

From: THE PRIVATE SECRETARY



NORTHERN IRELAND OFFICE
11 MILLBANK
LONDON
SW1P 4QE

C: JEA
Prer
Bup.

Philip Barton Esq.
Private Secretary
No.10 Downing Street

30 May 1997

Dear Philip

CALL BY SENATOR MITCHELL, 1100, 2 JUNE

Your letter of 15 May asked for briefing for the Prime Minister's meeting with Senator Mitchell on Monday. The other two Talks Chairmen, General de Chastelain and Mr Holkeri will also be in attendance. I understand from our Embassy in Washington that Senator Mitchell will also be accompanied by two of his staffers, Martha Pope and Kelly Currie. My Secretary of State and Mr Murphy stand ready to attend this meeting. They will have had short meetings themselves with the Senator earlier that day.

2. The main objectives of this meeting, which takes place at Senator Mitchell's request might be:

- to establish personal contact with the Senator and the other two chairmen and assure them of the new government's commitment to achieving a political settlement;
- to make clear HMG's gratitude for their commitment to the process; our appreciation of their skills; and to encourage them in their difficult task as chairmen;
- to demonstrate HMG's determination to see early progress in the talks;
- to let them know that the 2 Governments are working hard to develop agreed proposals on decommissioning with a view to tabling them soon after 3 June;
- to hear their views on the prospects for the talks.



3. A speaking note for the meeting is attached at Annex A. The Senator will go straight on to Dublin for meetings with the Taoiseach and Mr Ahern, before travelling to Belfast.

Press Line

4. The meeting, which takes place the day before the Northern Ireland talks resume, provides an ideal opportunity for the Prime Minister to make a public restatement of his wish to see the talks make early, positive progress. He could do so either in the form of a short written statement - draft attached at Annex B - or perhaps a short photocall with the three Chairmen at the end of the meeting. This could be particularly effective in Northern Ireland; there may not be much other political comment about the talks on Monday because most of the senior Northern Ireland politicians are away at a conference in South Africa. Alternatively, the Secretary could do a brief photocall with the Chairmen, after the meeting, to complement a written statement by the Prime Minister.

5. The draft statement attached is deliberately drafted in measured tones. It would be wrong to strike too optimistic a note since the parties still have to overcome the formidable hurdle of decommissioning. The best course would be to call on the parties to show renewed vigour and determination to press on with the negotiations and overcome any obstacles; this would echo the language of the Independent Chairmen's statement to the talks when they were suspended before the general election.

Yours ever
Frank Glee
for W K LINDSAY