

1. JEH/r - to see PM's comments.

2. file (after reattaching a copy of the possible comments) JH 144
 PRB 7/4

From: John Holmes

Date: 3 April 1997

PRIME MINISTER

POSSIBLE IRA SUSPENSION

We spoke about language you might use in an interview to pre-empt any PR advantage to Sinn Fein from a temporary halt to violence during the election campaign, whether avowed or not. I attach a few sentences on which you could draw.

The two dangers are appearing not to want a temporary ceasefire at all - it would after all be welcome as far as it goes and could save some lives; and pre-empting Sinn Fein so effectively that they decide not to go ahead. Neither is a show-stopper, and I have tried to draft around the more obvious risks.

In practice, if the IRA did announce only a suspension, whether or not with an explicit time limit attached, I suspect we could do a pretty effective demolition job on it at the time. In other words the PR risk may not be all that great. A declaration of an "unequivocal ceasefire" would be a different matter, but that looks relatively unlikely because anything called "ceasefire" appears unsaleable to the boys.

You may also like to glance again at the draft article we had on the stocks a few weeks ago but never used, in case any of the language in it appeals. We could revise and publish something on these lines, but the same risk of putting off a ceasefire would apply.

John

JOHN HOLMES

Best not - @ the moment. of

*Thanks
 Best
 J.*