

## Conclusion

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6. As things stand, I do not recommend that we should positively encourage the Provisionals to declare a Christmas ceasefire. But we should be prepared to move very quickly if they decide to do so unilaterally, conceivably in the day or so before and after Christmas. I propose to review the situation again some time in the week beginning 10 December (given that the Taoiseach may say something on the subject to the Prime Minister at the next month's Summit).

7. I recommend the Secretary of State agree that:-

- (i) we should prepare to respond very quickly to a ceasefire at Christmas, but not seek to initiate one;
- (ii) we should take forward detailed staff work on prisons issues suitable for the medium term;
- (iii) I should keep the Chief Constable and GOC abreast of our thinking; and
- (iv) we should keep the situation under close review and report again after the Summit.

8. The Secretary of State may also wish at this stage to note that, as last year, it may be necessary to make quick - and potentially far-reaching - political decision in the immediate run-in to Christmas and we may need to set up machinery and a short-term contingency plan for this. I say this because we cannot rule out a sequence which goes something like:- PIRA calls a Christmas ceasefire; we respond with some security de-escalatory measures; and Sinn Fein asks for a dialogue with Government on political issues - this dialogue to be linked to a continuing absence of hostilities. Alternatively, some third party or parties may elicit a response from the Provisionals, with similar implications.

S.F. (Setting the record straight ppt) cannot date this anyway accurately but they reckon it was Autumn 91 or Autumn 92.

EMD asks where are nos. 1-5 paragraphs.

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