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Foreign &
Commonwealth
Office

11 March 1997

London SW1A 2AH

Telephone: 0171

Dear Ken,

*File
John 12/3*

*(see Sir John Ken's
fax of 11/3 to - name
detailed and accurate account)*

The Foreign Secretary's Visit to Washington, 10 March
1997: Northern Ireland

*John
12/3*

The Foreign Secretary was in Washington yesterday paying calls on the Administration and on the Hill. He has debriefed us on two short, private conversations about Northern Ireland which took place over pre-dinner drinks and which may be of interest to you.

The first was with Congressman Ben Gilman, the Republican chairman of the House International Relations Committee. He argued that the all-party talks should resume and include Sinn Fein in return for an IRA moratorium on violence. The Secretary of State explained why a moratorium was not acceptable. We needed to have a permanent ceasefire, not least in order to keep the Ulster Unionists on board.

This conversation was overheard by Congressman Peter King, who said nothing at the time. He later came up to the Foreign Secretary after Gilman had gone out of earshot. He advised the Foreign Secretary not to listen to Gilman who was not expressing "our position". King claimed to have talked to Adams. He believed the IRA were ready to offer a permanent ceasefire based on the kind of language that HMG had been proposing.

I pass this on for what it is worth.

I am copying this letter to John Holmes (No 10).

*Yours sincerely,
Dominick*

(Dominick Chilcott)

Ken Lindsay Esq,
Private Secretary/
The Rt Hon Sir Patrick Mayhew QC MP

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