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NORTHERN IRELAND
Information Service

Statement by Secretary of State

23 January 1998

STATEMENT BY THE UFF

The Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, the Rt Hon Mo Mowlam, MP, tonight said:

"The Government views the UFF statement with grave concern. We shall consider its implications very carefully, particularly following yet another callous murder tonight.

"It is of course welcome that the statement appears to indicate there will be no further UFF involvement in terrorism for the present. But the acknowledgment that it has participated in such activity, and the indication that the organisation may return to violence in the future, are extremely worrying.

"The UFF indicates that it is committed to the search for a peaceful solution of the conflict. That is the wish of all the participants in the talks. But the commitment to peaceful means must be total and absolute, and reflected in word and deed.

"I acknowledge commitments that Mr McMichael and his colleagues have made to peaceful means, and his statement today that his party has used its influence in a positive manner. Nevertheless, the two Governments have always made clear that the position of political parties must be considered in the light of activities of paramilitary organisations with which they have clear links.

"We believe participants in the talks are likely to want to offer views at the Lancaster House sessions next week, and the UDF may want to explain their position further. It will be for the two Governments to decide what action to take, in the light of what is said."