



# An Chartlann Náisiúnta National Archives

**Reference Code:** 2021/99/13

**Creator(s):** Department of the Taoiseach

**Accession Conditions:** Open

**Copyright:** National Archives, Ireland. May only be reproduced with the written permission of the Director of the National Archives.

AMDAĞAID NA HÉIREANN

TELEPHONE: (202) 462-3939

FAX: (202) 232-5993

Cef



EMBASSY OF IRELAND

2234 MASSACHUSETTS AVE., N.W.

WASHINGTON, D.C. 20008

**SECURE FAX NO:** 66

43

19

3

PST: PSS; Messrs. Teahon.  
 Donlon & Dalton:  
 Ambassadors London &  
 Washington; Joint Secretary:  
 Counsellors A-I

16 MAY 1997

**TO HQ  
 FOR SECRETARY O HUIGINN**

**FROM WASHINGTON  
 FROM P HENNESSY**

**BLAIR SPEECH; WHITE HOUSE REACTION**

1. As you know the White House kept in close contact this morning regarding their response to Blair's speech. We indicated that we would be welcoming the statement's strong emphasis on consent, and the commitment to an inclusive process. However, we also drew attention to possible concerns in parts of the nationalist community at a perceived over-emphasis on the rights of the Unionist tradition, while indicating that we did not intend to highlight this dimension in our public response.
2. In discussions with Mary Ann Peters, NSC, it was clear that there was an awareness of the speech's limitations, but that there was also a sense that it was "worth taking a risk" on Blair. It was necessary, she felt, to look at the speech from a tactical viewpoint. She added that, within the British system, the pro-union rhetoric may have been effectively the price of the offer of the meeting with Sinn Féin, and, as such, arguably a worthwhile bargain.

3. Following these exchanges the White House statement was amended to delete the reference to the offer of an official-level meeting as a "challenge" to Sinn Féin. A copy of the statement, as released, is attached. [We, and Kennedy's office, were also originally told that the reference to the statement as "balanced" would be dropped. Mary Ann Peters subsequently advised that owing to a technical glitch the word remained in the text as issued. While acknowledging the slip, the NSC felt it would attract unhelpful attention to issue a revised draft.]

#### Senator Kennedy

4. Senator Kennedy's statement (attached) focuses on the opportunity which Blair's initiative affords to end the current impasse. Echoing his New York speech, he calls for restoration of the IRA ceasefire, followed by SF's rapid entry into talks.

#### LETTER TO THE PRESIDENT

5. The Ad Hoc co-chairs plan to issue the attached letter to the President early next week. The letter urges the President to make the Irish peace process "a special priority" in his meeting with PM Blair later this month.

[Total no of pages: 5 ]

THE WHITE HOUSE  
Office of the Press Secretary

---

For Immediate Release

May 16, 1997

STATEMENT BY THE PRESIDENT

British Prime Minister Blair in Northern Ireland

I welcome Prime Minister Blair's statement today in Northern Ireland as a balanced and constructive step toward restoring momentum to the peace process. His words offer hope and reassurance to the people of both of Northern Ireland's traditions.

The Prime Minister has made clear that this British Government, like its predecessor, wants to see inclusive talks, but it will invite Sinn Fein to the negotiating table only on the basis of an unequivocal cease-fire. And he has taken the initiative in offering to meet with Sinn Fein, at the official level, to assess whether inclusive talks are possible on that basis. I urge Sinn Fein to take up this offer and I pray it will bring about an end to the violence for good. Now is the time to open a new chapter in the history of this tragic conflict and achieve through dialogue and negotiation the lasting settlement the people of Northern Ireland want and deserve.

###

*from the office of*

*Senator Edward M. Kennedy  
of Massachusetts*

**STATEMENT OF SENATOR EDWARD M. KENNEDY  
ON PRIME MINISTER BLAIR'S SPEECH ON NORTHERN IRELAND**

For Immediate Release:  
May 16, 1997

Contact: Kathy McKiernan  
(202) 224-2633

I welcome Prime Minister Blair's initiative to re-activate the Northern Ireland peace process. Discussions between officials of the British Government and Sinn Fein will provide an important opportunity to clarify their positions and end the current impasse.

The highest priority is a restoration of the IRA cease-fire as quickly as possible, followed by Sinn Fein's rapid entry into the peace talks. I'm optimistic that these discussions will expedite that result, and I commend Prime Minister Blair for his initiative.

###

# DRAFT

May 20, 1997

President William Jefferson Clinton  
The White House  
Washington, D.C.

Dear Mr. President:

We believe that the result of the recent British election can be a turning point in the quest for peace in Ireland. All parties to the conflict in Northern Ireland have before them now a genuine opportunity to revive the Irish peace process. We are calling on you to provide the leadership necessary to encourage all concerned to take advantage of that opportunity.

As Co-Chairmen of the Congressional Ad Hoc Committee for Irish Affairs we have been proud to work with you in support of peace in Ireland. Your commitment to peace and justice for all of Ireland has resulted in the most significant progress toward a lasting settlement in more than 75 years. There is now an opportunity to build upon that progress. Clearly the goal is an IRA cease fire and immediate all-party talks with no preconditions.

Accordingly, we are requesting that when you meet with British Prime Minister Blair next week, discussion of the Irish peace process be given special priority and that the British government be encouraged to initiate confidence building measures to assure the nationalist community that it will be treated fairly in the talks. Working together, the U.S., British and Irish governments, and all parties to the conflict in Northern Ireland, can get the peace process back on track.

You can play a key role in ensuring that the opportunity now before us is not missed. We are ready to work with you to do whatever it takes.

Sincerely,

REP. BEN GILMAN  
Member of Congress

REP. TOM MANTON  
Member of Congress

REP. PETE KING  
Member of Congress

REP. RICHARD NEAL  
Member of Congress