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de Rosier & Taylor, Attorney  
General, Minister of State  
Coveney, Messrs. Teahon,  
Donlon & Dalton, Ambts.  
London and Washington, Joint  
Secretary, Counsellors A-E.

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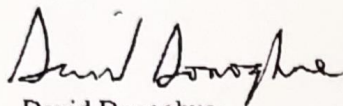
### Multi-Party Talks

#### Daily Report - 20 November 1996

1. Bilaterals continued today amid persisting gloom about the prospects for overcoming the impasse over decommissioning.
2. The Plenary has been convened for noon next Monday, but with no clear sense at this stage of what business it may usefully perform. It will be chaired by Senator Mitchell.
3. The Government delegation today was led by Minister Coveney. We had meetings with the British Government and the Chairmen and with the SDLP.
4. The British Government told us that, at their meetings yesterday with the UUP, the SDLP and Alliance, they had impressed on the Unionists in particular the need to recruit others to the way forward which they were proposing. Michael Ancram commented that, if the position taken in the recent UUP paper was a "bottom line" for them, the talks process was in very serious difficulty.
5. Both Governments agreed that the UUP had made a difficult situation considerably worse by circulating this hard-line paper (prepared at a time when they were ostensibly seeking common ground with the SDLP). We also agreed that the SDLP's frustration in having to deal with a succession of different UUP teams, none of whom seemed to coordinate with the others, was entirely understandable.
6. The SDLP met the British Government, Alliance, the UDP and the UUP (the scheduled trilateral was deferred to next week) and briefed us subsequently on these contacts. They had agreed with the UUP that it might be useful to draw up over the next few days written positions on the remits for, respectively, the envisaged committee and Commission and on the relationship between both. They had made clear that any commitments entered into in this area would have to be matched by a Unionist commitment to move on to three-stranded talks. The UUP had again referred to their concerns regarding the terms for Sinn Féin's entry.
7. The SDLP had also sought clarification that the UUP's understanding of the modalities of decommissioning was that contained in the relevant section of the Mitchell Report. We emphasised the importance of staying within the parameters set by the Mitchell Report.
8. We also suggested that the SDLP should leave the British Government in no doubt about the unacceptability of an approach which would vest in the Commission the power to judge when decommissioning should begin to take place (and which would

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be seen by Sinn Féin and the Loyalist parties as equipping the Commission with an "eject button" for use against them).



David Donoghue  
20 November 1996