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Foreign &
Commonwealth
Office

25 February 1998

London SW1A 2AH

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Dear David,

Roisin McAliskey: Handling of Repatriation Decision

We are generally content with the handling plan set out in your letter dated 20 February to John Holmes. We appreciate the sensitivities in relation to the Home Secretary's role on a decision on the extradition of Roisin McAliskey. However, we should not under-estimate the reaction of the Irish government if they are not informed of our decision before the story breaks in the media.

The Irish Embassy in London have lobbied both Home Office and Foreign Office officials hard for advance notice of the Home Secretary's decision. Whilst we accept that it is important that Ms McAliskey should learn of the decision before the Irish government, it is in our interests to inform them before they learn about it from the media. If we do not it will give the Irish another stick with which to beat us.

In practice, this means that the Home Secretary will need to inform the Irish Minister of Justice of his decision immediately after Ms McAliskey's solicitors have been informed. We can expect her solicitors to inform the media immediately. The window of opportunity can therefore be counted in minutes. Given the Irish Foreign Minister's close interest in the case, the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland should also inform him at the same time.

Please could the FCO's Head of Republic of Ireland Department be informed on the same timescale so that he may brief the Irish Ambassador.

I am copying this letter to John Holmes (No 10) Ken Lindsay (NIO) and faxing it to Sir Christopher Meyer (HMA Washington), Veronica Sutherland (HMA Dublin) and Sir Paul Lever (HMA Bonn).

Yours sincerely,
Dominick

(Dominick Chilcott)
Private Secretary

David Redhouse Esq
Home Office

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