

FROM: JULIE MAPSTONE  
IPL  
24 SEPTEMBER 1996

POLITICAL AFFAIR  
DIVISION  
24 SEP 1996  
Belfast

cc Mr Leach (L&B)  
Mr Steele  
Mr Watkins  
Mr Wood (L&B)  
Mr Beeton  
Mr Hill  
Mr Lavery  
Mr Maccabe  
Miss Bharucha  
Miss Jude

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MR STEPHENS - B

HUME/ADAMS: PUBLICATION OF HMG STATEMENT: BRIEFING

I attach draft briefing for Ministers on the response to the latest Hume/Adams approach. It is intended that the briefing will issue to Ministers as an accompaniment to the information handling plan being prepared on the publication of the statement.

Signed

JULIE MAPSTONE  
IPL  
EXT OAB 0236

HK/TALKMAIL 136

HUME/ADAMS: PUBLICATION OF HMG STATEMENT: BRIEFING

Key Points:

- the text of the [statement/article] consists of a restatement of existing policy. It merely repeats and reaffirms our approach on key issues to ensure there can be no doubt or uncertainty on the part of Sinn Fein or indeed anyone about the Government's position on these issues. None of the material is new.
- we are not interested in putting any obstacles in the way of a renewed IRA ceasefire. Quite the opposite. We wish to demonstrate that there is no reason for the IRA not to restore the ceasefire. The Irish and the US Governments have also been calling for a restoration.
- the Government is not engaged in negotiating a restoration of the IRA ceasefire. There are no secret talks going on. This text restates established Government policy. It has not been negotiated with anyone.
- the talks are intended to be inclusive. They should be as representative as possible and we would like to see Sinn Fein involved in the process. That can only come about after an unequivocal restoration of the ceasefire. Sinn Fein know well what they have to do to get into the talks.

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## **Q AND A: SUPPORTING MATERIAL**

### **1. BACKGROUND TO STATEMENT**

**Why has this [statement/article] been issued now?**

We have recently received a number of approaches asking us to set out Government policy on the key issues to do with the talks and peace process, so that there can be no doubt what Sinn Fein needs to do to join in the negotiations. We considered this was a sensible approach in case there might still be misunderstanding or any doubts about the Government's position. Our interest is in making the way clear for a restoration of the ceasefire, not in blocking it.

**Will this statement make any difference?**

If there are any remaining doubts around about the Government's position, this statement should remove them. The IRA should restore the ceasefire permanently and without further prevarication.

**Has the Government shown this text to anyone prior to publishing it?**

We consulted with various parties [and have shown the text to a number of key individuals in the past week], but we have not negotiated the text with any other party. It is the Government's text, and sets out our policy in our terms.

**Is the publication of this statement linked to rumours of an IRA General Army Council?**

Not at all. Its publication at this stage is to ensure there can be no misunderstandings about the Government's position on the talks.

**Do you expect a ceasefire?**

There is no reason why there shouldn't be a renewed ceasefire, but we don't have any evidence that there will be. Indeed, preparation for further attacks continues, as the recent large arms and explosives find in London amply demonstrates.

Following the arms and explosives finds in London could any new ceasefire reasonably be regarded as genuine?

We will clearly need to satisfy ourselves that any new ceasefire is truly unequivocal, particularly in the light of the recent arrests and finds in London. It will inevitably be necessary to look at any announcement carefully and in the light of other activity on the ground.

## 2. DETAIL OF THE TEXT

What is meant by unequivocal?

We will need to satisfy ourselves that any new statement is genuine about a full cessation of violent activity or the threat of such activity. An announcement which appears to be partial or conditional cannot be unequivocal.

Does the reference to an open agenda mean the union is on the table?

All participants should feel able to raise any issue which concerns them and to be listened to.

Will some decommissioning be required at the outset?

Both Governments have committed themselves to full implementation of the Mitchell Report, under which "some decommissioning would take place during the process of all-party negotiations". As Mitchell said, progress will only be possible on this issue in the context of an inclusive and dynamic process in which mutual trust and confidence is built as progress is made on all the issues of concern to all participants.