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TOP SECRET
C. R. 4,

From: R T Clarke
Date: 12 September 1997

cc: PS/Secretary of State (L&B)
PS/Paul Murphy (L&B)
PS/Adam Ingram (L&B)
PS/PUS (L&B)
PS/Sir David Fell
Mr Thomas
Mr Bell
Mr Watkins
Mr Leach
Mr Wood (L&B)
Mr Beeton
Mr Hill
Mr Priestley
Mr Perry
Mr Steele
Mr Maccabe
Mr Marsh
Mr Stephens
Ms Bharucha, IPL
Mr Fergusson, RID, FCO
PUSD(DSW) - via RID
Mr Tebbit, FCO via RID
Mr Pakenham, Cabinet Off.
Mr Holmes, No.10 - via RID

File 16/4.

Mr Brooker
IPL
NIO

MITCHELL PRINCIPLES : IRA STATEMENT

1. I saw Martin Mansergh this morning to discuss the above.
2. Mansergh said that the IRA statement had not come as a great surprise to him. He was aware from "direct contact, not just abstracts of security reports" of disagreement at the base level of the IRA with the approach now being taken by Sinn Fein. This applied to a strategy generally, with IRA opponents of the cease-fire being courted by the smaller fringe groups (ie RSF/Continuity Army Council/IKSP) and with pressure being brought to bear on the likes of Adams and McGuinness. It also applied to specifics such as Sinn Fein's signing up to the Mitchell Principles on 9 September, with the IRA hard-liners seeking to test the limits of what would be acceptable on the ground (and he went on to say that the public differences over

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the Mitchell Principles would only be the first of what he anticipated to be a number of alarms and excursions within the Republican movement over the next few months). But even though Mansergh had thought that the IRA would react to the Sinn Fein adherence to the Mitchell Principles, the timing of their statement had been "unfortunate". Equally unfortunate, to his mind, had been the fact that Sinn Fein had omitted to tip off the Taoiseach in advance. The Taoiseach had been very annoyed by this. Likening "certain figures" in the Republican movement to puppeteers with a different puppet on each hand, and noting that An Phoblacht was the Sinn Fein newspaper, he was disappointed that the Taoiseach had been left to scramble together a statement for the Dail that afternoon. Mansergh's message to Sinn Fein (which he claimed he had yet to convey) was that the IRA statement had "diminished their standing". He hoped that the tough line taken by the Taoiseach in the Dail, coupled with the statements coming from London and Washington, would have an effect on Adams. He went on to express the hope that the UUP would see the statement as a stick with which to beat Sinn Fein in the talks process, rather than as cover for them to stay at a distance (either inside Castle Buildings or out).

3. This latter point led him on to the recent exchanges with No.10 over language on decommissioning and consent. Mansergh said that their difficulties on consent, such as they had been, were purely internal (ie Fianna Fail grass roots) and had nothing to do with the well known Republican position. On decommissioning, however, their concerns had been that by using more forward language the Irish Government would open itself to accusations of bad faith from the Republican movement. He then went on to emphasise that the language which, as he put it, had been conditionally agreed between the two Prime Ministers, could only be used in the event of the UUP coming on board fully in the talks. They did not want to go as far as they had in the event of Trimble only signing up to some version of proximity talks.

4. Time was short, with Mansergh preparing to go off to the BIA weekend in Cambridge. Others including the Ambassador will have a chance for further discussion with him. It would be interesting to see his justification for the argument that more forward language on decommissioning would lay the Irish open to accusations of bad faith. I will certainly press him on this next time I see him.

Richard Clarke

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