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See letter to Hume

R'U

JH
24/7

From: JOHN HOLMES

Date: 22 July 1996

PRIME MINISTER

HUME/ADAMS INITIATIVE

P. J. De Leo

... We had a brief word about this, and you asked to see a form of words. I attach a draft paper which we could give to Hume, on the assumption that he will pass this to Adams. It is written in such a way that if it leaks and is published subsequently, our position is entirely defensible: we are taking seriously an apparent approach from Sinn Fein promising a new ceasefire.

If we give Hume a document in this form, the next step is likely to be a request from Sinn Fein for a meeting with officials. We do not need to decide on our attitude to this in advance of a request, and the terms in which it is put, but we do need to be at least ready to contemplate such a meeting. Whether public or private, we have to assume it would become public pretty quickly.

I believe such a meeting can be defended, on the following lines:

- we never said there was a ban on such meetings. No question of a meeting at Ministerial level until a credible new ceasefire is in place.
- Sinn Fein requested a meeting with officials because they said they had something significant to say about a new ceasefire.

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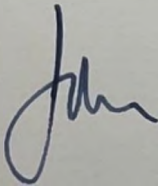
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- Whatever our views about the likelihood of this, clearly right to explore rigorously in the light of Sinn Fein's approach.
- Obviously no question of Sinn Fein joining the talks before a new and credible ceasefire.
- Also useful to explore with Sinn Fein the need to ensure Apprentice Boys' March passes off peacefully.

The defence should also be helped by your meeting with the Loyalist parties. It is less easy to accuse the Government of pandering to Republicans.

Any meeting will obviously now take place after the House rises.

Content to send Hume a response on these lines?



JOHN HOLMES

22 July 1996

[F\Hume.2mrm]

Paddy Mayhew and Michael Ancram are in touch with the text - and suggest passing the text also to Teahan and later to keep the Irish and Americans in the picture (as we have been doing hitherto).

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