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IMMEDIATE

Secure Fax

Pages: 5

To: Embassy, London  
For: Ambassador

From: Belfast  
From: Joint Secretary

Summit

1. I enclose for your information our SF 735 to Dublin concerning the President's visit to Northern Ireland on 18/19 June together with a note handed over in Dublin last night of which we were given a copy this morning.
2. One additional point of interest arose later today which I report without prejudice to the Constitutional position. In relation to the views they have now expressed, the British side have told us they assume the President will be guided by the advice of the Government. They said Ambassador Blatherwick had informed them, following his presentation of credentials to the President, and confirmed following discussion with officials in Dublin, that the President would feel obliged to accept, under the Constitution, any advice the Government wished to give in relation to visits to Northern Ireland. The British said the Ambassador had relied on statements made to him by the President herself in making this report.
3. Re talks: since my return here following the Murray/Butler Diner last week, I have noted a statement by Jim Molyneux in the Commons on 8 June in which he is implicitly critical of one vital aspect of the agreed statement of 26 March 1991 namely "nothing can be agreed until everything is agreed", column 174 of Hansard, 8 June, 1993 (attached). You will recall that this is a point you made yourself in discussion at the Diner. At that time I was unaware of the Molyneux statement.

Copy cover fax to Mr David Donoghue, Dublin.

SECURE FAX 735

16 June, 1993

TO: HQ FROM: BELFAST Pages: 2  
FOR: A/Sec O hUiginn FROM: Joint Secretary

President's Visit

1. To confirm. Shortly after your phone call early this morning, my opposite number, Martin Williams, called to report Ambassador Blatherwick's visit to Mr Murray last night. He said that the Secretary of State had instructed the Ambassador to seek a meeting with Mr Murray in order to convey in the most formal way his concerns about the West Belfast element of the President's visit. Williams confirmed, as you told me, that the Secretary of State will publicly dissociate himself from that part of the visit, and will say that he advised against it. Williams said that understandably Mr Murray was not in a position to give an immediate response except to say that the matter would have to be looked at, but the British side hoped to have a response very soon. He said we would be given a copy of the note handed over, which we have since received.
2. We anticipate that the matter will be raised at today's Summit in London. It may be helpful therefore to recap the exchanges leading to this development. On receipt of your instruction of 25 May, we conveyed informally to the British side the President's intention to visit Northern Ireland on the likely dates of 18/19 June. They asked for further information as soon as possible. As soon as it became known that the President had made arrangements to visit West Belfast (the Department's SF 361 of 2 June conveying outline programme) the British side expressed concern about the possible security and political implications. They urged that the community groups meeting the President should be balanced, suggesting the inclusion of a Jackie Redpath type group. They also expressed their concern informally about possible Sinn Fein involvement in the event. When we were in a position to provide detail of the organisations attending the West Belfast event (the Department's SF 377 of 11 June), the British side immediately said they would have to inform the Secretary of State and asked for the names of the people who would be present and to whom the President would be introduced. The provision of the list of names yesterday (Department's SF 385) and the confirmation that the venue would be Whiterock Community College, about which the RUC had already expressed major concern on security grounds, precipitated the Secretary of State's response via Ambassador Blatherwick last night.

3. His reasons are given in the Ambassador's note and demarche. From our knowledge, we understand it is his view that the meeting of Gerry Adams, Fra McCann and other members of Sinn Fein with the President, even in the context of a community-organised event, would be exploited by Sinn Fein domestically and internationally and would have a significant negative impact on the Unionist community with consequences for the efforts of both Governments to improve the security situation and promote political progress. The British are aware of the strong feeling expressed in SDLP circles (they have told us that neither Joe Hendron or Eamonn Hanna of Phoenix, who are listed to attend, will do so). The non-inclusion of any Unionist group in the President's schedule, as he had proposed, is also a factor in the Secretary of State's mind. He is seriously concerned furthermore about security aspects of the visit, including the safety of RUC officers. Lastly, he is greatly exercised by the late provision of detailed arrangements which he feels, as the Ambassador's note makes clear, precluded any possibility of British views being taken on board.

## VISIT TO NORTHERN IRELAND BY PRESIDENT ROBINSON, 18-19 JUNE 1993

I have been instructed on behalf of the United Kingdom Government to report our serious concern at the proposed inclusion in the projected visit by President Robinson to Northern Ireland of a two hour meeting in West Belfast on the afternoon of Friday 18 June.

As developed by the groups who are organising it, this event has become a very one sided affair. The list of people expected to be present includes a number of prominent members of Sinn Fein. There are some persons who have been convicted of terrorist offences or who are suspected of involvement in support for terrorist activities.

A meeting by President Robinson with such people would do very grave disservice to community relations in Northern Ireland. It would have the inevitable effect of exacerbating threats in security there. It would have a very serious and prejudicial impact on Unionist opinion. They would see it as a calculated expression of support by the President personally and by the Irish Government for unconstitutional politics.

Such a meeting would also inevitably have an impact on the political standing of the British Government in Northern Ireland and of the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland personally. In the circumstances he could not but make clear in public that such a visit, if it goes ahead, was doing so against his specific advice.

We would also be concerned about the security implications of such a meeting. The Secretary of State for Northern Ireland would also have to refer to this aspect in his public statement making clear that by proceeding with the visit the President was ignoring his advice that it might endanger life.

In addition the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland would need to make clear that full details of the proposed visit had only been made available to us three days in advance, precluding any possibility of adjusting the arrangements so as to avoid these difficulties.

The Secretary of State for Northern Ireland is well aware of the profound damage which would be caused to bilateral relations between Britain and Ireland by his having to make such a statement. He therefore earnestly trusts that President Robinson will not go ahead with this element of her proposed visit.

[Note handed to Secretary to the Government - 15 June 1993]