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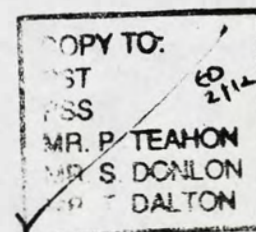
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EMBASSY OF IRELAND

2234 MASSACHUSETTS AVE., N.W.

WASHINGTON, D.C. 20008

29 November 1996

**WHITE HOUSE DISCUSSIONS, 28 NOVEMBER**

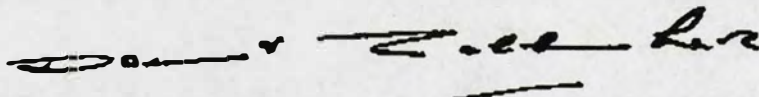
Dear Secretary

1. I thought, for the record, I should set out briefly the reaction of the White House in a range of discussions yesterday (ten in all; six with Lake and four with Soderberg) to the British Prime Minister's statement.
2. The formal reaction was set out in the press guidance note (attached), which I faxed yesterday evening. In particular through its first line - "The British Government statement speaks for itself" - this was intended to convey Washington's coolness towards the statement, and "to be noticed" as such. I should add also that the British had asked the White House to endorse the statement. Apart from the Washington view that the statement was unwise and unhelpful, Lake made the point to me that any such endorsement would have meant the end of any possibility of saving the process.
3. Soderberg, for her part, expressed the view strongly that the British decision to go ahead with their statement showed how weak John Major was politically. It was a short-term, short-sighted and easy move politically, but at the likely cost of jettisoning the real benefit - the ceasefire - intended to flow from the statement. As conveyed, both she and Lake were angry and dismayed at the turn of events, especially in the light of the latter's discussions with London over previous days. This had led to very difficult and tough talking between Lake and Downing Street, and to Washington and London coming "face to face in conflict" for perhaps the first time since the Adams visa. As against that, the White House felt that the Taoiseach's letter yesterday struck all the right notes. At the most basic level also, Soderberg feels that John Major would be better going into an election with a ceasefire in place than with bombs

in London.

- 4. There is considerable worry here at present that there could be a terrorist response to yesterday's events, which would have disastrous repercussions. Lake was particularly anxious, therefore, that all of us should get the message to Adams to keep the lid on developments.
- 5. On the more positive side, Soderberg feels - at a stretch (!) - that the statement just might help to get the Unionists off London's back, and enable Major to be freer to move forward. In this general regard, Holmes said to Lake yesterday they would do everything possible to leave open the door to his initiative. He had also earlier (on Wednesday) suggested that the British might issue their statement, and then act on the White House initiative.
- 6. Lake, in a call this morning (to go over the course, before he called Holmes), said our objective now should be to try and achieve a breakthrough at the Summit on the 9th. This would require intense preparations, and these were likely to be very difficult given that the British at present "were terrified of secret diplomacy", having had their fingers burned over the earlier secret discussions with the IRA. He would, however, have a better sense of their position following his call to Holmes, and would brief me accordingly.

Yours sincerely



Dermot Gallagher  
Ambassador

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



11/29/96 12:48

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White House Press Guidance

November 28, 1996

Press Guidance on 11/28 British Government Statement

If Asked Basis:

- / • The British government statement today speaks for itself.
- We hope all parties will redouble their efforts in the search for peace.
- We continue to urge an immediate restoration of the ceasefire.
- // • We continue to believe that a way forward can and must be found to achieve inclusive and substantive talks on the future of Northern Ireland.

If Pressed:

- Not going to comment on specifics.
- Our role is to encourage all sides to redouble their efforts in the search for a just and lasting peace.