

File
CONFIDENTIAL10 DOWNING STREET
LONDON SW1A 2AA

From the Principal Private Secretary

11 February 1998

Dear Ken,

SINN FEIN/IRA

I spoke to Jim Steinberg this evening to underline to him the seriousness of what appeared to be going on. We could not accept a situation where the IRA had gone back to killing, whether or not they claimed it. Moreover, the position over Sinn Fein's participation in the talks, following the two murders, was also very serious. The RUC Chief Constable was likely to say that the IRA were clearly responsible in both cases. This would create a very difficult dilemma. I hoped the Americans would use their influence to make clear to their contacts how serious the situation was, and to urge them to condemn and disassociate themselves from the murders, and to make clear, if that was the case, that the ceasefire had not broken down.

Steinberg took the point. He was already fully alive to the background, and said the Americans would do what they could. There would be obvious difficulties with a lack of faith in the impartiality of the RUC. There would not be much difficulty over accepting that the alleged DAAD killing fell to the IRA one way or the other, but that was the less serious case, in a sense. But it was difficult to see why the IRA could have sanctioned the other killing, given where things stood more widely. Nevertheless, he repeated that the Americans would do what they could.

I am copying this to Jan Polley (Cabinet Office) and Sir Christopher Meyer in Washington.

*Yours
John*

JOHN HOLMES

K. Lindsay, Esq.,
Northern Ireland Office.

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