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10 DOWNING STREET
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From the Private Secretary

22 October 1997

Dec Jan,

LEAKS ABOUT THE IRA

Today's *Daily Telegraph* reported the views of "security sources" and a "senior intelligence officer" about IRA attitudes to a ceasefire and the recent General Army Council meeting. It quoted a security source as believing that the Continuity Army Council bombing in Markethill was authorised personally by the IRA's Chief of Staff.

This is only the latest in a series of such stories in the *Daily Telegraph*, claiming to quote security sources. Sometimes the information is reasonably accurate, though not always. In any case, the Unionists virtually always seize on it as support for their own views about the IRA. Moreover, it is grist to the mill of those in the press looking to criticise Government policy.

Without wanting to stimulate a formal leak enquiry, I wonder whether there is not some way in which we can prevent such stories appearing in the future. Is it really too difficult to work out where they are coming from and try to choke off the source? I would be grateful for any thoughts you or others may have.

I am copying this letter to Ken Lindsay (Northern Ireland Office).

Yours are
John

JOHN HOLMES

Miss Jan Polley
Cabinet Office

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