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Der John,

**PRIME MINISTER'S MEETING WITH SINN FÉIN - 11 DECEMBER**

The Prime Minister is due to meet a Sinn Féin delegation on 11 December. I understand that the delegation will comprise Gerry Adams MP, Martin McGuinness MP, Lucilita Bhreatnach, Martin Ferris, Siobhan O'Hanlon, Michelle Gildernew and Richard McAuley. My Secretary of State, Paul Murphy and Quentin Thomas will attend in support of the Prime Minister.

**Key Messages**

The Prime Minister will want to test Sinn Féin's commitment to peace. But Sinn Féin will also be wanting to establish whether the Prime Minister is committed to genuine negotiations and a process of radical change in Northern Ireland.

The key messages the Prime Minister should aim to convey are:

- \* **peace and politics are the only way forward.**
- \* **we are committed to radical change in Northern Ireland, as elsewhere.**  
The status quo is not an option.
- \* **we are committed to genuine negotiations, will continue to press Trimble;**





\* **want to help you if you are committed to peace.**

### **Sinn Féin's Agenda**

In recent days, Sinn Féin have expressed extreme anxiety about reaching any preliminary agreement before Christmas which appears to endorse partition. Although McGuinness recently said in public that there would not be a united Ireland in May, they (like other parties) are worried about extremist criticism over Christmas.

The meeting takes place amidst concerns that the IRA may be planning a return to violence. Assuming that the leadership are still committed to the political negotiations - and they continue to give every indication that they are - Adams and McGuinness will therefore be looking for as much reassurance as possible from the Prime Minister.

On confidence building measures, there is some evidence from other reporting that these are now beginning to have a positive impact on republican thinking. Perversely, Mr Trimble's recent criticisms of HMG for making too many concessions to nationalists may help to convince the republican movement that HMG is serious. The Prime Minister can remind Sinn Féin of the measures that have been taken to date and emphasise our commitment to look for further measures as the situation allows.

A speaking note is at **Tab A**.





# PRIME MINISTER'S MEETING WITH SINN FÉIN LINES TO TAKE & BRIEFING NOTES

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Sinn Féin will obviously want to use the meeting both as a publicity opportunity and as a forum to raise (again) a number of grievances. The most likely to come up are prisoner issues (including extraditions and the case of Roisin McAliskey), demilitarisation (on which we have a good story to tell), Bloody Sunday and Irish language. Briefing and lines to take on these and on other possible issues are attached at **Tabs B to J**. We have included some detailed briefing on prisoner issues and will leave it to you to decide how much to show to the Prime Minister.

### Tab E Police reform/disbandment & Community justice 2-1

### Handling Issues

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David Trimble suggested in a recent call that the Prime Minister should speak to the media after the meeting, in order to counter-balance the level of publicity given to Sinn Féin. An alternative would be to issue a short press release; I attach an outline draft (**Tab K**).

Yours ever,

Klu

W K LINDSAY

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