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**Transcript of telephone conversation
with the Taoiseach and President Clinton
on Wednesday 22nd November, 1995**

Taoiseach:

Hello

President:

Hello

Taoiseach:

Hello Mr. President, this is John Bruton speaking.

President:

John, how are you.?

Taoiseach:

Thank you very much indeed I am very well, and thank you for taking the call. I just wanted to speak to you on two or three matters very briefly. Firstly to congratulate you on the success of your peace making efforts in Bosnia and also on the budget problem being solved and looking forward to your coming to Ireland.

President:

But you know, both of them are kind of like Ireland, we've solved the budget temporarily and the peace-making, we still have to make the world real but I tell you anyway it is progress.

Taoiseach:

Well in this lifetime I think its temporary isn't it. Well really the point I wanted to stress to you, we are at a very difficult point in our discussions with

the British on one issue which is really standing in the way of all else and that is what they call Washington Three which is a condition laid down in a speech by Sir Patrick Mayhew where he said that there would have to be, prior to all-party talks, decommissioning of some arms as a confidence building measure, as a signal to start a process of further decommissioning and they want that tangible step taken before the talks will start and they are saying also that the body that Senator Mitchell might chair would not be allowed to look at that issue, they would look at other aspects of removal of arms, longer term issues, but they would not look at this issue as to whether an upfront gesture of handing over some arms was to be a necessary trigger for talks starting at all. Now, unless they are willing to allow the matter to be looked at by the international body it is really very hard to see what useful function the international body would in practice be performing, because the body was produced as a way of getting around this issue, or putting it into a process where other questions could come into play and it would be less acute as a difficulty. But if they insist, the British insist, on excluding this question of a gesture or the upfront hand over of some arms from Senator Mitchell's body's remit, I don't see how we really can make the sort of progress we have to make, I am working very hard on this subject with the Prime Minister at the moment, I spoke to him earlier today, I am sending him a letter later tonight and will be speaking to him again tomorrow morning, but I just wanted to let you know that this problem still exists and that the other aspects of the difficulty about dates for talks starting on this or subsidiary and minor and could easily be solved with this one central problem

President:

Well let me ask this, is there any way to get an agreement on the twin track thing without, while just being silent on this now, not excluding it or including it, and having Major commit not to exclude it

Taoiseach:

I think if he would agree not to exclude it and allow the body to consider it of its own accord or on the basis of submissions from other people, that would be quite sufficient, but as of now the British government are saying we are setting up the body jointly and we are excluding this issue from it altogether.

President:

But do you think we could get the twin track thing going if we could get them to remain silent on it and then each party could sort of pursue its own position, and we could argue a little bit about it.↵

Taoiseach:

So long as they said that they were going to listen to what the body might say on this subject, on its merits, I think there wouldn't be a problem, but if they said you know anything that the body might say about this issue of the gesture we will ignore because it's not part of their remit, if they say that, I think that this would put Senator Mitchell in an invidious position where one group was expecting him to do one piece of work and another, the British government was expecting him to do a different piece of work and he would be in some difficulty there. So I think that they need to say well we don't want the body to do the work, that particular work, but if it comes up with proposals we will look at them on their merits.

President:

Well I think they have said that they would look at recommendations on the merits, so what you've got to do, what we've got to do then is try and get him to remain silent about it, if he has already said to Tony Lake that they would do that.

Taoiseach:

I think that remaining silent about it is rather difficult because they have made statements even today through Sir Patrick Mayhew that they will not allow this issue to be considered by the commission, that it will not be within its remit and for them to remain silent on Friday having said very clearly on Wednesday that it is excluded, would be quite difficult for them I think and it's a question they will be asked immediately and we believe that some formula whereby they would agree to consider it but reserve their prerogatives on the matter and obviously any final decisions about commencing talks is going to be for them, as far as their jurisdiction is concerned nobody can take that from them and no international body can take it from them either, but that they wouldn't say that we are going to ignore anything that the body might say about Washington Three, that's important.

President:

Yes, I understand

Taoiseach:

That they wouldn't exclude it ab initio on the basis that they have said clearly 'look that's none of their business.' We said it from the outset it was none of their business. Anything they say about it now is outside their area of competence is ultra-vires and we are going to ignore it.

President:

Yes

Taoiseach:

There is a risk that they could get themselves into that position and there has been a tendency for something to be said by them which is actually gradually expanded in subsequent statements into being something even more severe than the initial statement because

President:

You see, what I heard is that Mayhew restated his position on Washington Three, or the British position but explicitly excluded it being what. . . . Let us go back to work on it and see what we can do, but you've given me something to go on.

Taoiseach:

Thank you very much Mr. President and thank you for taking

President:

Listen, I really am sick about having to shorten my stay there but you understand

Taoiseach:

I know you have - indeed I understand

President:

If I went to Ballybunion the Republicans would have a field day, besides

Taoiseach:

You will be able to come during your second term

President:

Listen, I will be there as quick as I can, I am literally heart-sick about it, but you know, this is a big thing for Europe and we have got to resolve it and I think if the United States can do what we ought to do there, it will increase our ability to maybe play a positive role everywhere else.

Taoiseach:

Of course and it's a great success

President:

Thank you,

Taoiseach:

Thank you very much

President:

Can't wait to see you

Taoiseach:

Looking forward to seeing you, bye bye.