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10 December 1996

Sean O hUiginn,
Second Secretary
DFA

Dear Secretary

Conversation with Ken Reid, political editor, UTV, 8 December 1996

Ken Reid, made a number of points during dinner on Sunday 8 December. As Jim Dougal, BBC NI political editor, and Leo Enright, BBC Dublin correspondent, were also present I did not have the opportunity to tease out Reid's remarks and I report them for what they may be worth and with that caveat in mind.

David Trimble asked John Kerr, the British ambassador in Washington, to accompany the UUP delegation when they went to the White House last week and saw Vice President Gore.

Reid commented that the RUC Special Branch is now more active than heretofore in spreading 'black propaganda' stories, including, he implied, the recent Martha Pope "affair". He claimed that the level such operations is higher now than at any time since the early 70's. He also mentioned that Alan Murray has good contacts with the Special Branch.

Reid, who lives in Ballymena, was deeply impressed by the turn out of unionist and Protestant figures at Harryville Catholic church on Saturday evening. He claimed that Dennis Rogan, the UUP executive committee chairman was present. His explanation for the u-turn by David Ervine is that the local UVF is involved in the picket and Irvine can't afford to risk another Billy Wright scenario.

Yours sincerely

Colin Wrafter
Press and Information Officer

cc'd D Mulhall, Joint Secretary

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