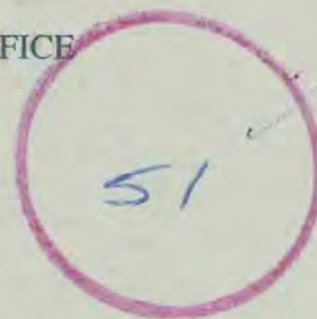


From : THE **S E C R E T** PRIVATE SECRETARYCCPB
JHNORTHERN IRELAND OFFICE
WHITEHALL
LONDON SW1A 2AZJohn Holmes Esq
Private Secretary to the
Prime Minister
10 Downing Street
London SW1A 1AA

17 January 1997

Dear John

HUME/ADAMS - FRESH TEXT

John Hume has given to Sir John Chilcot a revision of a proposed statement agreed with Adams and based on the 10 October text. According to Hume, if delivered by HMG, this would lead to the announcement of an IRA ceasefire. A copy is attached at Annex A.

As usual, Hume is setting his sights high, and from his conversation with PUS he is hoping for a positive reaction from the Government to help both him and his party, give leverage to the Republican leadership to limit IRA violence, and keep alive a strong sense that the circumstances for a new ceasefire can still be constructed. This latest initiative can be seen as a genuine attempt to develop the 10 October text in a way which brings it closer to the Government's position; on any objective assessment, however, it falls well short of what is now the Government's declared position as set out in the 28 November statement by the Prime Minister.

While it is to some extent reassuring that Sinn Fein continue to show interest in developing an agreed text it may be a measure of their true commitment that they have reverted to the old history of the 10 October text, rather than the 28 November statement which is the Government's formal, declared position. They are trying to wind

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the clock back, which simply will not work. (There is reason to believe that the Irish have also dismissed this notion of building on the 10 October text, although for the ill-founded reason that the British Government is not interested in seeing Sinn Fein joining the talks before the General Election).

Attached at Annex B is a short note analysing the textual differences between the Government's statement of 28 November and this new text from Mr Hume. The key difference is that the Hume text knocks out the various steps which the Government has declared as necessary between the point when a ceasefire is announced and Sinn Fein can join their first plenary (pages 2 and 3 of the 28 November statement). These steps are intended to provide "sufficient time" to ensure that Sinn Fein meet the requirements of the statutory Ground Rules before they are admitted.

By comparison, Amendment 2 in the Hume paper envisages Sinn Fein moving direct to a plenary as soon as they have committed themselves to peaceful methods and a ceasefire has been declared. They want to dispense with all the intermediate steps set out by the Government. This reflects an Irish Government suggestion at an earlier stage. Realistically, it is a non-starter as it is so far at odds with the British Government's stated position.

The Secretary of State has agreed to meet Mr Hume to discuss this latest text early next week.

Yours ever
David W
for W K LINDSAY

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NO. 287 P005

ANNEX A

10 January 1997

(Amendments to 10 Oct Given to JH)

Amendment 1. The prospects for success in these negotiations will obviously be much greater if they take place in a peaceful environment. The British and Irish governments agree that, beyond the unequivocal restoration of the IRA ceasefire, these negotiations are without preconditions. So under the legislation setting up the talks, if there was an unequivocal restoration of the IRA ceasefire of August 1994, Sinn Fein would be invited to nominate a team to join the negotiations at this stage.

Amendment 2. In the light of the recent events, the British and Irish Governments attach even greater importance, if that were possible, to a formal commitment by Sinn Fein to the far-reaching principles of democracy and non-violence set out in the report of the International Body.

Both the British and Irish Governments believe therefore that following the declaration of an unequivocal IRA ceasefire, and following on a commitment by Sinn Fein to exclusively peaceful methods and to abide by the democratic process, Sinn Fein should first be expected to attend a plenary meeting of the negotiations for the specific purpose of accepting the Mitchell principles. This would mean that Sinn Fein would formally affirm, in the presence of all the parties with whom they wish to participate in negotiations, their total and absolute commitment to the principles of democracy and non-violence set out in the Report of the International Body chaired by Senator George Mitchell. The parties in the talks have all done just that already.

From their entry into the negotiations onwards Sinn Fein would, in common with all the other parties to the talks, be subject to all the provisions and rules of procedure governing the Talks, including those governing the contingency where any participant demonstrably dishonoured the principles of democracy and non-violence.

Amendment 3. We are also determined to see these negotiations through to success, as speedily as possible. This is in line with the hopes and aspirations of people in both the United Kingdom and the Irish Republic. These have already given momentum to a process which will always have difficulties. The British and Irish governments are committed to an agreed timeframe and calendar for the conduct of the negotiations. The two Governments will also review progress at regular intervals, in particular in meetings between the Prime Minister and the Taoiseach and between the Tanaiste and the Secretary of State. Overall progress will be reviewed by the end of May 1997, a date set in the legislation.

Amendment 4. So we will continue to pursue social and economic policies based on the principles of equality of opportunity, equity of treatment and parity of esteem irrespective of political, cultural or religious affiliation or gender. This will ensure that there is just and equal treatment for the identity, ethos and aspiration of both communities, including equal treatment for the Irish language and culture. We are also committed to seek as one of the outcomes of negotiations a policing service which can enjoy the support of the entire community.

Amendment 5. The opportunity for progress has never been greater. The process of peace and reconciliation has received valuable economic support from the United States, the European Union and through the International Fund. The negotiations are widely supported internationally and benefit from independent chairmen from the USA, Canada and Finland. They also have the overwhelming support of the people throughout these islands. They want them to take place in a peaceful environment, free of all violence. That is our aim too.

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NO. 287 P006

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10 October 1996

This government has made clear its approach to the search for peace in Northern Ireland on many occasions. But we continue to be asked about this or that aspect, particularly about the multi-party negotiations which started on 10 June in Belfast. There has been continued speculation about a new IRA ceasefire, despite the latest huge arms and explosives find in London. This has renewed questions about what effect this would have on the negotiations, and our approach to these negotiations. It may therefore be helpful to spell out our position again.

The negotiations have one overriding aim: to reach an overall political settlement, achieved through agreement and founded on consent. They will address all the issues relevant to such a settlement. Inclusive in nature, they involve both governments and all the relevant political parties with the necessary democratic mandate and commitment to exclusively peaceful methods.

It is important to emphasise that all parties are treated equally in the negotiations in accordance with the scale of their democratic mandate. But no one party can prevent them continuing by withdrawing from the negotiations. No party has an undemocratic advantage.

Amended
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The prospects for success in these negotiations will obviously be much greater if they take place in a peaceful environment. Under the legislation setting up the talks, if there was an unequivocal restoration of the IRA ceasefire of August 1994, Sinn Fein would be invited to nominate a team to participate, from that point, in the negotiations. Beyond the unequivocal restoration of the IRA ceasefire the British and Irish governments are agreed that these negotiations are without preconditions.

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It is equally clear that, to be successful, the negotiations must be based on exclusively democratic and peaceful means. There must be no recourse to the threat (actual or implied) or use of violence or coercion. So on entering the negotiations each participant needs to make clear their total and absolute commitment to the principles of democracy and non-violence set out in the Report of the International Body chaired by Senator George Mitchell. The parties in the talks have all done just that already.

The range of issues on which an overall agreement will depend means that the negotiations will be on the basis of a comprehensive agenda. This will be adopted by agreement. Each participant will be able to raise any significant issue of concern to them, and to receive a fair hearing for those concerns, without this being subject to the veto of any other party. Any aspect can be raised, including constitutional issues and any other matter which any party considers relevant. No negotiated outcome is either predetermined or excluded in advance or limited by anything other than the

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need for agreement.

Among the crucial issues is decommissioning which must be resolved without blocking the negotiations. So the opening plenary will address the International Body's proposals on decommissioning of illegal arms. At that stage and without blocking the negotiations, we, along with the Irish government, will be looking for the commitment of all participants to work constructively during the negotiations to implement all aspects of the International Body's report.

It is essential that all participants negotiate in good faith, seriously address all areas of the agreed agenda and make every effort to reach a comprehensive agreement. For their part, the two governments are committed to ensure that all items on the comprehensive agenda are fully addressed. They will do so themselves with a view to overcoming any obstacles which may arise.

For our part, we are wholly committed to upholding our responsibility to encourage, facilitate and enable agreement in the negotiations. This must be based on full respect for the rights and identities of both traditions. We want to see peace, stability and reconciliation established by agreement.

We are also determined to see these negotiations through successfully, as speedily as possible. This is in line with the hopes and aspirations of people in both the United Kingdom and the Irish Republic. These have already given momentum to a process which will always have difficulties. The British and Irish governments are committed to an agreed timeframe and calendar for the conduct of the negotiations. We have already proposed that a plenary meeting should be held at a suitable date to take stock of progress in the negotiating as a whole. The two governments will also review progress at regular intervals including at a summit meeting to be held before the end of the year.

Meanwhile we are committed to raising confidence, both through the talks and through a range of other measures alongside them. The International Body's report itself proposes a process of mutual confidence-building.

So we will continue to pursue social and economic policies based on the principles of equality of opportunity, equity of treatment and parity of esteem irrespective of political, cultural or religious affiliations or gender. This will ensure that there is just and equal treatment for the identity, ethos and aspiration of both communities, including equal treatment for the Irish language and culture.

We are also committed to the creation of a policing service which can enjoy the support of the entire community.

It is worth recalling that, in response to the ceasefires of Autumn 1994 and the changed level of threat, we undertook a series of confidence-building measures. These included changed arrangements for release of prisoners in Northern Ireland under the Northern Ireland (Remission of Sentences) Act 1995, security force deployments, a review of emergency legislation and others. If the threat reduces again, the opportunity for further confidence-

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building measures returns.

But confidence-building is a two way street. Support for the use of violence is incompatible with participation in the democratic process. An end to punishment beatings and other paramilitary activities, including surveillance and targetting, would demonstrate real committment to peaceful methods and help build trust.

Amend
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The opportunity for progress has never been greater. The negotiations are widely supported internationally. Accordingly we welcome the contribution of the European Union to the resolution of the problem. Likewise we welcome the interest and involvement of the United States arising from the special affinity shared between all the peoples of these islands and people in the United States. In paritcular we welcome the contribution of areas of successful conflict resolution such as South Africa. The negotiations also benefit from independent chairmen from the USA, Canada and Finland and have the overwhelming support of peoples throughout these islands. They want them to take place in a peaceful environment, free of all violence. That is our aim too.

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ANNEX B

PAPER FROM JOHN HUME DATED 10 JANUARY 1997: TEXTUAL COMPARISON WITH
THE PRIME MINISTER'S STATEMENT OF 28 NOVEMBER 1996

General: Adams' approach seems to have been to work on his own 10 October text and ignore HMG's statement of 28 November. A number of the differences between the texts reflect this and may not be significant in themselves.

1. Paragraph 1 of 28 November refers to the Thiepval bombing.
(COMMENT: Essentially a drafting point).
2. Paragraph 2 of 28 November includes a reference to the purpose of the negotiations being to achieve a new beginning to relationships reflecting the three strands (COMMENT: Essentially drafting).
3. Paragraph 3 of 28 November - a couple of minor drafting points.
4. Paragraph 4 of 28 November - the first line contains a reference to "the need for sufficient consensus" in the negotiations, which is not reflected in the Hume paper. (COMMENT: No reason to think Sinn Fein could not live with such a reference)
5. Paragraph 4 of 28 November includes a reference to the outcome of negotiations being submitted to referendums, north and south, which is not reflected in the Hume paper. [Ditto]
6. Amendment 1 from the Hume paper omits references in the 28 November statement to the important contribution of the loyalist ceasefire and how it made it possible for loyalists to join the negotiations, etc. [Ditto]

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7. Amendment 1 from the Hume paper omits, from paragraph 6 of 28 November, a lengthy passage about the need for assurances that any new ceasefire would be genuinely unequivocal, and paragraphs 7 and 8 of 28 November about "words, actions and circumstances" and the process by which Sinn Fein would be accepted into talks. (COMMENT: Clearly a crucial omission).

8. Amendment 2 of the Hume paper picks up on earlier Irish suggestion that Sinn Fein should attend a preliminary talks session as soon as a ceasefire is called and Sinn Fein commits itself to exclusively peaceful methods (COMMENT: This clearly ignores the detailed steps in paragraph 8 of 28 November).

9. The third section of amendment 2 omits the reference in the 28 November statement to participants who are "no longer entitled to participate" in talks where they dishonour democratic principles. (COMMENT: Presentational change only)

10. Paragraph 7 of the 10 January paper. In the first line, the words "which must be resolved without blocking the negotiations" has been added after the phrase "Among the crucial issues is decommissioning", from the 28 November statement. (COMMENT: Recycling language used by the Prime Minister last year)

11. Paragraph 7 of the 10 January paper omits a large section from paragraph 11 of the 28 November statement which refers to the Mitchell compromise, states the two Governments' support for it, and refers to the need to reach agreement on carrying the compromise forward. The 10 January paper also has a repeat reference to tackling decommissioning "without blocking the negotiations". (COMMENT: The first is clearly a major omission).

12. Paragraph 9 of 10 January omits a reference to HMG encouraging agreement "over a period" through the negotiations. (COMMENT: Unlikely to be significant)

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13. Amendment 3 of the Hume paper aims to commit the two Governments to "an agreed timeframe and calendar for the conduct of negotiations", whereas the 28 November statement says that we will encourage "an agreed indicative timeframe". (COMMENT: Clearly way beyond what HMG regards as feasible)

14. Paragraph 12 of the Hume paper tries to commit HMG to ensuring "just and equal treatment for the identity, ethos and aspiration of both communities" (COMMENT: Clearly beyond 28 November and what is realistic). Paragraph 12 also seeks "a policing service which can enjoy the support of the entire community" (COMMENT: a phrase we could not live with).

15. Amendment 5 of the Hume paper repeats verbatim the last paragraph of 28 November (COMMENT: and smacks of being a sop to HMG).

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