

From: THE PRIVATE SECRETARY

On to Sean  
H. P. Hume



NORTHERN IRELAND OFFICE  
WHITEHALL  
LONDON SW1A 2AZ

John Holmes Esq  
Private Secretary  
to the Prime Minister  
10 Downing Street  
London SW1A 2AA

No need for a  
reply. Dismissed  
at length  
with Mr. Hunter.

25 November 1996

Dear John

R. G.  
M. J. Hume

Thank you for your letter of 20 November enclosing correspondence from Mr Andrew Hunter MP, in which he relates a recent conversation he had with John Hume on the IRA's conditions for a ceasefire.

Mr Hunter expresses concern about the likely political consequences, in Parliament and at the Talks, if these demands are met. Mr Hunter will of course need to be briefed in advance of publication of our text. He already knows from the Secretary of State, who briefed him before his visit to Dublin, what the Government's position is.

I enclose a draft reply for the Prime Minister's signature which first states that Mr Hume's account differs from what he has told us, and then goes on to confirm our position on each of the conditions as set out. Finally, there is an assurance that there is no change to our existing policy.

Yours ever  
David V. H.  
for W K LINDSAY

DRAFT LETTER FOR SIGNATURE BY THE PRIME MINISTER

Hunter

SCANNED

Andrew Hunter Esq MP  
House of Commons  
London SW1A 2AA

Thank you for your letter of 19 November in which you relate a conversation with John Hume about the IRA's four conditions for a ceasefire. Mr Hume's account differs somewhat from what he has told us. But I will take the four points in turn.

First on the question of immediate entry for Sinn Fein into the talks. We have and will continue to hold the firm line - which is any case set out in legislation - that there must be an unequivocal retraction of the IRA ceasefire. As we have stated on numerous occasions, in deciding whether the ceasefire is genuinely unequivocal we will examine all relevant words, deeds and circumstances, and take whatever time is necessary to come to a view.

On the question of a time frame, if the talks participants feel that it would be a good idea to have an indicative time-frame for the talks we would be supportive, but we have no wish to impose it.

Our approach to decommissioning is governed by the compromise approach proposed in the Mitchell Report, which recommends decommissioning during negotiations, "not before or after". Mr Hume and Sinn Fein know this and there is no chance that we will move from this position. We are currently engaged in discussion with participants on an agreed way to implement this proposal.

I note your own support for confidence building measures on prisoners as far as loyalists are concerned and I am sure you are aware of the changes announced recently, which of course cover all eligible cases, not just loyalists.

Lastley, I can assure you that our position on these issues is well known, and remains part of established policy.