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To: HQ
To: Second Secretary

From: Belfast
From: Joint Secretary

Tadiseah

Subj: Further details of Murphy/Trimble meeting (2 Sep)

It remains hard to judge how Trimble will go on the basis of this. It is clear from X, page 3 that PM Blair has mentioned "actual decommissioning during talks to him, at least."

1. We have had access to an internal account of the meeting between Minister Murphy and Trimble last Tuesday evening.
2. The basic conclusion reached is, as previously reported, that Trimble is seriously looking at involvement in round-table talks with Sinn Féin if he can get sufficient cover on the consent and decommissioning issues. A familiar mix of bluster and brinkmanship emerges, however, in much of the detail of the discussion.
3. Trimble's reaction on receiving the letter from the Secretary of State (about confidence-building measures) was to ask when he would be receiving a reply to his letter of 30 June to the Prime Minister (about decommissioning). He said that he would table a question on this matter when Parliament resumed if the reply did not come shortly.
4. It will be recalled that a draft reply to this letter was given to us in early August for comments (subsequently supplied). We were told that the reply would not issue before the end of August and would in any event probably require some updating at that stage to take account of more recent developments. The matter has, of course, been overtaken by the current discussions between the two Governments.
5. Trimble declared himself dissatisfied with the formulation on consent which appeared in the Secretary of State's letter (identical to that provided to the Loyalist parties on 29 August). Describing the reference to an "agreed outcome" as the only thing of value to him in the letter, he demanded a reaffirmation of sufficient consensus as a guiding principle in the negotiations. This, he said, had always been the main attraction of the existing structure for him and he would wish to retain it under any

and may have gone further in terms of premises of what he would try to get from you.
5. 9. 97.

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new arrangements.

6. Trimble also rehearsed his complaints about the Secretary of State's Belfast Telegraph interview, which he described as "pure McNamara". The impact of her comments, he claimed, was that it was now almost impossible for the UUP to be involved in talks. When Murphy pointed out that Mo Mowlam had clarified matters in a subsequent press conference, Trimble commented that "the PUP may have been fooled but we weren't". He would not accept any "private stitch-ups" on the consent issue; he needed clarification of the position in writing, including from No. 10.
7. On the individual responses on confidence-building issues, he said he wished to consider further the paragraph on the Conference and the Secretariat, though he welcomed the intention to publish lists of briefings in the Secretariat.

He welcomed the Secretary of State's willingness to address the Forum. He also demanded extra resources if, as he had proposed, there were to be more committees of the Forum.

On local government, he complained that he had received no reply to a detailed memorandum which he had sent to the Secretary of State on this subject. Reg Empey, who was also present, sought greater powers for the District Councils, pointing out, for example, that Belfast City Council has no legal authority to manage a site even though it may own it. The UUP would like to see a "power of general competence" but, if there were difficulties in this respect, the existing powers of local authorities in Britain to enter into partnerships and manage property etc. should be extended to NI.

Trimble disputed the suggestion that Protestants were being treated equitably by the British Government in community and cultural terms. He claimed, for example, that there was no training facility in North Belfast to which Protestants could go.

On fair employment, he attacked SACHR for having failed to recognise that the 1989 Act had not operated fairly towards the Protestant community.

On firearms, he claimed that the assurance he had been given was contradicted by a

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letter he had received from Jack Straw, while Labour were in Opposition, which had indicated that Labour did not intend to extend firearms controls to NI.

On parades, he described as "crap" the Secretary of State's promise that the new legislation would treat both communities in a fair and balanced manner.

8. Trimble claimed that the letter's treatment of decommissioning contradicted what the Prime Minister had told him, i.e., that the machinery would be "ready to roll" on 15 September, and that it represented a backwards move from the position set out by the two Governments on 16 July.
9. He also claimed that the Prime Minister had promised that there would be a statement from the two Governments to the effect that "actual decommissioning" would occur during the process. (Note: I expressed surprise at this claim, recalling no such agreement between the two Governments, and asked my British colleagues for clarification). He needed an expectation that there would be decommissioning. As of now, there was no requirement for Sinn Féin/IRA to do anything in relation to decommissioning. Trimble complained that the British Government had more or less abandoned the Mitchell compromise (which Murphy denied). He could not agree to move on without "some form of undertaking" on decommissioning.
10. Trimble also complained that his party had not been consulted on the matter of appointments to the Commission, despite various reminders he had given to the Secretary of State.
11. Murphy asked him whether he would consider going forward by somehow parking decommissioning and returning to it later. Empey remarked that the UUP had offered parking before but this had been rejected. Trimble added that, even on the basis of that offer, the matter would now have to be returned to (because of the arrival of Sinn Féin). Both of them emphasised the enormous difficulties which they would have with the UUP rank and file if the decommissioning issue was fudged. Ordinary UUP members, Trimble remarked, would simply not understand the complexities of a parking approach - they would interpret it as simply failure on his own part.
12. Trimble asked Murphy whether he believed Sinn Féin would sign up to the Mitchell

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Principles. Murphy replied in the affirmative (to the UUP leader's apparent disappointment). Trimble went on to say that he could not stay in talks for the "charade" of Sinn Féin signing up to the Principles. Emphasising his problems with the Executive Committee, he said he could not prejudge the outcome of the Committee's meeting and it was accordingly "highly unlikely" that he would be present at the Plenary on 9 September.

13. Murphy remarked to him that it was crucial that he meet the Prime Minister next week. Trimble suggested Thursday as a possibility. It was understood that there would be no meeting this week.
14. Trimble mentioned that he had discussed at his meeting with Paisley earlier in the day a possible new structure for talks which would involve a greater role for bilaterals. One option might be to begin with bilaterals and then go on to round-table talks.
15. In conclusion, Trimble promised a reply to the Secretary of State's letter within twenty-four hours (this has not yet been received).