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*See letter at*

*F14*

*Jan 19/6.*

From: JOHN HOLMES

Date: 18 June 1996

PRIME MINISTER

NORTHERN IRELAND

*Contact with*

*letter to NIO 18.6*

A SITREP may be helpful.

Negotiations have continued in Belfast today between the two Governments and the parties about the procedural guidelines and the agenda for the plenary, under Mitchell's chairmanship. The NIO say that it has been very hard, but generally constructive pounding. Mitchell has played a key role, although he is obviously finding it hard work. The NIO believe that the prospects of reaching agreement on both the procedures and the agenda in order to allow tomorrow's plenary to start at 1200 are reasonably good. The Irish are negotiating seriously and accept the need to make concessions to the UUP. ✓

The UUP themselves have remained positive in general. Both the DUP and McCartney have taken part in discussions under Mitchell's chairmanship. But their attitude cannot be described as positive, particularly that of McCartney. ✓

... The idea of an announcement by the Irish Government today of a joint security review has gone away. I attach a copy of the statement eventually made by the Irish. As you will see it focuses very much on their relationship with Sinn Fein. I see no difficulty in it from our point of view. Indeed it is fully compatible with what you were saying in the House today. ✓

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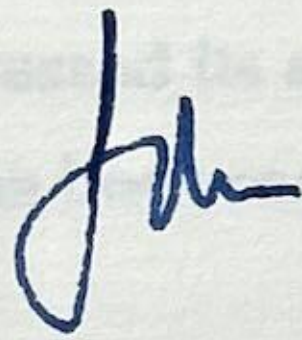
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On the security side itself, intelligence suggests another large vehicle bomb from South Armagh may be on the move - possibly for use in Northern Ireland but perhaps heading for the ports and the mainland. The RUC are on full alert. ✓

... Following the note I put to you at the weekend, and rather belatedly, I have drafted the attached letter setting out your general thinking at this stage. Are you content with this? Should it be circulated more widely, e.g. to N.I.? ✓

As you know it has so far proved impossible to find a time for you to speak to Bruton, though both of you are keen. I have agreed with the Taoiseach's office that we will look at a possible window between your return from the Europe speech and lunch tomorrow. ✓



JOHN HOLMES

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