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British Embassy
Washington

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File
July 19

Dear David

SINN FEIN

1. I spoke to Larry Butler (NSC) this morning about the terms in which the US would respond to the Secretary of State's announcement that Sinn Fein would join the talks process. He said the NSC preferred a low-key welcome (I agreed); there would be no White House statement. Instead the Spokesman would have a line-to-take at the 12.30 press conference on Martha's Vineyard.

2. Joe Lockhart answered a question ("What about Sinn Fein?") in terms Butler and I had agreed:

"Yes. We understand that the announcement was made by the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland today that says the conditions have been met for the IRA cease-fire and Sinn Fein have been invited into the talks. We welcome the decision which gives an opportunity for all parties in Northern Ireland to be part of inclusive talks, leading to a negotiated settlement."

3. Separately, State Department's spokesman also commented:

Question: "In the light of the British government's announcement today that Sinn Fein will be able to join the talks on 15 September, can we first have your reaction to that? And looking at the visit next week of Gerry Adams, what do you expect to achieve? And also, what specific, if any, American involvement do you see from now on in the peace process?"

.../Rubin:

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Rubin: "The British government has announced that the ceasefire declared on 19 July by the IRA is genuine in word and deed. The British and Irish governments have long held that Sinn Fein may join in the all-party talks in Belfast only when the IRA has ceased all violent operations. The United States has strongly supported this position and welcomes both the ceasefire itself and the inclusion of Sinn Fein in the talks, which we consider to be the best means of achieving a lasting overall settlement in Northern Ireland.

"As far as the American role in the talks, I believe Senator George Mitchell is an American, and Secretary Albright and he know each other extremely well. I observed Senator Mitchell working very closely with President Clinton during some political events in the United States last fall, and I am sure that Senator Mitchell will be keeping in touch with the United States during the course of these talks.

"But again, these are, like many negotiations around the world, where the hard choices, the real decisions, the ultimate success, will depend on whether the parties themselves have come to a conclusion that peace through the negotiating table is better than conflict through the streets. And that's their decision. And all we can do in this kind of a case is try to make ourselves available to assist in the process. That's what Senator Mitchell is doing.

"As far as your third question is concerned, I don't know that we have an objective for Gerry Adams's visit. You will have to ask Gerry Adams what his objective is. We provided the visa under the normal restrictions we provide in the context of cease-fire, and those restrictions are the same - namely, no restrictions except we will obviously be interested to know what kind of fund raising goes on".

4. Adams's programme continues to take shape. With the Administration, the highlight will be his meeting with Berger on 3 September. He is also meeting Secretary of Commerce William Daley. Butler assured me (again) today that there would be no meeting, formal or informal, with the President. With Congress, Congressman Gilman (House International Relations Committee) is organising a reception for Adams on the Hill. Adams (and Gilman) had lobbied for a separate one-to-one meeting with the Speaker. According to his staff, Gingrich turned this down; and doesn't much relish the prospect of the reception; but the politics of grunting a Committee Chairman being what they are, it is likely that he will drop by. With the press, there will be a Morning News Maker event at the National Press Club on 3 September. But the media seem less inclined to trip over themselves in pursuit of Adams than last time around. We heard today that the (well-respected) NewsHour with Jim Lehrer had decided not to interview him (apparently because the Unionists didn't have a "credible" spokesman to put up against him).

S G McDonald

Yours ever
S G McDonald