

**Secure Fax: 1082**

**Confidential**

**4 November 1996**

**No of pages including this one: 1**

**To: HQ  
For: PST/PSS**

**From: Belfast  
From: Second Secretary O hUiginn**

**cc Mr P. Teahon/ M. T. Dalton**

1. Senator Mitchell asked for a brief private meeting with Minister Owen, Secretary Dalton and myself in the margins of today's meeting.
2. He indicated to us in confidence that General de Chastelain felt it might advance the negotiations if he were to take over responsibility for decommissioning issues. (Senator Mitchell assumed this approach was based on private contacts by the General with Mr Ken Maginnis).
3. Senator Mitchell did not ask us for any reaction, but suggested we should talk it over with the British side. Senator Mitchell said he for his part was willing to accept the judgement of the two Governments on any reallocation of roles.
4. He mentioned that he was uncertain about his own future involvement. He hoped to be here until the end of the year, and possibly for some little time thereafter. While everything was deeply uncertain, it was unlikely he could devote to this agenda the year or more the talks might last.
5. We said we would discuss it with the British Government, but recalled earlier discussion that we had agreed to the present allocation of roles to meet a British/Unionist point. We would have preferred then and felt now that the political person should do the political (i.e., Strand Two role) and the military person the decommissioning. We would therefore be open to reverting to that approach, but would not contemplate General de Chastelain having both decommissioning and Strand Two roles. A combination of these two functions was definitely problematic from several points of view.
6. We have heard an unconfirmed report (not from Senator Mitchell) that General de Chastelain has asked the British for a two year contract. General de Chastelain has not discussed the matter with us.
7. This might be raised by the Tanaiste with Secretary of State on the basis that:
  - (a) We would want to be flexible on any reallocation of roles.
  - (b) We would definitely not wish the decommissioning and Strand Two roles combined under General de Chastelain (or, generally speaking, anyone).
  - (c) Any question of a two year contract would have to be considered on the merits as regards timing.

Ends.