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Mr Budd

FROM: Veronica Sutherland, HMA, Dublin  
DATE: 28 November 1996

cc: PS/Secretary of State (B&L) - B  
PS/Sir John Wheeler (B&L) - B  
PS/Michael Ancram (L&B)  
PS/PUS (B&L) - B  
PS/Sir David Kell - B  
Mr Steele - B  
Mr Bell - B  
Mr Thomas - B  
Mr Leach - B  
Mr Watkins - B  
Mr Wood (B&L) - B  
Mr Cornick - B  
Mr Hill (B&L) - B  
Mr Maccabe - B  
Mr Perry - B  
Mr Priestly - B  
Ms Jude - B  
Ms Mapstone - B  
Ms Bharucha - B  
Mr Holmes, No. 10 (by fax)  
Mr Budd, Cabinet Office (by fax)

L6  
M 17/12

TO: J Stephens Esq, NIO, London

REACTION TO PRIME MINISTER'S STATEMENT ON NORTHERN IRELAND:  
28 NOVEMBER

1. We have spoken to a number of our government contacts and all have given the roughly similar message.
2. Sean Donlon, whom I trust to give a reasonably balanced and objective view, said that the Taoiseach felt personally bruised that the statement had issued unilaterally, without the Irish government being party to it. The Irish felt very strongly that progress in the peace process was only made when the two governments acted together. They were particularly concerned in this instance at the timing. The statement came only hours before Irish government officials were due to meet members of Sinn Fein this evening.
3. In spite of feeling let down by the way events had developed, the Irish government were doing their best to find passages in the statement which offered the opportunity for progress to be made. As far as the main statement was concerned, this was proving very difficult. This was particularly unfortunate because Sinn Fein would focus on the statement itself rather than on supporting material and comments.

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4. I did not prolong this conversation, not least because Donlon had come out of a meeting of officials to speak to me. I did, however, point to passages on the second page of the Prime Minister's statement in the House which should offer pointers to the way forward. I mentioned in particular the passage referring to the Secretary of State inviting Sinn Fein to participate in the negotiations on an equal basis, followed by the reference to adjournment of the talks.

5. David Cooney expressed similar sentiments. He said that we should not underestimate the extent of the Taoiseach's anger. The DFA had hoped up until 1514 this afternoon that the Prime Minister would not make the statement. They were still considering how best to react publicly, but Cooney warned that we could not expect an easy ride.

(SIGNED)

VERONICA SUTHERLAND  
AMBASSADOR