

FROM NIO PRESS OFFICE

(TUE) 01. 21 '97 15:13/ST. 15:07/NO. 3580112753 P 1/3



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NORTHERN IRELAND Information Service

21 January 1997

MULTI-PARTY TALKS: GOVERNMENT STATEMENT

A Northern Ireland Office spokesman today issued the following statement:

The Government shares the increasing public concern that has arisen as a result of recent car-bomb attacks, the first two of which have been attributed by the Chief Constable to loyalist extremists. It raised those incidents with the Progressive Unionist Party and the Ulster Democratic Party at meetings last week, and has continued to evaluate the situation.

It is open to any participant under the talks Rules of Procedure to make a representation that a participant is no longer entitled to be at the talks, for having demonstrably dishonoured the Mitchell principles of democracy and non-violence. Those incidents, and possibly that at Larne yesterday, inevitably raise questions over the position in the Northern Ireland talks of the two parties associated with the loyalist paramilitaries. There will be an opportunity to consider these questions, which clearly turn on an assessment of the words, actions and all the relevant circumstances, when talks resume in plenary session next Monday.

The Government for its part will continue to scrutinise these serious matters carefully.