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f/bloody sunday eam  
bc JPB  
AC  
PB

10 DOWNING STREET  
LONDON SW1A 2AA

From the Principal Private Secretary

<sup>temporarily retained</sup>

16 December 1997

Dear Gen,

THIS IS A COPY. THE ORIGINAL IS  
RETAINED UNDER SECTION 3 (4)  
OF THE PUBLIC RECORDS ACT

### BLOODY SUNDAY

As you know, Dr Mowlam is keen to make the attached statement in late December or early January. The Prime Minister has looked at this. His view now is that Dr Mowlam may be right that a statement on these lines, before it is clear no further action can be taken, may go down better than one where that option is already closed off. The present draft is well-constructed. But before agreeing, the Prime Minister would like to be clear about the views of the Ministry of Defence and to know the latest state of play [redacted]

The Prime Minister would also like to be clearer about the circumstances in which such a statement would be made. An interview would not be suitable for such a carefully worded piece. A speech would be better, or perhaps an article. There is also the question of timing. Releasing such a statement on eg 29 December, when there may be virtually no other news around, guarantees maximum publicity (and maximum scope for critical reaction from all quarters). This needs further thought, and may point to early in the New Year, when the Government machine may be better placed to deal with the inevitable fall-out.

We also need to think through how to prepare the various parties involved beforehand. We must give the Irish advance notice, as well as the main parties, including the Unionists. We have also undertaken to brief the Opposition in advance.

Finally, Christopher Meyer's telegram No. 2675 usefully reminds us of the importance of Irish America, although we cannot of course satisfy that constituency, any more than the others. His telegram also illustrates the need to explain carefully why we do not favour another enquiry, while we are pursuing the one specific allegation we think might have some new substance.

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AJ

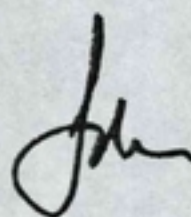


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I am copying this letter this letter to John Grant (Foreign and Commonwealth Office), Mike Venables (Ministry of Defence), Jan Polley (Cabinet Office), Christopher Meyer (Washington) and Veronica Sutherland (Dublin).

*Yours ever*



JOHN HOLMES

Ken Lindsay Esq  
Northern Ireland Office

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