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TOP-JEH
C.P.B.
ACFrom the Ambassador
Sir Christopher Meyer K.C.M.G.British Embassy
Washington3100 Massachusetts Ave. N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20008-6000Telephone: (202) 548-6012
Facsimile: (202) 548-7870
www.britain-info.org

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John Holmes Esq
No 10 Downing St
LONDON

ROISIN MCALISKEY: HANDLING OF DECISION

1. In his letter to you of 20 February, David Redhouse sought my advice on handling the Roisin McAliskey decision in the United States.
2. There is intense interest in the case here, and we shall need to move quickly. If the decision is taken on or around the 16 March deadline it will be especially sensitive, because - along with most who matter in Irish America - Ahern, Hume, Adams, Trimble, Alderdice et al will be in Washington for the St Patrick's Day festivities - along, of course, with Dr Mowlam.
2. If the decision is for extradition:
 - a) we should convey it, before it hits the wires, to the NSC (me to Steinberg); to State (me to Pickering); and to key Congressmen (ideally Mo Mowlam to Kennedy, Gilman and also Christopher Smith (R-NJ) who chairs the Human Rights Sub-Committee of the House International Relations Committee, and takes a particular interest in this case). I would do the rest of the Senate and House;
 - b) we would at once alert US Posts, who are being sent the contingency briefing. We shall pre-prepare material for our website - which already has a section on Roisin McAliskey.
 - c) we would contact the key journalists here. If the decision is taken while Mo Mowlam is in town, she should say something at once on the record.
3. If the decision is not to extradite, things will be much easier here. The only people who might not welcome it are Reno and Freeh: because of the implication such a decision might have for pending extradition cases here (our problem, as David Redhouse notes, will be a longer term one, as the Brennan/Artt/Kirby lobby cranks up to demand an equivalent "peace process dividend"). Reno and Freeh might therefore

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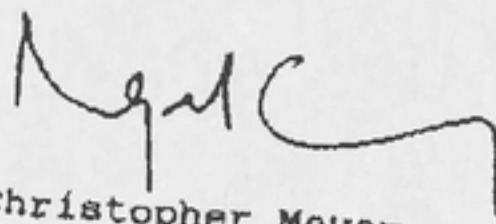
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welcome a reassuring call from the Home Secretary. Otherwise, we would still ring round Administration and Hill to let them know of the decision. But the pressure from them and the media would be much less intense.

4. The pressures around this case are already mounting. I noted what Ahern said to the Prime Minister. The Irish here tell us there are doubts in nationalist circles (and therefore in Irish-American circles) about the psychiatrist chosen to report to the Home Secretary, who is said to have focussed as much on McAliskey's political views as on her medical condition. It sounds like black propaganda to me. We shall need good material to deal with this point.


pp Christopher Meyer

cc David Redhouse Esq, Home Office
Ken Lindsay Esq, NIO
Dominick Chilcott Esq, FCO
Veronica Sutherland, Dublin

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