


 TC EO
JH

 Foreign &
Commonwealth
Office

Prime Minister

24 June 1996

I think this would be well worth while trying - but v. much on a personal basis to President Clinton, which I could repeat privately to Cable - i.e. not in the main bilateral.

Dear John,

Content?

JH 24/6.

Northern Ireland: US Anti-terrorism Legislation

You wrote on 30 April about the report in Washington Telno 862 that President Clinton had signed the Terrorism Prevention Act. That telegram warned that the US Administration would prefer not to take the step of designating PIRA as a terrorist group in the run-up to the Presidential election. The recent shooting in Adare and the bomb in Manchester have, however, added force to the arguments in favour of designation.

The practical benefits of designation by the State Department would be useful but limited. The Americans would never designate Sinn Fein itself as a terrorist organisation, and have already, in effect, reimposed the fund-raising ban on Gerry Adams. So the impact on fund-raising may be modest. Designation might make it easier for the Administration to deport IRA members in future, and it would make it more difficult politically to grant exceptions to IRA members seeking visas for entry to the United State. But designation will probably not make a crucial difference.

Designation would, however, have a powerful symbolic impact, marking the Administration's extreme displeasure with the IRA. Even those in Washington who believe that Adams is still trying to move the Republican movement away from violence might be persuaded that such an initiative would help, by showing how much damage the IRA's behaviour is doing to the cause in America.

Any suggestion that the Administration was moving towards designation as a result of British lobbying would risk frustrating our aim. It would be far better if the initiative appeared to be generated spontaneously within the Administration. President Clinton feels betrayed by the IRA breach of the ceasefire and by their recent actions in Adare and Manchester. When he meets the Prime Minister in Lyons, he is bound to ask what he can do to help. The Foreign Secretary believes that the best way of securing designation of PIRA would be for the Prime Minister to put this suggestion to President Clinton on that occasion.

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If the Prime Minister is content to proceed in this way, we shall include appropriate material in the briefing for Lyons.

The Embassy in Washington have emphasised that, if this approach to the President is to be successful, it must remain strictly confidential. I should be grateful if these papers were therefore given a strictly limited distribution.

I am copying this letter to Martin Howard (Northern Ireland Office), David Redhouse (Home Office) and to Sir Robin Butler (Cabinet Office).

Yours ever,

Dominick

(Dominick Chilcott)
Private Secretary

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