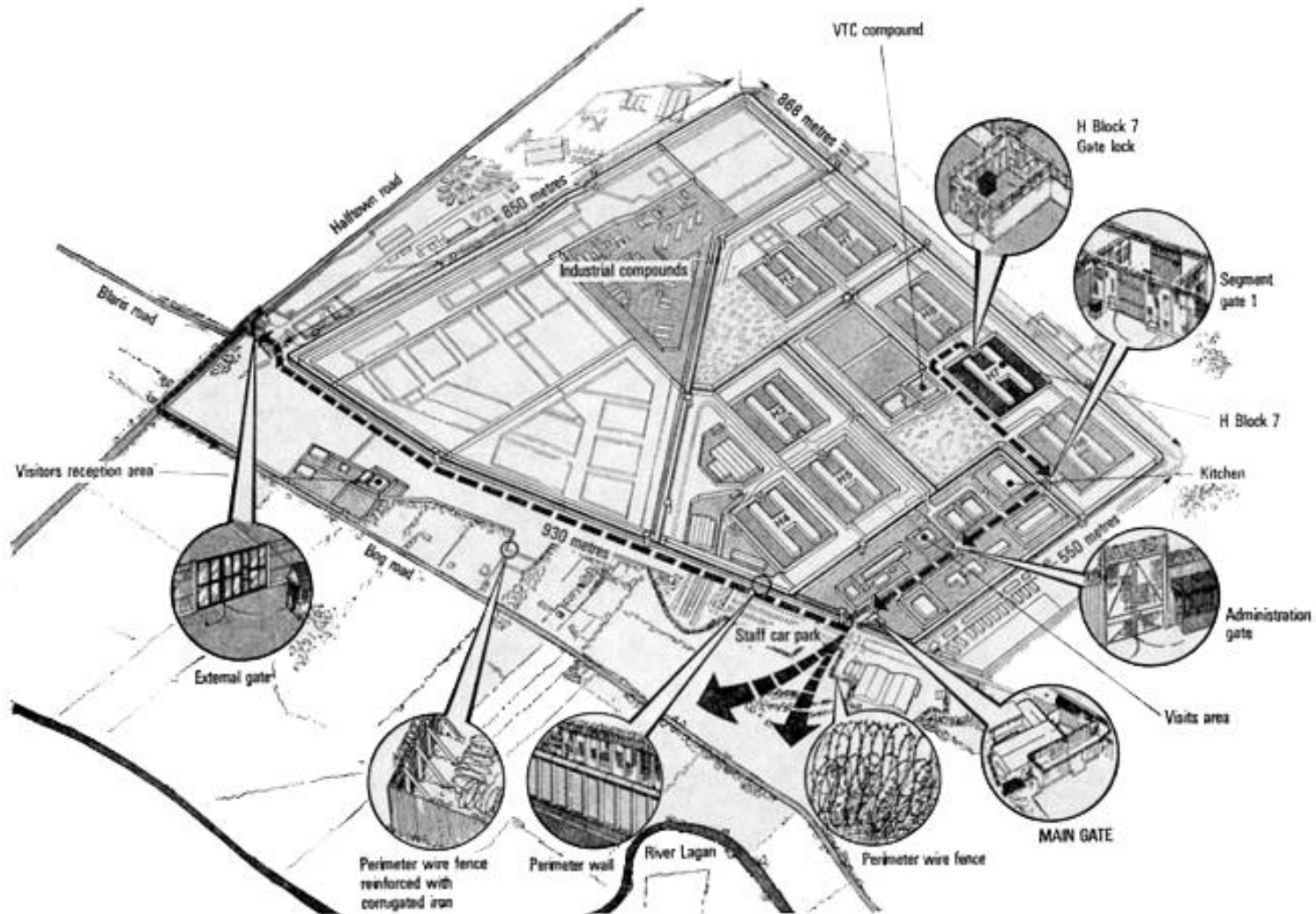
HM Prison Maze was a maximum security prison considered to be one of the most escape-proof prisons in Europe. Prisoners convicted of taking part in armed paramilitary campaigns during the Troubles were held here. On 25 September 1983, the biggest prison escape in British history took place. 38 Provisional Irish Republican Army (IRA) prisoners, who had been convicted of offences including murder and causing explosions, escaped from H-Block 7 of the prison. One prison officer died of a heart attack as a result of the escape and twenty others were injured, including two who were shot with guns that had been smuggled into the prison. The prisoners hijacked a food lorry which they then used to drive to the main gate. Nineteen prisoners were recaptured within a few days of the breakout, but the others remained on the run.

The escape was a propaganda coup for the IRA, and a British government minister faced calls to resign.

By 1992, five more had been caught and three killed in ambushes.

TASK

What network of support would the IRA prisoners in the Maze have needed to have organised the escape and survival on the run for so long?



A map showing the escape route of the prisoners of H-Block 7