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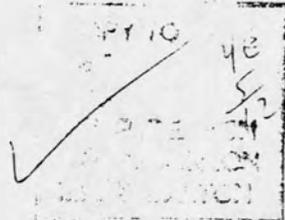
EMBASSY OF IRELAND

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4 DECEMBER 1996

TO HQ
FOR SECRETARY O HUIGINNFROM WASHINGTON
FROM P HENNESSYTRIMBLE AT THE WHITE HOUSE

1. — I discussed Trimble's meeting at the White House with Val Martinez, who is standing in for Mary Ann Peters at the NSC (Peters will return to work next week following a period of medical leave). The Ambassador also spoke briefly with Nancy Soderberg.

2. The meeting with Lake included an approximately 15-minute drop-by by Vice-President Gore. Trimble used the occasion to emphasise his interest in moving into the substantive phase of the talks. He said this was important both in itself but also to strengthen the inducement to Sinn Féin to come into the talks. In terms of time-table, he suggested that there was still time to make progress, but it needed to be done before the end of March, when the British election campaign would oblige the talks to go into abeyance. On decommissioning, he said that they would be prepared to accept parallel decommissioning, provided they were given a commitment in advance that decommissioning would in fact take place during the talks. He pointed to the proposed decommissioning Commission as the vehicle which would allow transition to the substantive phase.

3. Trimble played up the pressure he was under from Paisley. He drew attention to the UUP's poor performance in the May elections. This has caused unease in the party, although he was hopeful of better results in the Westminster elections where the UUP traditionally do better. He also stressed the party's interest in working more closely with the SDLP, including on local economic issues.
4. As regards prospects for a ceasefire, Trimble had made known his scepticism but had not over-stressed the point (Trimble had highlighted this element in his subsequent press briefing). He had reiterated his objections to setting a date certain for the resumption of talks, and claimed that his views were shared by the British.
5. While the US side saw the meeting as primarily an opportunity to keep open lines of contact with the UUP, Lake emphasised that they remained in touch with all the parties, and would continue to do what they could to advance the process. A copy of the press statement issued following the meeting is attached. It is particularly helpful in that it highlights the Administration's hope that "inclusive and substantive talks would move forward as quickly as possible" (given that Trimble's message during his visit has been to suggest that the talks should move ahead without SF).
6. In the margins of the meeting, the Unionists, in terms which were not entirely clear to our interlocutors, suggested that the Administration itself might seek to establish what measures (targetting, etc) the IRA were willing to commit to as part of a ceasefire. While this might in some circumstances imply an openness to a greater US role (as Molyneaux subsequently seemed to imply - see below), the White

House team want some more time to reflect on the exchanges, and on their possible relevance to the present impasse.

Molyneaux

7. Following the meeting, I had the opportunity of a conversation with Jim Molyneaux at the function organized by the American Ireland Fund (which was poorly attended). Molyneaux reiterated the difficulties of setting a date certain, but envisaged that on the basis of a guarantor role for the three governments - British, Irish and, interestingly, the US - it could be possible to move from a ceasefire — announcement (which he saw coming after the adjournment of the talks) to the reconvening of talks in a short period, not excluding before the end of January. Asked to elaborate on the US role, he saw it as guaranteeing the good faith of the commitment to reconvene all-party talks at an early date, thereby overcoming the difficulty caused by the lack of a specific date for the resumption of talks. In outlining this scenario, he strongly emphasised the importance of the content of the IRA statement, which must provide for the unequivocal ending of its campaign (he characterised the August '94 statement as a tactical truce); despite opportunities to do so, he did not signal any particular requirements in terms of deeds.

[3 + 1 pages total]

THE WHITE HOUSE

Office of the Press Secretary

For Immediate Release

December 3, 1996

STATEMENT BY THE PRESS SECRETARY

Northern Ireland's Ulster Unionist Party (UUP) leader David Trimble and National Security Adviser Anthony Lake met this afternoon for an hour to discuss the peace process in Northern Ireland. Mr. Trimble was joined by former Ulster Unionist leader Sir James Molyneaux and party secretary Jeffrey Donaldson. The Vice President joined the meeting for a brief period as well.

Mr. Lake and Mr. Trimble exchanged views on the current status of peace talks in Northern Ireland; both expressed their support for serious and substantive negotiations in Belfast under the able chairmanship of former Senator George Mitchell.

Mr. Lake reiterated the Administration's commitment to working with the parties in Northern Ireland, and with the British and Irish governments, in their efforts to achieve a just, democratic and lasting settlement. He also underscored our strong view that the cease-fire be restored immediately. Mr. Lake expressed the Administration's hope that inclusive and substantive talks would move forward as quickly as possible.

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