

BY: SBIRITISH EMBASSY;

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17 September 1997

Mr David Brooker
NIO(L)British Embassy
WashingtonFile
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Dear David,

US REACTION TO THE MARKETHILL BOMB

1. I attach the draft statement which was prepared by Larry Butler (the new Mary Ann Peters) at the NSC yesterday afternoon. He had got round to this task late in the day, and time was correspondingly short for him to consider amendments. I tried to negotiate the two sentences which I have written in, but failed to secure the addition. Larry said he broadly agreed with the point I wanted the US to get across, and would try to reflect the thought in some later statement (or behind the scenes in US contacts with Sinn Fein), but this statement had to go out quickly. He would need authority to introduce such a significant amendment, and Jim Steinberg was not around.
2. The line I took in arguing for the suggested addition was that Markethill was the first serious incident since Sinn Fein had signed up to the Mitchell Principles. This was the moment to bring home to them that the context had changed. It was no longer acceptable that they should stick to their old lexicon of "regret" and "disappointment". That, after all, was the language they had used in the past to react to IRA violence in which they were implicit accomplices. If they used the same vocabulary to react to terrorist incidents during the IRA ceasefire there would inevitably be suspicion that Sinn Fein (at least) condoned continuing violence. If Sinn Fein could get away with an expression of mere "regret" in this instance it would set a precedent for the whole period of the peace talks.
3. Though I failed to secure this change, I continue to think that the point is an important one. I hope that serious efforts are being made at the UK end to impress on Sinn Fein that their acceptance of the Mitchell Principles imposes real new obligations on them. I was irked when I talked to Niall O'Dowd in New York recently, and he made light of the Mitchell Principles. We might think it would be a big deal for Sinn Fein to have to sign up to them, he said, but they would have no difficulty at all in doing this as their whole rhetoric was one of peace in any case, and the Principles would impose no new obligations. I hope we can prove him wrong.

Yours sincerely,
Anthony

A J Cary
Counsellor (Political & Public Affairs)

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