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*cc Mr Murray
Mr Lake*

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EMBASSY OF IRELAND
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SECURE FAX

13 September 1995

Peace Process I

*Tolson
New hands are
of particular interest
R. G. 14/9/95*

Dear Secretary

1. Accompanied by Mr Hennessy, I called this morning on Nancy Soderberg at the White House to further explore current Administration thinking on how the peace process might be taken forward. Tony Lake, the National Security Adviser, joined us for part of the discussion.

U.S. approach

2. The NSC essentially feel that the British and Sinn Féin have to move on decommissioning. Ideally, while accepting that both sides would publicly maintain their respective positions on the instalment issue, Washington would like each to say that they would consider the report of the International Commission on its merits. They appreciate the trust deficiency that would make this extremely difficult for Sinn Féin but strongly believe that an "act of faith" is necessary on all sides if the process is to move forward.

3. Lake and Soderberg will put this approach to Adams this (Wednesday) evening and will urge him to have confidence in the process, including the good offices of Senator Mitchell, whom the party should know is not insensitive to their concerns.

4. An integral part of the NSC approach also is to put forward a date for all-party talks. Their formula would be that such talks should be held before the end of the year and (this added by Lake) ideally by the 15th December.

5. I should say also that, in discussion last evening with Gerry Adams, he laid very great emphasis on the need for a specific date to be set for all-party talks, adding that this would

introduce a new dynamic into the process and give him some room for manoeuvre.

6. Adams also accepted that, whatever the merits of decommissioning, realistically it was a problem that now had to be faced up to and, in this regard, he agreed (somewhat reluctantly) that the twin-track approach was probably the best way forward.

Decommissioning, Unionists and concern about President's visit

7. There is increasing concern in the White House about the attitude of the Unionists in relation to decommissioning. Specifically, the NSC are worried that a November report from the envisaged Commission, if it did not include an instalment recommendation, might be publicly rejected and ridiculed by the Unionists and, in the process, endanger the success of the President's visit. For this reason, Nancy Soderberg wondered aloud whether the Commission really needed to report in advance of the President's visit.
8. Apart from the above concern, the NSC has also been urged by Ambassador Crowe in London and, to a lesser degree by Jean Kennedy-Smith (apparently arising in significant part from her discussions at the BIA Conference last weekend), to be more conscious of the Unionist position. In this regard, and as already reported, Tony Lake spoke earlier in the week to David Trimble and was pleased that the Unionist leader accepted his invitation to come to Washington. To the White House's surprise, Trimble's proposed timing was early November, however, the two sides are now in touch about advancing the date and I would not be surprised, therefore, if the Unionist leader were to arrive in Washington in the near future.

Visit to Ireland by Soderberg

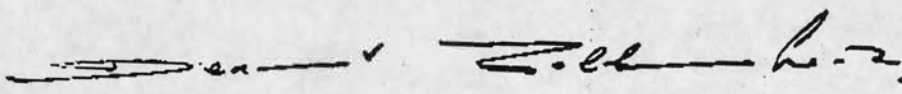
9. Ms. Soderberg would like to take an early opportunity - obviously with the President's visit very much in mind - to visit Ireland, North and South, and meet the various key players, including the Unionist leadership.

Other points

10. Two other remarks by Ms. Soderberg may be of some interest:

- (a) Lake and Soderberg liked Ancram and felt they could do business with him. Though he probably came too soon to Washington after the Summit deferral, and as a result did not have a clearly thought out position, they found the Minister a complete (and very welcome and positive) contrast to the Secretary of State - as a further reflection of her attitude, Soderberg added that much of the responsibility for the Washington difficulty sprang from Mayhew's initial presentation and mishandling of the issue.
- (b) the NSC found Rod Lyne to be very hardline on Northern Ireland and generally unsympathetic to a U.S. role. Ancram, on the other hand, seemed open, flexible and eager to engage.

Yours sincerely


Dermot Gallagher
Ambassador

Seán Ó hUiginn Uas
Secretary
Anglo-Irish Section
Department of Foreign Affairs

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SECURE FAX

13 September 1995

For: Secretary Ó hUiginn
From: Ambassador/P. Hennessy



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Peace Process II

1. Gerry Adams met with the National Security Advisor, Tony Lake, and with Nancy Soderberg at the White House this evening for over 90 minutes. The Vice-President was present for a significant part of the meeting.
2. The meeting examined in considerable detail ways in which the package previously discussed by the two governments could be made acceptable. This included a paper (attached) handed over by Adams. (The White House approach was very much along the lines set out in our earlier fax today).

International Commission

3. The U.S. side began by strongly pushing the idea of a Commission on decommissioning. Adams, in response, said he could not envisage a Commission being acceptable unless a date for all party talks was clearly set out. He emphasized that the IRA was very negative about the Commission approach, including its title. Soderberg, in turn, said that the description in the Adams paper - "international arbiter" - would not be acceptable to the U.S. as it too strongly gave the impression that Washington was going to go out and resolve the decommissioning issue, something that would be fraught with danger for them.
4. As an alternative, Soderberg suggested that the body might be called the Mitchell Forum. Adams is going to consider this overnight and come back tomorrow with either his agreement

or an alternative suggestion.

5. On the question of the third Washington condition, the US proposal is for parallel public statements by the British Government and Sinn Féin, in which each would restate its current position but, crucially, would go on to indicate that they would seriously consider the findings of the Commission report. The U.S. view is that this is the most that can be expected politically from the British, and that London will not give a private assurance on the Washington requirement to Sinn Féin (beyond what might be implicit in the above). They also expressed the general hope that the political soundings and talks envisaged by the two governments at that time would improve the atmosphere in which the Commission was operating, and generally help to move matters forward.

Target date for talks

6. The US side also suggested that the 15 December (the second anniversary of the Joint Declaration) should be set as the target date for the opening of all-party talks. They specifically made the point that Sinn Féin were not going to obtain more than a "target date" and, encouragingly, Adams seemed to accept this. As regards timing, you will note that the Adams paper had suggested the convening of a Conference (in November) to which all parties would be invited, but which would apparently meet on a phased basis on successive days. Soderberg, however, argued that a December date made a lot more sense than one in November, given that there were so many issues to be resolved in advance; she added that, "if all party talks were held tomorrow, these would be a complete mess".
7. You should be aware - and we have this from both Adams and Soderberg - that the Vice President pushed Adams hard on accepting the NSC formula, making the point forcefully that "this is a good deal and you can do it".

Next step

8. The position now is that Adams will take soundings overnight on the above approach and will have a further meeting in the White House, probably tomorrow (Thursday) afternoon. Lake and Soderberg, in the meantime, will sound out Ancram on the British response - one source called this process the "what ifs" on both sides. From their contacts in recent days with the British Minister, the White House believe that London will accept the 15th December as a target date for the opening of talks and, hopefully also, the parallel statement approach on decommissioning.

Adams' reaction

9. In our contact with Adams following today's meeting, the Sinn Féin leader, while still reflecting on and analysing the White House proposal, said he was pleased that the Administration had become so deeply involved and so determined to find a way forward. We, for our part, continued to emphasise to him the need to respond flexibly and positively to this exceptional White House involvement; we both agreed to make contact again tomorrow.

Unionist contacts

10. In response to suggestions by both the White House and ourselves that Sinn Féin should seek to develop Unionist contacts, Adams said that this process was already under way, through intermediaries, though not as yet to the top leadership.