

02-DEC-1997 19:47

PRIV OFF STORMONT

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PHONE CALLS TO TAOISEACH/PRESIDENT CLINTONLine to take

Remain determined to do all I can to push forward the Peace Process. But increasingly concerned that Adams/McGuinness may not be able to deliver the IRA.

Pressing forward on a number of fronts:

- Talks: still going, beginnings of engagement on substance, sub-group to report on outline of agreement before Christmas;
- Security: must follow professional security advice, threats from CAC and LVF limit scope for action. But Chief Constable has taken significant measures, including end of day time patrolling by the Army in West Belfast and one battalion has returned to GB;
- Prisoners: processing repatriations/transfers.

Now set a date to see Sinn Fein in Downing Street. Follow-up to my first meeting in Northern Ireland: treating them the same as other parties as we said we would do in July. But by no means a cost free option: Opposition has criticised, some newspaper comments say it's too early.

Decided to proceed with this despite alarming signs that the IRA may not hold to its cease-fire - or may even have already decided to abandon it by the end of the year. Difficult to assess what is going on - obvious signs of dissent, may just be a way of managing the movement and restoring unity. But cannot ignore real possibility of return to violence.

Decided right strategy is to press on to demonstrate that political process can work. Want to make it as difficult as possible for a return to violence to be justified. But this carries risks for me.

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SOFS/PM/LB

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Want you to know that I am worried but determined to press on. Grateful for anything you can do to support. Believe it is essential that if worst fears are realised, all three Governments stand together to say the IRA is to blame but the political process must go on without Sinn Fein.

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SOFS/PM/LB

TOTAL P.05