

From: THE PRIVATE SECRETARY

CONFIDENTIAL

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*Already seen by
fax, + reply
Sent by the PM
JH
2/8.*

30 July 1997

Dear John

JOHN TAYLOR LETTER

will go to Attached

As requested in your letter of 24 July, I attach a draft response to John Taylor's letter about confidence building measures.

As the draft explains, steps are in hand to agree the way forward on the Northern Ireland Grand Committee (NIGC). The Northern Ireland Affairs Committee has already been established and will meet today. It is understood the question of representation on the UK Delegation to the Council of Europe is to be announced by way of written answer in the House tomorrow. I understand that John Taylor will be a Member of this delegation but it would be inappropriate for the Prime Minister to reveal this prior to the formal announcement.

All three of the issues mentioned above are part of a long standing UUP "wish list". It is not obvious how they will help to build confidence in the wider unionist community in Northern Ireland but brought into play at the right moment they could give the UUP leadership something to be positive about and would help to create confidence in the party as a whole.

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CJ/Holmes

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Mr Taylor's point on "gun laws" is of a rather different nature and appears to be at odds with the views of the UUP spokesmen. However, my Secretary of State is already aware of John Taylor's views and is willing to postpone planned firearms legislation in order to demonstrate sensitivity towards UUP concerns. Despite this, she does have fears that delay in bringing forward Northern Ireland provisions on this issue may give rise to questions about the Government's commitment to good governance in Northern Ireland and whether a lower standard of public safety is permissible. It may also result in the debate on legally held handguns becoming embroiled in the question of terrorist decommissioning.

The question of "gun law" apart, it is likely that the other issues raised in John Taylor's letter will also be mentioned by David Trimble at his meetings with the Prime Minister today and tomorrow with Dr Mowlam.

*Yours ever,
Ken*

W K LINDSAY**CONFIDENTIAL**