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From: Diane McNally
 Political Development Team
 21 January 1997

cc PS/Secretary of State (B&L) - B
 PS/Sir John Wheeler (B&L) - B
 PS/Michael Ancram (B&L) - B
 PS/Malcolm Moss (DHSS,DOE&L) - B
 PS/Baroness Denton (DED,DANI&L) - B
 PS/PUS (B&L) - B
 PS/Sir David Fell - B
 Mr Thomas (B&L) - B
 Mr Steele - B
 Mr Leach - B
 Mr Bell - B
 Mr Watkins - B
 Mr Stephens - B
 Mr Wood (B&L) - B
 Mr Beeton - B
 Mr Brooker - B
 Mr Hill (B&L) - B
 Mr Lavery - B
 Mr Maccabe - B
 Mr Perry - B
 Mr Priestly - B
 Ms Bharucha - B
 Ms Mapstone - B
 Mr Whysall (B&L) - B
 Mr Sanderson, Cab Off (via IPL) - B
 Mr Dickinson, TAU - B
 Mr Lamont, RID FCO - B
 HMA Dublin - B
 Mr Jones, HO (via IPL) - B
 Mr Westmacott (via RID) - B
 Mrs McNally (B&L) - B
 Mr Holmes, No 10

*File
 in my:*

NOTE FOR THE RECORD

TALKS: 21 JANUARY 1997: SUMMARY

Another quiet day at the Talks. A warning statement by the British Government was issued on the position of the Loyalist parties in the talks process in the light of recent Loyalist attacks. Business consisted of meetings with the Irish (official), the SDLP and General de Chastelain.

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In the bilateral meeting with Irish officials (Messrs Donoghue and Cooney), it was agreed that if the British side were able to produce a package for resolving decommissioning before the elections it might be passed to the Irish side via the usual channels later in the week, with a view to discussing it with their Ministers on Monday. The Irish continued to seek a commitment that any package would be agreed between the two Governments before being floated with anyone else: the British side encouraged them to adopt a more open approach, in which they might, for example, agree that ideas could be explored further but without final commitment in their part.

They were notified of the Prime Minister's meeting with Mr Trimble that afternoon, when the latter was expected to put forward his views for filling the political vacuum.

The British side handed over the text of a statement (subsequently published) indicating concern at recent attacks attributed to loyalists, and acknowledging that they raised questions over the position of the loyalist parties in the talks. The Irish were unhappy at the British side raising the profile of the issue: (there were hints that elements in Dublin fear us to be seeking the expulsion of the loyalists, paving the way for the exclusion of Sinn Fein).

The Irish side indicated that the SDLP were held to the view that it was for the two Governments to act to enable substantive negotiations to begin. The Irish maintained their opposition to any suggestion that the Independent Commission might have responsibility for making a judgement on the start of decommissioning.

At the meeting with the SDLP, they were hostile to ideas such as the UUP were entertaining for discussing social and economic issues as a means of filling the period in the run up to the elections, while decommissioning remained unresolved. If there were agreement, and the way open to substantive talks after the election, they saw some

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case for practical work, such as working up the agenda, which ought not to be contentious. There was a strong feeling among them that the Independent Chairmen should put forward a package as promised in their statement of 18 December 1996, and a hint that if the talks could not be put back on the rails they would not be able to sustain continued participation.

The British and Irish sides (official) had a brief review of the state of play with General de Chastelain; little emerged. He had met four of the parties to explore whether there was a basis for exercising the authority conferred on the Chairman by the Rules of Procedure to work up a solution that might secure agreement. The UUP - a low level team - he noted, had held out little prospect of movement before the election. The British side indicated support for a proactive approach by the Chairmen, including in circumstances where the two Governments were not totally agreed on any package. The Irish expressed much hesitation at this. The General offered little on what the substance of an agreed outcome might involve; we indicated that work was proceeding on our own package. Further meeting tomorrow, after the General has seen the remaining parties.

(Signed)

MRS D E McNALLY

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