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IRISH EMBASSY, LONDON

SECURE FAX

1 September 1994

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Foot fee
Chas. A -*

TO: BQ

FROM: LONDON

FOR: Assistant Secretary O hUiginn

FROM: PAUL MURRAY

I spoke today with Brian O'Connell, RTE's London correspondent, regarding the briefing being provided by the British side on developments since the ceasefire.

Briefing was provided yesterday afternoon by Ministers Mayhew and Ancram. On the issue of the permanence of the IRA ceasefire, they kept referring back to the answers provided some months ago to Sinn Fein's request for clarification of the Joint Declaration. There were two requirements from Sinn Fein/the IRA:

- 1 A clear statement of intent as regards permanence. This did not necessarily have to include the word "permanent" - it could, for example, take the form of confirmation by Gerry Adams of statements by other figures such as John Hume or the Taoiseach that the ceasefire was clearly intended to be permanent. Alternately, formulations such as "for good" could be used.
- 2 Verification: the IRA's statement must be matched by their actions.

At this stage, Mayhew said, the British Government was unable to discern the reality behind the IRA statement and he was worried about the possibility of an IRA resumption of violence if negotiations did not go their way. Jonathan Haslam, the PM's press secretary, said to O'Connell that it was one thing putting the safety catch on the gun, quite another putting it away.

Overall, O'Connell was given to understand that under no circumstances would the British Government proceed to talks until Sinn Fein had provided the necessary clarification. He was also given to understand that the clock could not begin ticking on the three month period before Sinn Fein could join the political process until the British Government was satisfied about their intentions.

Mayhew was anxious to play down the appearance of a split between the two Governments on the permanence issue, saying

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that while there might be a difference of interpretation, there was none on substance. Both Ancram and himself stressed the risks that were being taken by the Prime Minister and the Taoiseach. He expected the summit between the Taoiseach and the Prime Minister to take place at the end of September.

O'Connell felt that he got a strong hint from Mayhew that the broadcasting ban on Sinn Fein would go sooner rather than later. On the other hand, the SOS was distinctly cautious on the prospect of scaling down the security forces presence in Northern Ireland, saying that he would rely on "professional advice".

Because parliament is not sitting the lobby briefing system is in abeyance at the moment, so neither O'Connell nor Bernard Purcell of the *Irish Independent*, to whom I also spoke today, expected much in the way of official briefing today. O'Connell was, however, to have lunch with Haslam and promised to let me know anything of interest which transpired.