

## The International Body

Meeting with General John Wheeler  
January 12, 1996  
Belfast

### Account of Meeting

General Wheeler said he did not believe the republicans could conceivably hand over weapons to the British in any decommissioning exercise. In his personal view, perhaps some combination of the Commonwealth and the WEU might work as a third party recipient. Paramilitary destruction of arms would complicate matters. 2500 kilos of semtex, he noted, would be difficult for the IRA to destroy.

Wheeler said the IRA has made perfectly clear that prior decommissioning is not in the cards. Some movement towards all party talks might change the situation, but that was difficult to determine in advance. In addition to decommissioning, a no-first-strike pledge should be at the top of the agenda of negotiations.

Wheeler described the reduction of security forces in Northern Ireland following the ceasefires, noting that the military no longer undertakes routine patrols except in south Armagh and east Tyrone. The British Government hopes to return to the normal garrison and base levels of 1960 eventually.

Wheeler said there are a lot of handguns held for personal protection in Northern Ireland. All shotguns are registered.