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From the Private Secretary

Dec Martin,

HUME/ADAMS CONTACTS: US VIEWS

Lake (NSC) sought me out in the margins of the Lyon G7 Summit on 28 June to pass on the results of his latest contacts with Hume and Adams. He said that he had talked to Adams a week ago, and had made clear that the time had now really come when Adams had to make his mind up. He could no longer duck and weave. Adams had told him, and Lake believed him, that he genuinely wanted a renewed ceasefire. But the movement was divided and it was very difficult.

Lake had encouraged Adams to talk to Hume about what the IRA might need to justify a new ceasefire. Lake claimed that he had also made clear to Adams that he saw no prospect of HMG agreeing to direct contacts with him (Adams had apparently been complaining about the lack of links), and that there was no prospect of substantive concessions from HMG in return for a new ceasefire.

Lake had subsequently talked to Hume, and encouraged him to meet Adams. This had happened last Wednesday. Adams had told Hume that he had spoken to the IRA, and that what was needed was a statement from HMG along the following lines:

- i. The talks would be serious, comprehensive and inclusive.
- ii. They would be concluded in some reasonable time frame.
- iii. Decommissioning would be dealt with in the course of the negotiations, and would not be a precondition.

Hume had apparently told Adams that ii. above was impossible, although there might be a chance of some words setting out HMG's determination to reach

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agreement as soon as possible. But i. and iii. did not seem different from what HMG had been prepared to say before. Hume had therefore undertaken to ask for a meeting with the Prime Minister to pass all this on. Hume believed it was serious. Lake, having talked to Adams as well as to Hume, also thought there might be something serious here. He had been let down by Hume in the past, and had no faith in him, but he had not (he claimed) been let down by Adams.

I explained the contacts we had had with Hume, which were consistent with Lake's account, and said that a meeting with the Prime Minister was indeed likely early next week. But we remained very sceptical whether there was anything behind all this. It did not square with other things which had happened or seemed to be in prospect. It was difficult to believe that a few new words could make much difference.

I also warned Lake clearly that a new ceasefire would not reopen the way for Sinn Fein to enter talks quickly, following the Manchester bomb. Lake said that he was well aware of this. If there were a new ceasefire, which could be seen as credible and lasting, he wondered whether there might be a possibility of Sinn Fein joining the talks after the summer break. I said that I could make no promises, and gave a further warning that more violence by the IRA could make the present position untenable in any case. Again, Lake said that he was well aware of this.

Lake hopes to talk to Adams again over the weekend to check the credibility of his story further. He undertook to let me know if he heard any more. He meanwhile urged us not to neglect the opportunity, even if we were, with good reason, sceptical. I said that we would of course listen to what Hume had to say. Hume himself carried no credibility in this area, because we had heard it all before so many times. If Adams was confirming the story, that made it look more serious. But we would still need a lot of convincing.

Comment

I suspect Lake is more involved in all this than he is letting on. I also suspect Adams is telling Lake what he wants to hear, rather than spelling out the reality. But we will clearly have to listen to what Hume says before we come to any conclusions about our own response. I will let you know if I hear more from Lake in the meantime.

I am copying this to Jan Polley (Cabinet Office).

JOHN HOLMES

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Northern Ireland Office

Yours ever
John