



From: Secretary of State
31 October 1994

cc PS/SofS (B&L) - B
Sir J Wheeler (DFP, B&L) - B
Michael Ancram (DENI, B&L) - B
Baroness Denton (DED, DANIEL) - B
Malcolm Moss (DOE, DHSS&L) - B
Mr Fell - B
Mr Legge - B
Mr Thomas - B
NI Perm Secs
Mr Steele - B
Mr Williams - B
Mr Bell - B
Mr Watkins - B
Mr Wood - B
NIO Heads of Divisions
Miss Steele - B
Mr Caine - B

PUS

NORTHERN IRELAND CEASEFIRE

The attached letter expresses the Prime Minister's thanks for the excellent arrangements which were made for his visit to Northern Ireland last week. All the varied and prodigious skills of the Department were brought to bear, and the result was an extremely successful and historic occasion. I am both grateful and proud.

2. As the Prime Minister observes, the follow-up work to his speech is of prime importance, and it is going to require a lot of work on several fronts simultaneously. We must see to it that at every level, Ministerial and official, we go for this fast.

3. The Prime Minister recognises the demands that this will place on the NIO and Northern Ireland Departments. We are in the rare position of having a blank cheque on other Departments' accounts, and I know you will be uninhibited in drawing on it.

PA



10 DOWNING STREET
LONDON SW1A 2AA

THE PRIME MINISTER

Personal Minute

No. 28

THE SECRETARY OF STATE FOR NORTHERN IRELAND

NORTHERN IRELAND CEASEFIRE

Thank you for the excellent arrangements which, as always, the Northern Ireland Office laid on for my visit on 21 and 22 October.

As I said in my speech in Belfast, the peace process has now entered a new phase. The next 6-12 months will determine whether we can consolidate the ceasefire and minimise the risk of a reversion to violence by hard-line terrorists. Self-evidently, it will be of huge national benefit if we can succeed in this.

I believe that there is no higher priority on the Government's agenda. Now, if ever, is the time to apply all appropriate resources to building on the opportunity which our policies have helped to create.

We are now going to have to move policy forward, as rapidly as possible, on several fronts simultaneously. During the next few weeks, the NIO will be preparing for and initiating the exploratory talks with Sinn Féin, including on the crucial and difficult question of weapons and explosives. You will be preparing for a parallel process with the Loyalist paramilitaries. You will also

be working to conclude the Joint Framework Document with the Irish Government; to secure the support of public opinion and the Northern Irish Parties; and then to develop the political talks process. On the economic side, you will be organising the Investment Conference in December; taking part in negotiations with the European Union; and consulting local councils on new projects. We have promised to pay particular attention to community relations and the economic and social needs of the worst affected areas. Visible economic development will be a powerful disincentive to renewed violence.

I would ask all Government Departments to support you in this work in whatever way might be helpful.

You may well need additional staff during this transitional period, and I hope that other Departments will be ready to respond to any requests from Northern Ireland Office for short term attachments.

I am grateful to the Chief Secretary to the Treasury for his support for the proposals in my Belfast speech. We should continue to invest in making a success of the transition, which would bring very large economic returns in years to come.

You will obviously wish to liaise closely with the Ministry of Defence and the Home Office on security questions, including policy over the decommissioning of paramilitary weapons and munitions.

Likewise, you will wish to involve the DTI, FCO and the Treasury (as well, I am sure, as the CBI and the City) in preparations for the Investment Conference.

There will doubtless be many other examples where inter-departmental co-operation is needed. I think it would be helpful if the Cabinet Secretary could establish an official committee to underpin NI Committee and ensure efficient co-ordination.

I am sending copies of this minute to all Cabinet Ministers and to the Cabinet Secretary.

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to be 'John H. W.' or similar, written in a cursive style.

27 October 1994