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NORTHERN IRELAND  
Information Service

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Attached is a copy of the speech delivered today by the Secretary of State, Sir Patrick Mayhew QC MP, to a media lunch, held in his honour, at the Four Seasons Hotel, Washington, attended by British, Irish, and American journalists.

It is great to be back in Washington at a time of progress and of buoyancy for all of us who are concerned with the affairs of Northern Ireland, and the affairs of the people of Ireland, North and South.

There is a huge difference this time. Whereas on my first two visits terrorists were on average killing 90 people a year: injuring hundreds and inflicting damage costing millions, now we are six months into a Republican cessation of violence - which Loyalist Paramilitaries followed six weeks later.

I want to offer some thoughts about first why this has happened, and second how such a welcome change can be made manifestly permanent, so that a return to violence would be unthinkable.

I have touched on one reason already: a shared position between both governments in the Joint Declaration. The future of Northern Ireland is going to depend on the wishes of most of the people living there. There is no give to be had on that one.

Another is the resolution of the Northern Ireland people across the community, not to give way in the face of terrorism. A third is the resolution displayed by the police, the militaries who support them: behind them the government, behind them the people of the United Kingdom as a whole. After 25 years none showed the slightest sign of cracking.



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And another reason is that their own people in the community are embracing the possibility of a future based on consent and have demanded an end to violence.

These, I believe, are the reasons why both sets of paramilitaries have given up the bomb and bullet and switched to political methods for gaining political objectives. I recognise what a fundamental change this is for them. Imagination and perception are now needed from us. We have shown these in every sphere in a reduction of security measures; targeting of economic support; and publishing the Joint Framework Document itself. But equally, I recognise that we must never purchase further remission from violence which should never have been perpetuated in the first place. The murders of Tim Parry, 14, in a street bombing in Warrington, England; of Michelle Baird, 9, in a fish bar bombing in Shangfield Road; of Barney Green, 33, in a machine gun massacre in a bar in Lochean Ireland, County Down. In our relief that these horrors are said to be at an end, we are not going to purchase the privilege of being spared suffer more of them. The turning of that page of their history is owed to the people of Ireland, North and South, as a right and not for a price.

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Here I wish to record our deep gratitude for the invaluable help and encouragement from this country in our efforts to protect people from terrorism - help and encouragement which I know have sometimes been politically costly to give, which I believe has been rightly given.

How can peace be made manifestly permanent? Let there be no doubt how welcome it is. Consider. Some 50 people are alive who would presumably be dead. People no longer live and move and have their being in a state of fear, more or less successfully repressed. A young man told me all his life he realised he had been listening every day for a bomb or gun. People aren't searched entering shops. Troops are off the streets. The police can concentrate on community policing. Road blocks have gone. Trade is booming and how. A hugely successful Investment Forum in December 1994 and we all look forward to President Clinton's Investment Conference in this city in May.

Both governments want to encourage agreement amongst the people of Ireland, North and South. That is their primary purpose, and the primary purpose of the Joint Framework Document. That can only come about by a process of Talks and Negotiations - as in 1992 (six fruitful months).



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Who shall participate in those talks? We want them as inclusive as possible: but inclusive of constitutional parties: those plainly and wholly committed to peaceful methods of solving disputes: committed to democracy, and with a democratic mandate.

If any party reserves the right to condone a return to violence if they don't get what they want they won't get others to sit down with them. Participants in a talks process must be armed only with their convictions.

I have to tell you this about the IRA, notwithstanding their cessation of violence. Their Army (and it is one) remains in being. Its command structures are in place. It continues to recruit volunteers. It continues to identify targets notably off duty police officers. It maintains an arsenal of Semtex, heavy machine guns, mortars both of howitzer and flat trajectory character. It researches new methods of manufacturing improvised weapons and explosives. It continues to seek out foreign sources of weapons and funds. It continues and has stepped up its loathsome practice of brutal punishment beatings inflicted without charge, trial or appeal - to say nothing of jurisdiction. The Loyalists are doing the same.



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I have mentioned our exploratory dialogue. We think it is necessary, so that each side can find out, and understand, the other's positions. It will lead, we hope, to Sinn Fein qualifying themselves to join in substantive talks and negotiations.

We have said we will bring Ministers into it when we think the time is right. Sinn Fein want that. Sinn Fein say they wish to be treated like other parties to whom Ministers do talk. Ministers talk to no other parties with the characteristics of Sinn Fein I have described.

In judging the right time for Ministerial involvement we have to be clear that Sinn Fein is willing to address all of the necessary issues and that progress has been made in having a serious and substantiative exploration of them. Ministers need to be clear, that if and when they take part, constructive discussion - particularly in achieving substantial progress on the decommissioning of arms would be facilitated and accelerated by their joining the dialogue.

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We look to Sinn Fein to provide the assurance that this is so. Following that, we need to be clear, for example, that they will join in exploring the various modalities of decommissioning of arms. This would include procedures for verification, the need for independent supervision of the destruction of arms, the different methods of decommissioning and certain practical and legal considerations.

We shall be pressing to achieve three things:

- A willingness in principle to disarm progressively;
- A common practical understanding of the modalities, that is to say what decommissioning would actually entail;
- In order to test the practical arrangements, and to demonstrate good faith, decommissioning of some arms as a tangible confidence building measure and to signal the start of a process.



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For the reasons I have tried to give, only when substantial progress has been made are we prepared to sit down with Sinn Fein in substantive talks and negotiations. I very much hope that this, too will continue to be the determining factor for whether Mr Adams is permitted to raise funds in this country. It would certainly be true for most of the parties in Northern Ireland.

I appreciate that this strikes a sterner note than perhaps you were expecting, sterner perhaps than you have recently heard - at a time of undoubted and most welcome advance towards the goal of agreement, based on inconclusive talks, and commanding broad support across this divided community.

If so, it may be due to the fact that if over 25 years more than 3,000 people have died through brutal terrorism - thousands injured, and vast damage done to property, I suggest that an American Administration, faced with similar challenges would do exactly the same.