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FM WASHINGTON

TO IMMEDIATE FCO

TELNO 1454

OF 202305Z JUNE 97

AND TO IMMEDIATE UKDEL DENVER, NIO LONDON, NIO BELFAST

AND TO IMMEDIATE DUBLIN, BIS NEW YORK, ACTOR

UKDEL DENVER: FOLLOWING FOR PRIME MINISTER'S PARTY

SUBJECT: SINN FEIN'S RESPONSE TO THE AIDE MEMOIRE

SUMMARY

1. Adams informs King that decommissioning is the only issue of real difficulty for Sinn Fein in his letter to the Prime Minister.

2. NSC is trying to coordinate maximum pressure on Sinn Fein from the US.

3. Concern that Trimble is still unsighted on the "6 weeks" offer to Sinn Fein.

DETAIL

4. Congressman Peter King (R-NY) rang Cary this afternoon to say that he had seen the Adams letter of today's date to the Prime Minister, and subsequently spoken to Adams. Adams maintained that the only point of real significance was decommissioning. The rest were "housekeeping details" which could be "dealt with in a matter-of-fact way in one quick conversation". Cary said that if true, this was good news. We were making good progress with the Irish Government on the decommissioning paper. We hoped that the two Governments would soon be in a position to table a joint paper.

5. Trina Vargo, of Ted Kennedy's office, has also been speaking to Adams this afternoon. "When she first spoke to him, she said (which was before his conversation with King) he was insisting that the whole Sinn Fein response to the Prime Minister was important. She claims that she gave him a flea in his ear, saying he would never convince even his friends in the US that this was any more than a negotiating tactic to buy time. She could accept that there were some genuine loose ends over decommissioning, but the rest was padding. She got a second call from Sinn Fein (on behalf of Adams) after his conversation with King, taking a new line. All that mattered, she was now informed, was decommissioning.

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6. Mary Ann Peters, in the NSC, had also spoken to King and said she was recommending a round of calls to Adams on Monday from Berger or Steinberg, and also from the likes of Bruce Morrison, to maintain maximum pressure on Sinn Fein. They should be in no doubt that the US would not allow them to play things long, inventing obstacles, and seeking endless clarification.

COMMENT

7. This is encouraging. US opinion since the Lurgan murders has hardened a lot. There is much less readiness to give Adams the benefit of the doubt.

8. But we are worried about Trimble. Hill's (NIO) "gameplan" for next week rightly concentrates on how to coax Trimble over the decommissioning hurdle. But what about the rest of the aide memoire? In New York, Trimble was clearly in the dark about the "six week" offer to Sinn Fein, though even journalists were aware of it. Does the six week offer to Sinn Fein still stand, post-Lurgan? If not, Sinn Fein will cry foul, and so will Irish America. Someone should have told Adams before now. If so, the Unionists will surely cry foul in their turn, and might even refuse to join talks on this basis. It is bad enough, they may say, that we made an offer to Sinn Fein behind their backs and without consulting them. But it is intolerable to maintain that offer after the Lurgan murders.

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