

**SECRET***file  
Feb 11/4***From: Philip Barton****Date: 11 April 1997****S 31 /97****PRIME MINISTER****cc: Mr Holmes (o/r)****NORTHERN IRELAND**

You might like a short update. The IRA have claimed responsibility for the shooting of the RUC policewoman in Londonderry yesterday. Her condition is stable. Sir Patrick Mayhew issued a statement condemning the attack. A couple of motorways in England were closed temporarily following security alerts earlier today, but these turned out to be false alarms rather than coded IRA warnings.

2. As you may have heard, there were strong rumours yesterday that Sinn Fein were about to announce a ceasefire. In the event, nothing happened. It is not clear why -

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3. Overall, yesterday's shooting, coupled with the recent hoaxes and bombs on the mainland have put Sinn Fein on the defensive. The Irish Government have been taking a helpfully robust line - the Taoiseach said on Wednesday evening, after a meeting with Hume, that "a vote for Sinn Fein is a vote of support for the IRA and the IRA's campaign of killing and murder".

*Philip*

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