

*Absolutely must
set up End. Comm.*

*File
Hogf.*

From: John Holmes
Date: 22 July 1997

PRIME MINISTER

cc: Jonathan Powell
Alastair Campbell
Philip Barton

NORTHERN IRELAND

The position this evening is as follows:

- I have sent your draft letter to Trimble to the NIO for their comments, saying that you will want to send it to Trimble in the next day or two. I expect them to have quite a lot of comments, particularly on your sentence linking failure to decommission with the Mitchell principles. We will fix a meeting with Trimble in the House (for privacy) next Tuesday or (better) Wednesday.
- the vote on our decommissioning proposals will take place tomorrow afternoon. It is 99.9% certain that the proposals will not be accepted.
- a number of differences between us and the Irish have emerged about what to do after the vote. We want to try to continue the talks for another week, for example to settle the details of the agenda for the substantive talks if we can. We also want to go ahead with setting up the Independent Commission on decommissioning as planned; and plan for the talks reconvening after the summer on 8 September, to give time for another vote on decommissioning and for Sinn Fein to swear their allegiance to the Mitchell principles if we invite them to join the talks, before substantive negotiations begin on 15 September. The Irish do not want to set up the

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Independent Commission yet (to keep up pressure on Trimble) and simply propose to suspend the talks until 15 September.

Mo will try to sort out these differences with Ray Burke first thing in the morning. I have already told Paddy Teahon that I regard the Irish attitude to the Independent Commission as likely only to confirm the UUP's suspicion that the Irish want to prevent any action on decommissioning at all costs. You may need to intervene with Ahern if we get nowhere at Mo's level.



JOHN HOLMES