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Jails 'too comfy' to merit escape

<http://news.bbc.co.uk/go/pr/fr/-/1/hi/uk/7366258.stm>

From BBC News 25.04.08 © BBC MMVIII

Inmates are so comfortable in jail that they do not want to escape, a prison officer union leader says.

Glyn Travis of the Prison Officers Association says inmates are happy to stay inside because they can get hold of drugs, mobile phones and even sex. He said a dealer **regularly** broke into a Yorkshire prison by using a ladder to enter cell windows - but no inmate used the ladder as a **means** of escape.

The Prison Service said the prisoners were never in a position to escape.

'Serious crisis'

Mr Travis said the authorities only became aware of the security **breaches** at low-security category C Everthorpe prison, near Brough, East Yorkshire, in January.

"The prisoners didn't take this opportunity because we believe life is so **cushy** within the prison system," he said.

"We have got no-go areas in certain prisons because prisoners have got complete control. There is not sufficient staff, there is no interaction between staff.

"We have got a **serious** crisis in our prisons today."

Mr Travis blamed a **shortage** of prison officers and relaxed regimes, where prisoners enjoyed satellite television and video game consoles. He said that efficiency savings had reduced staff levels and the supervision of prisoners.

"Drugs are coming into prisons at a rate that's so **dramatic** that drugs in prison are actually cheaper than on the outside," he added.

A spokesman for the Prison Service said: "During the incident, at no time were prisoners out of their cells or able to access any other areas of the prison.

"**Immediate** action was taken with **extra** fencing, the removal of trees, extra CCTV cameras, and the transfer of the offender involved to another establishment."

Mr Travis claimed there have been **similar** incidents in other prisons. In Sudbury prison in Derbyshire he said there was even an attempt to smuggle in prostitutes.

Conservative justice spokesman Nick Herbert called for a "fundamental shake-up" of prisons. "Prisons should be places of hard work and restoration, preparing offenders to go straight. Instead we have overcrowded jails where drugs are **rife**, prisoners are too often idle and there is little purposeful activity."

A spokesman for the Ministry of Justice said prison conditions were appropriate.

"The punishment of the court is loss of **liberty** - harsh regimes do not lead to rehabilitation or a reduction in reoffending," he said.

Kindly contributed by Dave Norgate, Bromley Adult Education College.

L1.1, L1.3 (reading comprehension, identify main points and detail); Rw/L1.1-1.3 (vocabulary).

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A.

Read the article two or three times

Write down what you think are the main points contained in the article.

Point 1

Point 2

Point 3

Point 4

Point 5

Point 6

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B.

Read the article and then answer these questions

1. Why did the prisoners not try to escape according to Glyn Travis?
2. Who called for a fundamental shake up of prisons?
3. Where was the breach of security in January?
4. Why have staff levels been reduced?
5. Are drugs cheaper in prison than outside?
6. What has happened at Sudbury prison>?
7. What action has been taken to prevent a similar incident happening at Everthorpe?
8. Are the Ministry of Justice happy with the situation in these prisons?
9. What do you think about prisons? Should they be for rehabilitation or punishment? Should they watch TV or do hard labour? Should drugs be allowed? Write an essay giving your views.

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C.

Look at the words in the text that are in bold. They are listed on the left below. Can you match them with a word on the right that can replace them in the text.

For example **regularly** can be replaced by **often**

regularly	—————>	often
shortage		instant
breaches		dearth
similar		additional
immediate		method
dramatic		easy
extra		lapses
liberty		comparable
serious		widespread
means		freedom
rife		spectacular
cushy		grave

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Answers

A. (Example answer – variations possible)

- The prisoners find jail very cushy
- Prisoners do not want to escape
- Prisoners can get hold of drugs, mobiles and sex
- Shortage of staff is the reason given
- Action has now been taken to prevent this
- Conservatives want a shake up of prisons

B. Read the article and then answer these questions

1. Because life is so cushy in the prison system
2. Nick Herbert
3. Everthorpe prison
4. To make efficiency savings
5. Yes
6. An attempt to smuggle in prostitutes
7. Extra fencing, removal of trees, extra CCTV cameras and transfer of the offender
8. Yes they feel prison conditions are appropriate.

C.

regularly	→	often
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