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From the Private Secretary

23 September 1996

Dear Gen,

**HUME/ADAMS:
FOLLOW-UP TO NORTHERN IRELAND COMMITTEE**

Thank you for your letter of 23 September. I think your proposed approach is generally on the right lines. However, I do not see the need to brief the Americans before we respond to Hume, although they should be briefed as soon as the response has gone. It follows that, once Sir Patrick Mayhew has spoken to David Trimble later this week, the response to Hume could go quite quickly.

Meanwhile, I have had the expected telephone call from Hume. He said that this morning's developments were "bad". However, they were not unexpected. Such action would go on until such time as we were able to ensure a new ceasefire. He remained convinced, as he had said before, that this was now genuinely possible and that this time it would be for good. He went on in this vein for some time, stressing his own deep knowledge of Sinn Fein and the IRA.

I explained where we were as far as the response to him was concerned, spelling out that we could not negotiate on our own position. I underlined to him that today's finds obviously reinforced the scepticism we had already felt about the likelihood of an IRA ceasefire, and suggested that this had also delayed our response further for obvious reasons. He accepted all this happily enough, and seemed relieved that we were not about to reject his approach altogether.

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

Yours ever
John Holmes

JOHN HOLMES

Ken Lindsay, Esq.,
Northern Ireland Office.

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