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SINN FEIN: ENTRY CONDITIONS

- the Secretary of State must be satisfied that the terms of the legislation are met: there must be an unequivocal restoration of the ceasefire of August 1994 and Sinn Fein must establish a commitment to exclusively peaceful means and show that they abide by the democratic process;
- words, actions and circumstances would need to be consistent with any purported restoration of the ceasefire. We would have to look at the words of any ceasefire declaration: was it clearly unequivocal and intended to be lasting?
- it would also be necessary to have regard to whether any paramilitary activity (including surveillance, targeting and weapons preparation) was continuing;
- developments which were incompatible with an unequivocal restoration of the ceasefire or which would constitute a breach of the Mitchell principles would obviously affect the conclusion reached. Sufficient time would be needed to ensure that the requirements of paragraphs 8 and 9 of Command Paper 3232 were met before Sinn Fein were invited to participate in the negotiations;
- are not convinced that a ceasefire is likely at present. In many ways, the indications are to the contrary - eg find of command wire in Londonderry;
- however, if a ceasefire were to be declared, would be advantageous for us to have considered how we would respond. Perhaps more important, must avoid being wrong-footed by Sinn Fein or the Irish Government who want us to say Sinn Fein would formally join negotiations at once;
- this would be wrong: does not give us sufficient time to assess ceasefire carefully. Know it would cause you problems;

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- as a contingency, therefore, we have been giving some preliminary thought as to how to manage the time after a ceasefire declaration in such a way that we can resist the pressure for immediate entry to negotiations;
- at an early stage in our thinking on this, but the intention would be to set out a process, to take place over a period of time, which would test Sinn Fein's intentions and give time to see if the credibility of any ceasefire can be demonstrated to our satisfaction;
- such a process might involve, for example, meetings with Sinn Fein at official level, followed by Ministerial contact, to test what assurances they could give us about the ceasefire. They would also deny Sinn Fein the easy propaganda claim that even after a ceasefire we refused to talk to them;
- we would want an early commitment, not part of the formal negotiations, to the Mitchell principles;
- this would mean Sinn Fein were tied down to giving a commitment, for example, to exclusively peaceful means, to total disarmament of all paramilitaries and to oppose the use or threat of force to influence the outcome of negotiations;
- meanwhile of course we would have bilateral or other consultations with the parties to determine how negotiations could be advanced most constructively;
- there would, therefore, be a significant period of testing. The IRA would have to show consistency of words and actions over a period. No question of Sinn Fein sitting down with other parties in negotiations until they have met the criteria and sufficient time has passed;
- interested to hear your initial thoughts?

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