

Pl. Hester
Pa. 3

File JH 1073.

PRIME MINISTER

From: John Holmes
Date: 7 March 1997

cc: Jonathan Haslam
Philip Barton

ROISIN McALISKEY

This case continues to attract a lot of media attention both here and in the Irish Republic. One or two Conservative MPs have even begun to express concern about her treatment, including Andrew Hunter. Spring is apparently intending to raise Irish humanitarian worries with Paddy Mayhew at an IGC next week.

The Home Office today sent the attached letter in response to the concern I expressed on your behalf a couple of weeks ago. It concentrates on media efforts but says little about the substantive position. In practice there should be some useful progress on this in the next week:

- a decision is likely to be taken that she will be allowed to keep her baby in the Mother and Baby Unit at Holloway (this will defuse the most emotive issue);
- her current "High Risk" Category A status is being downgraded to "Standard Risk", which will introduce greater elements of normality into her life;
- the number of "strip searches" has been significantly reduced, and visits by her partner and mother are no longer through glass etc.

Good.

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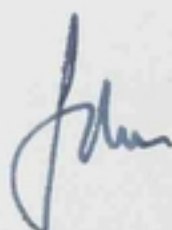
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Controversy will doubtless continue, since there is an obvious republican interest

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in keeping the story alive. One main demand, for bail, is most unlikely to be granted since there is a real risk of her absconding to the Republic, whence she could not be extradited to Germany. There is also bound to be trouble if she is "restrained", ie handcuffed, on the way to and from hospital to give birth (she will not be restrained during birth itself). I am querying this.

Nevertheless I think this is now going in the right direction. I am continuing to keep a close eye and to remind all concerned of your interest in ensuring we do not have a PR disaster on our hands.

**JOHN HOLMES**