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10 DOWNING STREET  
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From the Private Secretary

6 September 1996

Dear Gen,

### HUME/ADAMS' INITIATIVE

Having warned me yesterday that he was in the final stages of negotiation with Adams, John Hume has now sent me the attached draft statement for use by the British Government. He said that it had been cleared explicitly with Adams, who had cleared it also with the IRA. The position now was that if we were ready to make this statement, and the IRA knew when we were going to make it, they would respond shortly afterwards, at a time specified in advance, with a renewed "total cessation".

Hume added that there were three key issues for Sinn Fein/IRA:

- (i) that there should be no preconditions to negotiations. The key problem here was decommissioning. But he claimed they accepted the parallel approach in the Mitchell Report;
- (ii) a timeframe for negotiations. The Sinn Fein/IRA view was that this should be six months. Hume thought that in practice they might accept a review of the negotiations after six months.
- (iii) Confidence building measures, by which was meant prisoners. Sinn Fein/IRA wanted to be sure that there would be movement on this issue if there was a new ceasefire.

Sinn Fein/IRA would need private assurances on these three points, in addition to the public statement, conveyed through a third party, which could be Hume himself but need not be, before they would announce a new ceasefire.

I said that at a quick read, although much of the draft was unexceptionable, I could see quite a number of problems. Those which stood out particularly were language about the timeframe; the references to no veto over the process; the references to decommissioning; the language on justice and policing; and the sentence on equality of treatment of the Irish language and culture. I was also unclear what was meant by the references in the last paragraph to the contributions of the EU and South Africa.

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Hume said that the key issues were the three he had already mentioned. The language in the draft need not be regarded as sacrosanct, and the less important parts of it should certainly be amendable.

I said that I also wanted to be absolutely clear about the status of this piece of paper. Hume had told Edward Oakden a few weeks ago that there was no commitment to a ceasefire if a statement was made, only a commitment by Sinn Fein to approach the IRA about one. Hume said that this had now been resolved. The IRA had cleared the text and agreed to move to a ceasefire if the right statement was made. He insisted that there was now no doubt about this.

I also asked whether Sinn Fein were insisting on a meeting with the British Government in advance. He said not.

I said that we would obviously need to look at this text and consider what Hume had said. I undertook to go back to him with our response. We left it at that.

**Comment**

It remains difficult to be sure how seriously to take Hume over all this. But he seemed surer of his ground than in past conversations, although as vague as ever for the most part. He was fresh from a meeting with Adams on the evening of 5 September, and categorical about the Sinn Fein/IRA position.

Using the attached draft as it stands is obviously out of the question, but we need to look carefully at how much of it might be acceptable, and consider how best to respond. It remains the case that there are few if any other indications, beyond Hume's own comments, that the IRA is ready to declare another ceasefire. But it also remains difficult for us not to respond, given that the Americans (and no doubt the Irish - though Hume denies this) will presumably be well aware of what is being put to us. I would be grateful for your comments and recommendations. It would be helpful if we could receive these in the course of next week.

  
**JOHN HOLMES**

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Northern Ireland Office

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