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FROM:

D J R HILL

POLITICAL DEVELOPMENT TEAM

19 SEPTEMBER 1996

ASSISTANT SECRETARY
SECURITY POLICY & OPERATIONS 1
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REF. NURTHERN IRELAND OFFICE (B)

PS/Michael Ancram (B&L) PS/Secretary of State (B&L)



cc PS/PUS (B&L) PS/Sir David Fell Mr Leach (B) Mr Bell Mr Watkins Mr Steele/ Mr Wood (B&L) Mr Stephens Mr Perry Mr Maccabe Mr Lavery Mr Priestly Mr Whysall (B&L) Ms Mapstone Ms Bharucha Mr Campbell Bannerman Mr Lamont, RID HMA, Dublin Mr Clarke, Dublin Ms Collins, Cabinet Office

TALKS - SCHEDULING

Friday

1. There will be a "sherpa trilateral" with the UUP around 4.00pm at Castle Buildings. Mr Leach, Mr Perry and I will have a pre-meeting with the Irish officials (David Cooney and Val O'Donnell). The main text for consideration will be the proposed "response" to the UUP questions.

Monday

2. The meeting to brief the DUP on our Decommissioning Bill will be held at a convenient opportunity on Monday morning depending on the timing of any plenary business. The DUP intend to field Peter Robinson, Nigel Dodds and one other. Nigel Dodds did not think that the UKUP had indicated a desire to see the Bill and did not intend to

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invite them to join the meeting, though he would have no objection if we chose to do so. I am inclined to await an approach from the UKUP.

3. The precise timing of the Government/UUP trilateral arranged for Monday afternoon was also left to be settled on the day. David Cooney shares my view that it would be desirable to allow time for a substantial preparatory meeting between the two sets of Ministers (led on the Irish side on Mrs Owen, the Tanaiste being on route to New York), probably in the early afternoon. That may point to the trilateral taking place at around 4.00pm. The main documents on the table will be the Governments' "response" to the UUP questions and the draft "Suggested Conclusions" to the plenary address to decommissioning.

Alliance Representation

4. There may also be a need for <u>Ministerial contact</u> between the two Governments to discuss the line to be taken in response to the Alliance Party representation. The proposed "skeleton" judgement will be very difficult for the Irish and may not play well politically for us either. Although we have told the Chairman that the determination will not be available before Monday, it would be slightly awkward if the determination was not available on Monday as delay would imply indecision or disagreement and there is very little other plenary business to transact. It would probably not be too serious a matter if the determination was delayed until Tuesday, but there may not be much time on Monday to consider the issues. If the Secretary of State and the Irish Attorney General were able to discuss the broad lines of the determination during Friday, over the telephone, that would give us a better chance of producing an agreed determination during the course of Monday.

Other plenary business

5. Plenary is adjourned at the call of the chair. If the determination is available on Monday that could be presented to plenary and an opportunity taken to note any "observations" which the

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parties may have. The only other plenary business which has been signalled is a discussion of the rule of confidentiality, but the timing is presumably very flexible. If there is no determination available on Monday morning it may be best to advise Senator Mitchell to signal that there will be no plenary before Tuesday (to keep the afternoon in particular free).

Pre-brief

6. I understand that the Secretary of State would prefer Monday morning's briefing meeting to start somewhat later than usual, at 9.30am.

(Signed)

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