

23. Sep. 1996 14:41

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No. 05121.10P. 2/32

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From: THE PRIVATE SECRETARY

NORTHERN IRELAND OFFICE
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John Holmes Esq
Private Secretary to the
Prime Minister
10 Downing Street
LONDON
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(in destroy it
on file already)*

*John
22/9*

23 September 1996

Dear John,

HUME/ADAMS: FOLLOW-UP TO NI COMMITTEE

My Secretary of State has reviewed whether this morning's excellent arrests and finds should affect the approach agreed by NI last Thursday.

He has concluded that the approach remains valid. The finds confirm what we already knew, and have warned NI, about the IRA's immediate intentions, but do not give a fresh indication about their long term strategy. We still need to respond to Hume, and to do so in a manner which does not appear to dismiss out of hand what may be presented as a genuine approach about a possible ceasefire.

However, my Secretary of State has decided not to broach the issue with Mr Trimble today. Once the dust has settled he intends to find a suitable opportunity to do so in the next couple of days, by which time wider reaction to today's events will also be clearer. If he briefs Mr Trimble by Wednesday, it will clear the way for Michael Ancram to brief the US Government during his visit to Washington at the end of this week. A letter to Mr Hume can go thereafter.

In the meantime, you may well receive further phone calls from John Hume, asking about our response. We do not wish

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to give him the impression that he is being cold shouldered, nor that we are not treating his endeavours seriously. If he does contact you (or, indeed, you might like to contact him yourself), we suggest you make the following points:

- the Prime Minister has treated his approach seriously, but his deep scepticism as to the IRA's intentions has been exacerbated by Monday's finds;
- we do intend to respond in as positive a fashion as possible, but, as he must know, the text he gave us on 6 September covered a host of issues not mentioned before;
- when we reply, it will be to set out our position in as positive and clear a fashion as possible, but we will not enter into negotiations on it;
- we have all along stressed the crucial role of events on the ground: Monday's finds only make it all the harder to take Adams' words at face value.

A copy goes to Colin Budd and Jan Polley.

Yours ever,

Ken

W K LINDSAY

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