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From the Private Secretary

13 February 1997

Dear Ken,

NORTHERN IRELAND: US VIEWS

Sandy Berger, Lake's replacement as Head of the NSC, rang me late on 12 February to pass on condolences from him and President Clinton about the murder of the soldier. He said that the President would be putting out a statement expressing outrage at this act and calling for calm on all sides, particularly from the Loyalists. He himself would be calling the Loyalist leaders this morning, Washington time, to urge them not to respond to this provocation and to stick to their ceasefire. I welcomed this.

Berger also said that he had been talking to Mitchell, both before he left Washington for his latest stay in Belfast, and since he had arrived in Belfast. He was encouraging Mitchell very strongly to stay on as chairman of the talks after the elections. He had laid heavy emphasis on the responsibility of Mitchell to see this through. Mitchell had not definitely agreed, but had said he would let Berger know in due course. Berger would keep up the pressure. Again I welcomed this. We were certainly keen for Mitchell to stay.

Comment

This was my first discussion with Berger on Northern Ireland. I had deliberately not introduced it into our conversations so far. What he said was entirely helpful but it illustrated that, whatever the British press may think, the interest in Northern Ireland of the NSC and the President is not going to go away.

I am copying this to William Ehrman (Foreign and Commonwealth Office), Jan Polley (Cabinet Office), Sir John Kerr (Washington) and Veronica Sutherland (Dublin).

Yours etc

JOHN HOLMES

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Ken Lindsay Esq
Northern Ireland Office

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