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TPE NIO LONDON

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## CONFIDENTIAL

FROM: D J R HILL  
CONSTITUTIONAL & POLITICAL DIVISION  
20 JUNE 1997

cc (see attached list)

PS/Mr Murphy (L&amp;B)

PS/Secretary of State (L&amp;B)

## DECOMMISSIONING: JOINT PAPER

I attach a further and near final draft of the joint paper.

2. With two exceptions, the Irish have accepted our proposed amendments; and they have proposed a set of understandings on how the paper should be deployed.

Outstanding Issues

3. The Irish had some minor concerns about the phrasing and location of our proposed new paragraph 5; but we have provisionally agreed at official level that the point should feature as the second sentence of the second (unnumbered) paragraph of the "possible conclusions". I recommend that this should be agreed.
4. The Irish continue to resist the phrase we proposed at the end of what now becomes paragraph 6. We have told them that we cannot afford to lose this vestigial remanent of Mr Trimble's desire for a "communication cord".
5. The Irish have sought confirmation that:
  - there will be an agreed presentation of the paper both in plenary and to the media;



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- the two Governments will respond to amendments on the basis of consensus, i.e. neither Government will support an amendment unless it has the backing of the other and if one Government has a problem with an amendment, the other will join it in opposing that amendment;
- if the paper does not get "sufficient consensus" support at the end of the day (because Mr Trimble can't acquiesce in it) and the issue has to be "pigeon holed", the two Governments would make clear that they stand by their proposals as the only viable means of resolving the issue [thus offering a degree of certainty to Sinn Fein on this score].

6. We have told the Irish at official level that we could probably agree these handling proposals if they can accept our text.

7. In practice I see no difficulty with the Irish side's proposals on handling. We might well, in presenting the proposals, want to be rather more bullish than the Irish about the effect of the proposals in contributing to the achievement of actual decommissioning, but there should be sufficient flexibility to allow that.

8. However, in the light of Mr Trimble's reactions to the brief summary of our proposals which he received last weekend, I really do think we need to stand by the final phrase of paragraph 6. It is pretty vestigial compared with what Mr Trimble would ideally like, but it would strengthen our hand in presenting our proposals to him. So far as the Irish are concerned, it does not actually give Mr Trimble a mechanism for blocking the negotiations so I hope they could live with it on the basis that it may be an important part of the cover he is likely to need to enable him to move into substantive negotiations.



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9. Is the Secretary of State content that we should:

- agree the Irish handling proposals, but;
- hold out for the phrase at the end of paragraph 6?

10. If so, she may want to ring Mr Spring over the weekend to seek his support for it. Meanwhile officials will continue to urge our Irish colleagues to recommend accordingly. Obviously it will be important to have an agreed text by early Monday morning.

*Signed David Hill*

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