ROINN AN TAOISIGH

Uimhir.....

To **Secretary**

From **Walter Kirwan, Assistant Secretary**

24 22 23

Taoiseach's Response to an Unequivocal Restoration of the August, 1994 IRA Ceasefire, particularly following a Meeting with Gerry Adams and John Hume

1. As discussed, having regard to the high likelihood that, following a restoration of the IRA ceasefire, accepted by the two Governments as being unequivocal, a meeting involving the Taoiseach, John Hume and Gerry Adams would take place within a few days, it is necessary that the Taoiseach's reaction in such a situation should be prepared in advance. It is probable - and certainly desirable, I think- that the Tánaiste and the Minister for Social Welfare would also be participants in such a meeting.

2. I have prepared draft material in regard to the Taoiseach's response, which I now submit for initial consideration. I am also copying it to Mr Donlon, Mr Kenny and the Attorney General for their reactions. When we have the internal reactions, within the Taoiseach's system, we can consider consulting the Departments of Foreign Affairs and Justice.

3. The material is in the form of

   (1) Speaking Points for an opening statement by the Taoiseach at a press conference, whether on the steps or in the Press Room of Government Buildings and
   (2) suggested responses to hypothetical but quite likely questions.

4. The opening statement is quite substantial. Initially, I thought it would be too long for a 'steps' appearance but the more I think about it the more I am compelled to the view that a substantial statement would be required in the circumstances postulated. A restoration of the ceasefire will be quite different from the initial declaration in August, 1994. The ending of that ceasefire last February and the various atrocities since then have raised a major question-mark over the credibility of any restored ceasefire. The Taoiseach himself has repeatedly spoken of the need for a restored ceasefire to be credible, to be for good, to hold in all circumstances. There is deep scepticism among unionists and loyalists (including loyalist paramilitaries) as to whether any restoration would be other than tactical.

In these circumstances, I feel strongly that, following any meeting with Gerry Adams after a new ceasefire, the Taoiseach would need to preempt all the doubts and queries that would certainly be put to him in questions by the media, which have, of course, been full of speculation for weeks past, about the credibility of a ceasefire and the related issue of the terms for Sinn Féin's entry into the multi-party talks. The points for the Opening Statement reflect this need, as I see it, for the Taoiseach to "get his retaliation in first". At the same time, I have sought to build in some positive elements, as well as primarily defensive and preemptive material.

6. If it were felt that, despite the arguments set out above, the Speaking Points are too lengthy for an Opening Statement on the steps, the points could be drawn on for other statements and interviews, including a statement in the Dáil. If a substantial opening statement were to be made, it is for consideration as to whether Sinn Féin and the SDLP would be alerted to the Taoiseach's intention or even shown the draft.

7. Given all the events of the past 9 months and the Taoiseach's previous statements, it would, I submit, be quite unrealistic to script for the Taoiseach an unqualified acceptance of the credibility of a restoration of the ceasefire. Accordingly, the line that is taken in the draft opening statement is one of giving the IRA the benefit of any doubts there may be, on the basis that there sufficient grounds for belief that the restoration is indeed unequivocal as to strongly tip the balance of risks towards accepting the credibility of the IRA announcement. It would be useful to have initial reactions at this stage to this approach.

8. As regards the draft answers to possible questions I would direct attention to numbers 4 and 6, about, respectively early IRA decommissioning and shaking hands with Gerry Adams. On the latter, this is essentially a reminder that this issue will arise, as clearly it would be necessary to have the choreography of the occasion fully settled in advance. While one can imagine layouts, such as 5 microphones spread well out, designed to avoid a Taoiseach - Adams handshake, my view is that this is unavoidable if we do not wish the media focus to be on the absence of such a handshake.

9. As regards the question on decommissioning, my suggested reply pushes the boat out a bit, as compared with our line to date. This reflects my view that once there is no precondition about prior or parallel decommissioning and once Sinn Féin entry to the talks is agreed, we should then step up pressure on them in the decommissioning area. This, I submit, will be necessary if we are to have any chance of getting a satisfactory agreement with the UUP. Hitherto, our line has, effectively, been that the Republican movement must be left, themselves, to decide if or when to do any

decommissioning during the negotiations. This, in the end, is probably an inescapable reality but it need not mean that we do not press them to agree, even if not actually carry out, some decommissioning, where we judge political progress is being made and, very likely, requires some positive indications on decommissioning, if it is to be consolidated.

10. I am, of course, conscious that at a stage in the negotiations where we are stuck on the address to decommissioning in the opening plenary, we have to be very careful not to give to unionists ammunition which would make it harder to exit from that item and from the opening plenary generally, in order to move into substantive negotiations in the three strands. This is why I call particular attention to the draft reply to question no. 4.

12 November, 1996

cc Mr Simon Hare
Mr Séan Donlon
Mr Shane Kenny
Mr Dermot Gleeson, S.C., Attorney General