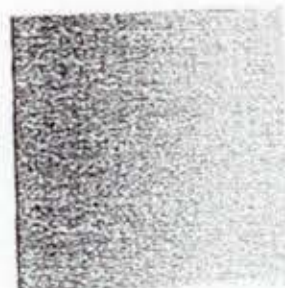


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Anne



Head of the Civil Service

Head of the Office of the First Minister & Deputy First Minister

Nigel Hamilton

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HCS/156/05

Cc DDS
A Beame

FROM: NIGEL HAMILTON

26 JANUARY 2005

cc Linda Brown
Rosalie Flanagan
Paul Sweeney
Neill Jackson
Dorothy Angus

Our Ref: GM/10/05

TO: PERMANENT SECRETARIES

OBSERVANCE OF MAJOR NATIONAL OR INTERNATIONAL TRAGEDIES

1. As you know, the Government has in recent years called for the national observance of periods of silence in the wake of major tragedies such as the Madrid Bombings, Beslan and most recently, the South-East Asia Tsunami. A number of issues arose in the arrangements for the observance of the Tsunami disaster within NICS and it may be helpful therefore to clarify the lines of communication and the arrangements for the flying of flags which will operate on such occasions.
2. The Department for Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) is responsible at national level for advising other Departments, including the NICS, on the observance of periods of silence. When such notification is received, Machinery of Government Division, OFMDFM, will communicate this information to Northern Ireland Departments through its established network of contacts, who can then make such arrangements as are necessary to inform staff within their Departments of the timing and duration of the period of observance.

Flags

3. It is important to emphasise that these occasions will not involve the flying of flags at half-mast on Government Buildings. The Flags Regulations (NI) 2000, as amended, specify those Government Buildings, and the days/occasions, on which the Union Flag is to be flown. The Regulations do not allow for any flag to be flown at any Government building at any other time, including the observance of major national or international tragedies.
4. Departments can obtain further advice and guidance from:

Observance Issues: Machinery of Government Branch, OFMDFM,
(Tel: 028 9076 5701).

Flags: Central Appointments Unit, OFMDFM,
(Tel: 028 9052 8191).

Nigel Hamilton

NIGEL HAMILTON