

An Chartlann Náisiúnta
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PST, PSS, S/S Ó hUiginn, Counsellors A-I, Section, Messrs Teahon, Donlon & Dalton, Ambassadors London & Washington, Joint Secretary

cc Secret. + relevant

VIA E-MAIL

20 JUNE 1997

TO HQ
FOR SECRETARY O HUIGINN

FROM WASHINGTON
FROM P HENNESSY

Copied to D Cooney, C O Floinn
Please copy to Ambassdor Gallagher

CONVERSATIONS WITH GERRY ADAMS

1. Trina Vargo, of Senator Kennedy's Office, briefed the Ambassador and myself on a conversation which she had this afternoon with Gerry Adams. I got a briefing shortly afterwards from Congressman Peter King on a conversation which he also had with Adams.

2. Shortly before speaking with Adams, Vargo met with the local SF representative who gave her sight of the Sinn Féin request for clarification. Vargo's view was that while a few of the points might be legitimate, the long list of items cited went beyond any reasonable clarification requirement.

3. Vargo made these points strongly to Adams, whom she found uncharacteristically defensive. She stressed that those in positions of political leadership in Washington, who had been actively engaged on the issue, felt badly compromised by this week's events. Adams agreed that last Friday's document was impressive, but the fact was that he was not yet in a position to deliver "certain people". In order to convince these people, he needed much greater specificity on the various issues mentioned. Vargo responded, to Adams' evident discomfort, that the current edition of the Andersonstown

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News (which reports local criticism of the IRA attack in Lurgan) suggested that even his own supporters were no longer backing the party line. Vargo found Adams' presentation unimpressive, and was left with no great sense of optimism that the current impasse would be quickly unblocked.

Conversation with Peter King

4. Our information, and this is significant, is that King spoke with Adams after the latter's conversation with Vargo. Speaking with King, Adams referred to the clarification request, and emphasised that decommissioning was the only significant issue; moreover, he understood from the Irish Government that this issue was capable of being resolved. In what King regarded as quite deliberate terms, Adams went on to say that he hoped people reading the document would not be thrown by detailed presentations on other matters. He described these as "housekeeping details and matter-of-fact issues" which could be resolved in one conversation. King's sense was that Adams wanted this message passed on, and he therefore also proposed to mention it to the British Embassy.

5. King availed of the opportunity to stress to Adams the enormous political damage inflicted by the Lurgan killings–because of their total senselessness, he thought the damage was greater than after Canary Wharf, Enniskillen or other earlier atrocities. While Gerry Adams still had some (diminishing) personal credibility, that of the Republican movement was fast disappearing. If Adams and Sinn Féin wanted to survive politically in the US, they had to separate themselves from the IRA. King warned Adams that one more serious incident could be fatal for support in Congress for his position.

6. As he has previously said to us, King pointed out to Adams the implications for the US role of Major's replacement by Blair, with whom the President clearly intended to have a good personal relationship.

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7. Subsequent to the above, late this afternoon, Vargo was again contacted by the resident SF representative (Mairead Keane). As if summarizing the earlier Adams/Vargo conversation, Keane gave out a line which was in fact almost identical to that conveyed to Peter King.

8. Vargo's view is that, perhaps because of her initial robust response, Sinn Féin have significantly refined (at least the presentation of) their message. She has relayed this to Peters at the NSC, who is in touch with Deputy National Security Adviser Jim Steinberg with the US delegation at the G7 Summit in Denver. (King has also arranged to speak with Steinberg later this evening).

9. As previously reported we understand from the NSC that Clinton and Blair will discuss the issue over the week-end: there are two blocks of time set aside during breaks in the meeting for the President and PM to meet (while this may not constitute a formal "bilateral", as understood in G7 terminology, the key point is that the two leaders will have a full exchange of views on current developments).

ENDS

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