

CONFIDENTIAL**TAB B****SECURITY & PRISONERS - KEY POINTS TO MAKE**

- * I am pleased that we have been able to take advantage of the reduced level of terrorist activity following the reinstatement of the IRA ceasefire in July, which is why we have greatly **reduced security** throughout NI.
- * Significant moves have been taken to reduce the impact of security measures on everyday life. There is now no routine daytime patrolling by the Army in support of RUC foot patrols in Belfast, Londonderry and elsewhere. Army patrols throughout Northern Ireland in support of the RUC are at half the level they were before the IRA ceasefire, 250 soldiers have returned to their base in England and helicopter activity has reduced by around one quarter.
- * Although some groups (such as CAC and LVF) have not declared cease-fires and continue to pose a threat and there are daily incidents of shootings, beatings, petrol bombings, bomb scares etc, many steps have been taken to return NI to normality. We will continue to respond swiftly and positively when the security situation allows.
- * Aware of the importance which you attach to the sensitive issue of **prisoners**.
- * Have already done a lot on this with early releases, repatriations & transfers, Christmas home leave, reduction of security classification etc
- * Dr Mowlam has clearly said that further movement on prisons matters including prisoner releases is not excluded. In particular, the construction of a peaceful and lasting settlement would provide opportunities to make progress in this and other areas.
- * Any changes to release arrangements must be justified and must not undermine community confidence in the criminal justice system or the political process

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TAB C

Defensive lines on Observation Posts in South Armagh

- * Threat in area remains high. Chief Constable must make judgements based on information available to him.
- * Stage has not yet been reached when complete normalisation is possible - a number of installations in South Armagh must remain for time being, until threat reduces and disappears - look forward to day when this is possible. All have a role in achieving this.
- * No options have been ruled out but the material must be examined thoroughly first.
- * Mo Mowlam met the relatives of some of those killed at a lunch on 3 July. She told the families that she would examine the material make a statement as soon as possible, but that might take several months.
- * *[If pressed]* We do plan to inform the Irish Government and the relatives of our decision before we make an announcement.

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