



NORTHERN IRELAND OFFICE
WHITEHALL
LONDON SW1A 2AZ

John Holmes Esq
Private Secretary
10 Downing Street
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15 March 1996

Dear John,

CONTACT WITH SINN FEIN

In the absence of a PIRA ceasefire and a lack of condemnation from Sinn Fein of the breaking of the ceasefire, Ministers have considered the pre-ceasefire guidance on Ministerial and official contact with Sinn Fein with a view to revising it to fit the new circumstances.

I attach a set of revised guidelines which has been drawn up and agreed by my Secretary of State and his Ministerial colleagues in Northern Ireland. We believe that they are consistent with public statements on such contact made by the Prime Minister and other Ministers in the wake of the breakdown of the ceasefire.

The withdrawal of Ministerial contact with Sinn Fein as a party is in line with the approach of the Irish Government. We would intend that our policy should remain on all fours with that of the Irish to the extent that we would not wish to adopt an approach which appeared to be more liberal than theirs.

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I would be grateful for confirmation that the Prime Minister
is content with these guidelines.

Yours sincerely,

Robert Crawford.

ROBERT CRAWFORD

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GUIDELINES FOR CONTACTS WITH SINN FEIN

In the absence of the unequivocal restoration of the PIRA ceasefire of August 1994, contact between Sinn Fein and NIO Ministers and officials will be circumscribed as follows:

- a. Ministers will not meet with an exclusively Sinn Fein delegation in any circumstances nor will they meet, on Government property, a delegation or group which includes Sinn Fein representatives;
- b. Ministers will continue their outside visits in Northern Ireland on the understanding that any contacts with Sinn Fein will be incidental to the primary purpose of the visit, eg, during a visit to a District Council to discuss Council business;
- c. meetings between Sinn Fein and senior officials may take place with the explicit approval of the appropriate Departmental Minister;
- d. contact between Sinn Fein and junior officials on local constituency matters will continue uninterrupted;
- e. Sinn Fein should continue to receive Press Notices and other material sent to all political parties.