



Mike *MA*

You should be aware
of the attached statement
by Mr Prior which is being
released today.
WITH

THE COMPLIMENTS OF THE
PRIVATE SECRETARY

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STATEMENT BY THE SECRETARY OF STATE FOR
NORTHERN IRELAND, THE RT HON JAMES PRIOR, IN BELFAST

I wish to make a clear and simple statement to all the people of Northern Ireland. HM Government has no plan to push Northern Ireland into a united Ireland and has never had any such plans. Those who claim that such plans exist can produce no evidence of them and only stir up groundless fears.

HM Government is responsible for the conduct of the external affairs of the United Kingdom and will discharge that responsibility in the interest of all the people of the United Kingdom. It is in the interests of the people of the United Kingdom that there should be close and friendly relations with the Government of the Republic of Ireland, particularly on security. HM Government will not be deterred from this policy.

Despite the unremitting efforts of the RUC and the Army, it must be recognised that the security of individual people in Northern Ireland remains at risk. HM Government accepts its responsibility to stand against terrorism and lawlessness in all its forms. The security forces and their commanders have the total confidence of HM Government. The Government will always consider most seriously concrete suggestions from the public and their elected representatives for improvements in security. Generalised criticism or abuse of those responsible for the conduct of security operation only assists the IRA. The Government will not allow private armies to take over the work of the Police and the Army. The Government will not adopt methods

which abandon the rule of law or which are intended to punish the innocent.

It is the inescapable duty of all to give the security forces any information they may have about those who plan or commit acts of terrorism and murder. Those who fail to do this make themselves supporters of terrorism and murder.

The economy of Northern Ireland is at grave risk. There is no hope of its recovery if the Province is a place that its own people wish to make ungovernable. Northern Ireland cannot exist at any tolerable standard of living unless it can demonstrate to the rest of the United Kingdom and the world at large that its population and in particular its elected representatives respect the duly constituted authority of the Government. I pledge myself as Secretary of State for Northern Ireland to devote myself unsparingly to the task of bringing peace and prosperity to Northern Ireland and I call on all the people and all their elected representatives whatever their differences to join me in these two fundamental tasks.