

HANDLING PLAN

ANNEX B

This handling plan assumes that we have agreed the text of a Joint Declaration with the Irish Government (probably in Brussels) and that the Prime Minister and the Taoiseach will wish to make a public statement very soon afterwards - probably in London on 14 December.

2. The plan deals with those steps which will be needed before and immediately following the making of the Joint Declaration.

Timetable

1. Ministerial meeting considers JD15 text.
2. If text approved (subject to amendments), Cabinet invited to give general authority for the proposed course of action.
3. As soon as practicable afterwards:
 - (a) Prime Minister to see Mr Molyneaux to show him text and seek his general acquiescence;
 - (b) SofSNI to arrange to see Mr Hume ?before Brussels.
4. Joint Declaration text agreed in Brussels.
5. [Irish Government will probably seek to ascertain reaction in wider nationalist community and gauge prospects for a cessation of violence.]

5. As soon as possible after Brussels:

- (a) briefings for RUC Chief Constable and GOC(NI) (NIO), Buckingham Palace (Cabinet Secretary), President Clinton (PM by telephone);
- (b) arrangements for Summit (No.10, FCO, NIO); and Press Conference (No.10);
- (c) Prime Minister to minute Cabinet;
- (d) British/Irish officials coordinate drafts of joint lines to take and Q and A material.

6. 24 hours before Joint Declaration:

- (a) briefings for Leader of the Opposition and Mr Ashdown (PM);
- (b) Mr Molyneaux, Mr Hume and ?Dr Alderdice (NIO), HMA Washington (FCO), NIO Ministerial team (NIO) told of arrangements for Joint Declaration, Press Conference etc;
- (c) media told of QE2 Press Conference (No.10).

7. Taoiseach and Prime Minister meet for Summit and formally agree Joint Declaration.

8. Public statement made by Prime Minister (supported by senior colleagues? - ie Foreign Secretary, SofSNI), and Taoiseach at Press Conference, followed by Q and A session.

9. Just before/immediately following public statement:
follow-up briefings for key journalists (No.10 and NIO), opinion formers and community leaders in Northern Ireland (NIO), key politicians on Capitol Hill (HMA Washington); guidance telegram to Posts (FCO). ✓
10. Following day (Friday 17 December?) Prime Minister makes Statement in the House [briefings (with text) necessary for Opposition spokespeople on Northern Ireland in Commons and Lords, and Northern Ireland party leaders (No.10)] ✓
- [11. ?After cessation of violence: Irish Government announce unilaterally establishment of Permanent Irish Convention.] ✓