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ASSISTANT SECRETARY
SECURITY POLICY & OPERATIONS 1

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FROM: D J R HILL
CPL DIVISION
18 OCTOBER 1996

RECEIVED 21 OCT 1996

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OFFICE (B)

cc: PS/Sir John Wheeler (L&B) - B
PS/PUS (L&B) - B
PS/Sir David Fell - B
Mr Thomas - B
Mr Steele - B
Mr Watkins - B
Mr Bell - B
Mr Wood (L&B) - B
Mr Stephens - B
Mr Lavery - B
Mr Perry - B
Mr Maccabe - B
Mr Priestly - B
Mr Cornick - B
Mr Whysall (L&B) - B
Mr Campbell-Bannerman - B
Ms Mapstone - B
Ms Bharucha - B
Mr Lamont, RID - B
HMA Dublin - B
Mr Clarke, Dublin - B
Mr Westmacott, W'ton via RID - B
Mr Oakden, No 10 - B
Ms Collins, Cab Office (via IPL) - B

PS/Michael Ancram (L&B) - B
PS/Secretary of State (L&B) - B

TALKS: GAMEPLAN FOR WEEK BEGINNING 21 OCTOBER

Broad Objectives

These might be to

- continue the plenary debate on decommissioning at a relatively measured pace, if necessary deploying [and perhaps publishing] our paper and speaking note;
- consider the options for securing an agreed exit from the decommissioning debate. A discussion of Mr Stephens' submission ("Breaking out of the Impasse") of 11 October would be helpful;

- 1 -

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- work to secure Irish support for the approach to Sinn Fein's entry to the negotiations reflected in our latest draft of the Hume/Adams text. Monday's lunch with Mr Spring will be a useful opportunity to engage him on the subject.

2. At a tactical level we need to

- explore with Mr Trimble and the UUP what flexibility there might be in their position on decommissioning in the event that the entry conditions were raised; and prepare (if things move fast) to brief Mr Trimble on the Hume/Adams text;
- keep Mr Hume occupied by asking him to explore what the Republican Movement is offering in return for any statement from us;
- work to keep the Loyalists on board, in particular by signalling the Prime Minister's readiness to meet them within the next few weeks (if he agrees to do so).

Plenary Debate on Decommissioning

3. Having endured four hours of turgid oratory from Mr McCartney the plenary now faces a lengthy exposition of Dr Paisley's views on decommissioning, commencing at noon on Monday. The UUP will presumably want to respond to the various criticisms made of them by the other Unionist parties and introduce their own proposals. I hope they will do so in a way which helps to persuade the Irish that the issue of decommissioning is not simply a Unionist "tactic" (Mr O'hUiginn's line) but a matter of fundamental political significance for them.

4. Even if the other parties do not take too long to set out their opening positions, this part of the debate is likely to last until at least to close of play on Tuesday. If we get that far next week

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might then begin (this Wednesday being a non-plenary day) with "questioning" of each other's positions.

5. So far as the two Governments are concerned, we need not at this stage go beyond explaining and justifying the position reflected in the "suggested conclusions" published on 1 October. We have available:

- a paper for circulation. We have invited Irish comments on it - they seemed generally content on a first reading, and reassured that it does not touch on the conditions of entry for Sinn Fein;
- a speaking note which seeks to "sell" our proposed approach to Unionists as effectively as possible while making clear that we remain in negotiating mode;
- a supplementary speaking note (being submitted separately) responding to Mr McCartney's analysis.

6. There is a strong case for circulating the "speaking note" (after delivery) as well as the paper, to ensure that the Government's approach is fully understood and the various arguments properly registered with the other talks participants. There would also be considerable value in publishing both documents to facilitate the public presentation of the Government's approach. (The "confidentiality" rule does not apply as we would only be exposing our own position.)

7. On the handling of the debate there might also be advantage in encouraging the Irish to make a substantial contribution (rather than referring briefly to the "suggested conclusions" as they were intending earlier this week). There is still considerable mistrust and misunderstanding among Unionists in respect of the Irish Government's position on decommissioning: most clearly suspect that the Irish do not want to see any decommissioning; a reasoned explanation of the Irish view that their approach offers the best

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chance of securing actual decommissioning might remove some antagonism although it is unlikely to be persuasive.

8. The timing of any Government intervention could be a matter for discussion with the Irish but will also, obviously, depend on the speed with which the debate progresses. If there is no call for HMG to make a substantial presentation this week we might consider circulating our paper by Tuesday evening and then speaking to it next week.

9. A folder of papers relevant to the debate will be available in Castle Buildings on Monday.

Hume/Adams and "conditions of entry" for Sinn Fein

10. We need to take forward the strategy agreed by NI on Thursday. John Holmes has spoken to Paddy Teahon and we can expect Mr Spring to be ready for a detailed discussion on Monday.

11. There are clearly differences between him and Mr Bruton on the question of whether the conditions for Sinn Fein's entry to the talks should be raised: the uneasy compromise is that there should be no change to the existing conditions (although the two men give those conditions a distinctly different emphasis), but there may well be scope to secure his support for the proposition that the process of establishing whether any purported restoration of the IRA ceasefire is indeed "unequivocal" is bound to take some time. He is likely to be much harder to persuade on defining/toughening up specific criteria which might be used in making that judgement (even though he is among the range of Irish politicians who have at least implicitly called for something more than an unequivocal restoration of the IRA ceasefire - see Annex).

12. I attach a checklist of points (largely provided by Mr Stephens) which might be made to Mr Spring over lunch.

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13. If Mr Hume does make contact with Michael Ancram he should be asked to explore what the Republican Movement is offering in return for any statement from us.

Contact with the Ulster Unionists

14. It will be useful to have an early read out on tomorrow's UUP Conference, but it will presumably endorse the 30 September paper on decommissioning.

15. If we decide to table a paper on decommissioning this week we should warn the UUP in advance that it contains nothing new.

16. It would be desirable to continue to probe the UUP position. It seemed pretty clear last week that they would not be able to move away from the 30 September paper unless the barrier to Sinn Fein entry was raised to a height which (without being explicit) made it impossible for Sinn Fein ever to join the process. The note of yesterday's meeting between the Prime Minister and Mr Trimble suggested that he might feel able to "set aside" the decommissioning issue if the entry conditions were raised, an "inchoate" Commission established and progress made towards enactment of the Decommissioning Bill. However, the discussion was clearly somewhat confused: we need a clear understanding of the UUP bottom line on the decommissioning/conditions of entry issue and also of what they would be prepared to do in return for any movement by the two Governments, in terms of agreeing to move in to substantive discussions in the three strands.

Briefing meeting

17. I understand that Monday's briefing meeting has been convened for 10.30 am in Castle Buildings.

18. I suggest that we focus initially on Mr Stephens' submission on "Breaking out of the Impasse", together with Mr Perry's submission of today's date on the handling of the Decommissioning Bill. We might

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aim to identify, in the light of the note of the Prime Minister's meeting with Mr Trimble, a possible package of measures - including the notion of allowing a period of time to elapse before any restoration of the IRA ceasefire could be deemed unequivocal - which we could offer to the UUP as the price for agreeing to "set aside" the decommissioning issue.

19. That would provide a useful basis upon which to consider our approach to the subsequent meeting with Mr Spring.

(signed)

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LUNCH WITH MR SPRING: POINTS TO MAKE

Handling the Address to Decommissioning

1. This could run for a while yet. HMG stands ready to table a paper in support of the "suggested conclusions" (look forward to receiving any comments on it) and to speak to it.
2. Believe it would be helpful if the Irish Government made a substantial intervention - to help convince the Unionists that you share the objective of total decommissioning, which some doubt, and to explain why you believe the two Governments' preferred way forward offers the best chance of securing actual decommissioning. You may not convert any Unionists but a powerful presentation could remove much misunderstanding and distrust. No doubt Seamus Mallon will make a powerful and effective contribution, building on his recent statement.
3. Timing? Probably best to keep our powder dry until others have talked themselves out.

Breaking out of the Impasse

4. We still need to find a way forward to move beyond decommissioning and into the three strands. We have got to show that we can get into serious political negotiations - otherwise loyalists and/or SDLP may lose interest.
5. The gap between the two Governments' and the UUP paper is too wide simply to bridge. Lisburn has reduced any room for manoeuvre there was.
6. But Lisburn also provides a new opportunity. General consensus emerging that we need to be clearer about the conditions of entry for Sinn Fein.

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7. Believe this must reflect two elements:
- to give confidence that a ceasefire is credible both the words the IRA use and their actions on the ground must be consistent with it being an unequivocal restoration of the ceasefire;
 - it is unrealistic for Sinn Fein to expect a ceasefire to secure their immediate entry to negotiations now. I know you have been thinking of a period of six weeks - we think [four] months is more realistic.
8. Some indications, from Prime Minister's meeting last week with Trimble, that clearer conditions of entry, along with enactment of the decommissioning legislation and establishment of an inchoate commission, would enable the UUP to set aside decommissioning otherwise and move on to the three strands. Trimble said he wanted to sort this out quickly.
9. I want to talk to him later this week. What can we say on conditions of entry, draft legislation, "inchoate" Commission?

Hume/Adams

10. All this is closely connected with future of Hume's initiative. Latest text is clearly unacceptable as it stands. But if this were simply a matter of text, believe we could have responded in a reasonably, positive, always of course sticking within existing policy.
11. But cannot go on as if Lisburn had not happened. The only way we can proceed further with this initiative is if we incorporate into it clearly conditions of entry so that Sinn Fein know what to expect. Naturally we hope for your support in this.

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12. Understand No.10 have floated a possible text on conditions of entry with the Taoiseach's department over the weekend. [Hand over text]
13. If you could support such an approach, then we would hope to be ready to go back to Hume with a text which incorporated these new conditions of entry and responded positively. Any help you can give in preparing the way for Hume would be useful.
14. Have to say we remain extremely sceptical that this will lead anywhere. Hume continues to assert that Adams and the IRA guarantee a permanent cessation - but we have no tangible evidence to back this up. If there were some direct evidence from Adams that this was a real and credible prospect, that might help.
15. In fact, the evidence is that bombs is the immediate prospect - Adams must know that risks disastrous consequences.

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ANNEX

AN IRA CEASEFIRE: COMMENTS BY IRISH GOVERNMENT/NATIONALIST PARTIES

Taoiseach: Dail 16 October 1996:

"We all know that we were told before we had a ceasefire that would hold in all circumstances and it did not. Many people were deceived by statements to the effect that the previous IRA ceasefire would hold in all circumstances. It did not hold in all circumstances and, therefore, great care needs to be taken by those who wish to convince that they have established a commitment to exclusively peaceful methods.

Great care will be required on their part to ensure that this time they establish it in a way that will hold in all circumstances and that there will not be a second deception".

Tanaiste, Seanad, 16 February 1996:

"We have sought to ensure a bridge for Sinn Fein out of the wilderness of their self-imposed isolation and into the democratic area ... if and when they do cross it [the bridge] and have made it clear that they will not return to the other side, they will be treated like everyone else. They will have no more influence than that to which their support and the force of their arguments entitle them, and also no less.

Mr B Ahern TD, Dail, 10 October 1996:

"If the August 1994 ceasefire is restored, with adequate assurances that it is complete and definitive, and that there will be no further going back on it, Sinn Fein should then be allowed to take their place at the table, on the basis of the Mitchell principles without delay."

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Mr R Burke TD, (Fianna Fail), Dail 16 October 1996:

"We all want to see a permanent ceasefire with no going back and no further betrayal".

John Hume, Radio 4 Today programme, 12 October 1996:

"I think what everybody would want to see will be a restoration and a total and absolute restoration of the IRA ceasefire, a completely peaceful situation and the talks continuing with everybody present in a totally peaceful atmosphere."