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From: THE PRIVATE SECRETARY

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cc CDS
FA/APS o/r
VACJohn Holmes Esq
Private Secretary to the Prime Minister
10 Downing Street
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5 September 1997

*Dear John,***INTERNATIONAL COMMISSION ON DECOMMISSIONING: MEMBERSHIP**

The Finnish, US and Canadian Governments have now provided us with their nominations for members of the Decommissioning Commission. These are:

- (a) Finland. Brigadier (retired) Tauno Nieminen (55), an officer with extensive UN experience and who co-ordinated the ICFY Mission in Yugoslavia in 1995;
- (b) US. Mr Donald Johnson (48), a serving diplomat, formerly Ambassador to Mongolia, and currently working with the OSCE, including on decommissioning, in Moldova;
- (c) Canada. Lieutenant General (retired) Jack Dangerfield (59), who also has had UN experience and has held senior appointments in NATO as well as the Canadian Army.

Full CVs are attached. Lt Gen Dangerfield's name has been put forward against the possibility that Gen de Chastelain does not in the event chair the Commission. If not, Brigadier Nieminen will chair the Commission, Lt Gen Dangerfield having indicated his willingness to serve under him.

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The calibre and experience of all three candidates is very impressive, and Mr Murphy has approved the names. He would be grateful to know that the Prime Minister is also content. The agreement of Ray Burke and the Taoiseach is being sought in parallel, though we do not expect any particular problems: we should know their views tomorrow afternoon.

Assuming that the Prime Minister is content, we intend to arrange - subject to their availability - for Nieminen and Johnson to visit Ireland, north and south, next week for briefings by the two Governments, including discussion of possible schemes. This would help meet Unionist demands that the Commission be in a position to begin work as soon as substantive talks get underway. While it would not be appropriate for Dangerfield to accompany them unless the question of the chairmanship has been resolved by then (he is aware of the position), arrangements are in hand for him to be briefed in Canada if necessary.

The Commissioners cannot formally be appointed until the international agreement is brought into force by an exchange of letters between the two Governments; this the Irish are not prepared to do until substantive talks are about to begin. We also need to consult the Talks participants on the identity of the Commissioners, which will take place early next week. Mr Murphy sees advantage, however, in briefing David Trimble over the weekend on where matters now stand, and will do so provided that the Prime Minister has no difficulty with the nominated individuals.

In order to enable the Commissioners-designate to make the necessary arrangements to travel here by the middle of next week, we need to confirm our acceptance of the nominations as quickly as possible. It would be very helpful, therefore, for early confirmation that the Prime Minister is content with the individuals proposed. Formal thanks to the Governments and the Commissioners themselves will issue once the appointments have been made.


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I am copying this letter to John Grant (FCO), Veronica Sutherland (Dublin) and Jan Polley (Cabinet Office).

Yours sincerely, 

Richard Lemon
Private Secretary to Paul Murphy
Minister of State