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FROM: ANITA BHARUCHA
          IPL DIVISION
          23 OCTOBER 1996

cc   Mr Thomas   - B
     Mr Stephens   - B
     Mr Beeton   - B
     Mr Hill   - B
     Mr Perry   - B
     Ms Mapstone

PS/SECRETARY OF STATE (L&B) - B

CABINET BRIEFING: THURSDAY 24 OCTOBER

I attach briefing for tomorrow's Cabinet; a security brief is at
Annex A.

SIGNED

ANITA BHARUCHA

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MULTI-PARTY TALKS

-   as part of the Opening Plenary, the participants have begun to discuss the International Body's proposals on decommissioning. The UKUP (Mr McCartney) and the DUP (Dr Paisley) have spoken so far;

-   the gulf between the participants on decommissioning remains; HMG and the Irish Government have of course earlier this month published our joint proposal on an 'exit strategy': it is up to the parties to reach an accommodation on decommissioning - it is our intention that giving them the opportunity to set out their views over a few weeks will reinforce the point that this is a potential impasse from which _they_ must work to extricate themselves.

-   it may be that if the parties conclude that Sinn Féin will not be joining the talks, they will agree that decommissioning can be 'parked' in some fashion;

Loyalists

-   we, and the Irish Government, continue to emphasise the gains which the loyalists have made and will continue to make by holding their ceasefire, in contrast to Sinn Fein;

-   Michael Ancram met a PUP/UDP delegation on 16 October; they are also seeking a meeting with the Prime Minister - this would be a good incentive in encouraging them to maintain the ceasefire;

-     we must, however, bear in mind that there are also indications of readiness on the part of the Loyalist paramilitaries to resume violence.

Conditions of entry for Sinn Fein after any ceasefire

-     have said that any ceasefire must be genuine and unequivocal, and that the onus is on Sinn Fein to demonstrate to everyone by their words <u>and actions</u> that any ceasefire is genuine;

-     clearly any ceasefire will need to be assessed over time, and in the light of all the circumstances.