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FROM: D J R HILL  
POLITICAL DEVELOPMENT TEAM  
1 OCTOBER 1996

cc: PS/Sir David Fell  
Mr Thomas  
Mr Steele  
Mr Leach  
Mr Watkins  
Mr Bell  
Mr Wood (L&B)  
Mr Stephens  
Mr Perry  
Mr Maccabe  
Mr Whysall

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Ms Mapstone - B

GOVERNMENT PAPER ON DECOMMISSIONING

As we discussed yesterday there could be a case for revising the draft paper we had prepared as the Government's opening shot in the "address" to decommissioning and playing it in to the forthcoming debate.

2. Although we have already circulated our "suggested conclusions" there is a lot of useful material in the draft paper (latest draft 4 September) which provides much of the justification for the suggested conclusions and otherwise helps to present a fully rounded picture of the Government's position. For example, it outlines the features of the draft legislation, summarises the Government's view of the modalities proposed in the International Body's report and sets out our position on the confidence-building measures where action rests with HMG.

3. Publication of the paper as we deploy it during the address to decommissioning might also serve as a useful corrective to the flavour left in the media by recent internecine Unionist sallies on the subject. If there were agreement to circulate papers on decommissioning next week as a prelude to the address to

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decommissioning that would provide exactly the right context for such a paper. Alternatively we could deploy it at the beginning of the substantive address.

4. Against that background the paper could usefully be updated to incorporate the developments in our thinking and our position which are reflected in the "suggested conclusions". For example, paragraph 18 would need to be adjusted and the final sentence could be fleshed out with more detail on the proposed Committee and a reference to the proposed Working Agenda. The references to the legislation and, in particular the legislative timetable could be more specific. The paper should also incorporate a reference to the expert support which would be available to the Committee and Commission, and to the independent experts of international standing who we envisage would play an appropriate role in relation to the Commission.

5. In addition to incorporating these and other changes necessary to provide a comprehensive context in which to view the suggested conclusions, you might bear two further considerations in mind:

- (a) on the original plan, HMG would have first published its draft Opening Statement setting out its overall approach to the negotiations. Is there a case for incorporating some of that material to avoid any perception that we see decommissioning as the central issue in the talks? (I have in mind, in particular, paragraphs 4 to 8 of the 4 September draft of the Opening Statement, something brief on "consent", paragraphs 12 and 13, 27 and 29);
- (b) should we seek to expand the assertion/quote in paragraph 22 of the draft paper on decommissioning which goes to the very heart of Unionist reservations about the proposed Committee?

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3. If we are to deploy a paper on these lines it might be needed next week and should therefore be submitted for clearance (both as to substance and handling) before the Secretary of State leaves for the USA.

4. I should be happy to discuss my thinking in more detail if that would be helpful.

10 September 1996

STATEMENT ON THE BRITISH GOVERNMENT APPROACH TO DECOMMISSIONING

(signed)

D J R HILL  
POLITICAL DEVELOPMENT TEAM  
CB x22317

The Government wishes to see the total decommissioning of all illegally held weapons at the earliest opportunity. The issue of decommissioning remains high on the agenda of the multi-party negotiations.

It has been the Government's position since 28 February that the International Body's proposals on decommissioning should be addressed by the opening plenary session of the negotiations. That is where the UN proposals published this afternoon need to be considered.

The Government will play a full part in that debate and will make every effort to promote convergence on an agreed approach to the decommissioning issue. Its own position will continue to be based squarely on the International Body's report.

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