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POLITICAL AFFAIR
DIVISION

- 8 NOV 1996

N.I.O. BELFAST

FROM: D J R HILL
CPL DIVISION
8 NOVEMBER 1996

cc: Mr Steele
Mr Bell
Mr Stephens
Mr Leach
Mr Watkins
Mr Wood (L&P)
Mr Maccabe
Mr Perry
Mr Beeton
Mr Priestly
Mr Whysall
Ms Mapstone
Ms Bharucha
Mr Dickinson

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Mr Thomas - B

HANDLING OF POSSIBLE FUTURE SINN FEIN PROTESTS AT BLOCK B

On a contingency basis I asked Mr Dickinson to revisit the operational plans for controlling Sinn Fein access to Castle Buildings. His report is attached.

2. For the moment we should clearly stand by the "current" plan (paras 1-4 and 6); but it may do no harm to plan ahead against the possibility of an IRA ceasefire followed by a Sinn Fein "stunt" based on seeking entry to the talks before the Secretary of State is in a position to issue an invitation.

3. The original proposition that it would be desirable to operate in concert with the Irish holds good (and we should remember that although under the legislation it is the Secretary of State who invites nominating representatives to nominate negotiating teams, it will be for the two Governments jointly to issue invitations to attend the talks).

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4. Equally, if we have a common position with the Irish it might well be desirable - in the interests of minimising adverse publicity - to reactivate the "10 June" plan for dealing with any Sinn Fein stunt after an IRA ceasefire. That would mean

- agreeing a message to be read out to any Sinn Fein delegation invited in to Castle Buildings (and relayed to the media)
- identifying someone to invite a delegation in to the building.

5. If we do not arrive at a common position with the Irish it may be better to stick with our "current" handling plan, perhaps reinforced by a prior public statement setting out what can be expected to happen before any formal invitation is issued to Sinn Fein.

6. Either way those concerned should await specific Ministerial authorisation before allowing Sinn Fein representatives any access to Castle Buildings, whether in a limited way (as on 10 June) or as full members of the talks community.

7. I should be grateful for any observations which you and copy recipients may have.

(signed)

D J R HILL
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