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Telephone Conversation Between the Taoiseach and Gerry Adams

T: Hello Gerry, sorry to delay you there.

GA: It's ok, that's no problem.

T: How's the form.

GA: I'm not in good form but sure who is. I've got probably no right to be in bad form when you think of what the families are going through.

T: It's horrific stuff watching it. I was reading the Irish News there and it really gets at the bottom of your heart.

GA: Absolutely desperate. Did you have words back responding to that stuff that we got? I tell you my problem - this could go on forever. I said to Tony Blair the other day that I am prepared to try and develop words to facilitate David Trimble. We need to expedite it quickly and we also need to be mindful that we have signed up to this Agreement, we campaigned in the referendum, we fought the elections and we should not need to be looking for words to facilitate anybody, we should all be in this in terms of partnership - to deal with Trimble, which I think is a very good thing for him to do in the chapel yesterday whereas but he never said a word .. it's all madness. I just think we need to be pressing very quickly, we should hope to have this within the next day and I also told him - he was asking me to say that I was in support of the security thing, I said first of all I would not do it.

T: I understand.

GA: Secondly, I said if I, through some unforeseen circumstances, I could do it, I'd be no use in terms of militant republicanism or nationalism because I'm actually a wee bit concerned about some of the stuff you have put through because take you under British law - I still don't have anything involved in the British Government for us to be involved in. IRA did a dastardly? in Birmingham but I mean six people went to jail and Guildford was the same, you know, these things need to be taken into account. I think he probably appreciates, politically and historically, how our lot ...

T: I mean, I know, there were some things that were being asked, Gerry, I thought you could do and there were other ones that I knew you wouldn't.

GA: Well, I will give my words to you, which I think is the best that uses most of what he has said to us, well maybe it might not be a lot but I think it should be a lot and you can do your best with it.

T: I certainly will. In terms of just to give you the debrief of last night Gerry. I met Trimble and with him was Derek Hussey who I never met before, difficult enough guy but in the end I think we ended up okay. Reg Empey was there and Ken Maginnis. We went through the ground but in terms of a lot of it we were talking about the Agreement, it was all okay about moving on. Where I saw difficulty, I want to make you aware of this, was Reg Empey. The message they were giving to me was certainly that they want to move very quickly and, while he has difficulties and major difficulties, he wants to move on and I spoke privately to him for a short while too. I think the scenario of what they seem to have is one thing that the words go and then that they would respond and then they would try and get the meeting, but I still think in their minds, that before they are going to get into the whole Executive end that they are still looking for something to happen on decommissioning. Now the something I am not sure what. What I did say to them last night was - because I had spoken to Martin, you know I met Martin -

GA: Yes, I did.

T: I said to them listen, Martin McGuinness is dealing with this, you tried to say that Martin, that it's all part of the one organisation and then when it comes to this you try to say it's a separate organisation. If Martin McGuinness is dealing with General de Chastelain on these matters I think that is enough and they did not really argue with that. But I still think that there is going to be a little problem, he particularly mentioned not so much that they were on about amendments, surrender and all that - that's never going to be on but they were not pushing anything like that but they were pushing particularly whatever semtex triggers or whatever trigger, he mentioned a particular item that probably sets off these things and its one of those kind of items, were rolled out to de Chastelain because it has to be done within the two years anyway. If that did not happen they would not be able to get a seconder for them to move in

with yourselves at this stage, now we talked around it for a good while but it certainly seemed to me to be a problem. But at the same time, that was the negative thing but there were giving the signal if something on this happens, then everything else happens. I was saying well this is big stuff, but he is, I think, in the mode of being far more trustworthy of you and Martin, but that his people may not be and that if he could get these words it would allow the meeting and then allow some action on that matter to happen which Martin will be talking to de Chastlain on, then we could move fairly quickly and that if it was choreographed, he would be very much part in doing that. Now all very grand, Gerry, but I was seeing all the difficulties of that key item with yourselves, I just want to be straight

GA: That's fine, I appreciate that.

T: I saw them because I got the feeling that they weren't just saying it, that it was that he did see a way around it with his people, I mean he was saying to me and he came back to me afterwards, he said it's not that I am trying to be tough but its the fact that I would not be able to deliver it.

GA: You see that's a mutual problem which we both share.

T: Then I made the very point, listen, you know what Gerry is trying to do, he is also trying to carry people who would not agree with all of this. I understand that very clearly, Gerry, but its just that we need to find some way that we can, I think, its my own gut feeling, I have not talked to anybody here about it, the meeting was late enough last night, after which we had a few sambos and a drink with them before I headed off but it was just in my mind that it could all be done quickly if we could move the pace and what you have done would not be noticed because you would have moved on to a greater position.

GA: Yes, you're right.

T: I can see it in mind, I was lying in bed last night thinking how do you get all of these things.....?

GA: Well of the thing I'm going to say to Blair - have you phoned him yet?

T: What I said was I wanted, I didn't want to say anything till I knew what you were doing because he keeps asking me about the words, because I wanted to check with you first.

GA: OK, well what I was going to say was exactly what you have just said, is to try and move this whole thing speedily. Are you going to this yoke in Omagh?

T: I am.

GA: I am going now as well, maybe we should have ten minutes on the side.

T: I would be very glad to do that. On the back of this as, terrible as it seems, to me is probably the best opportunity.

GA: Well I am of that sense as well, like out of all the turbulence will come some good, we will work at it. I have the same sense. Obviously it has to involve Trimble because there is no point in us going on fishing expeditions.

T: He would have the sense, Gerry, that you, to be honest with you and I think he has you wrong, he was of the sense that you want to do these things but that you will do them incrementally over such a long period that it will be lost. Now I mean that is not the sense that I have from you at all.

GA: The first thing that I want to do is, I want to enter the next phase of this, which will have to include he and I and his people and our people just talking. I think that he is hanging tough, I think that he wants all sorts of concessions from republicans in return for - I told Tony Blair this, as I said at the beginning of this conversation we actually don't need to say anything we've done everything - but because I want to move this along, I'm prepared to stretch ourselves to get concessions from our people in return for what, in return for conversations which are not going to be that productive at the beginning, anyway.

T: I would think that in terms of where we are at, there is 3 or 4 things, one is the exchange of letters/statements, there's the meeting, there is something on the d-item, whatever way, let's not get into it, something that has to happen in that in whatever form and there is the Executive. All of those could nearly all be done together, and I think that if you try

to do any one of them, either one of you are in trouble, you are all going together, I think you know. That's my own sense.

GA: Well, I think I agree, that's why I am taking the abc sort of approach and I also think that in terms of what you just said, David Trimble could also ease the thing by thinking of words that he could say.

T: Exactly.

GA: Without making this a dog's dinner. Are you going to talk to Tony Blair now?

T: I am, he has been trying to get me since nine o'clock and I have been dodging him, so I will talk to him now and I will kinda say the same thing that I

GA: I was to talk to him at 1.30.

T: If you just give me, I will get on to him immediately, so you try 1.15 or 1.30, I will try and get in between now and 1.30.

GA: First class, I'm a wee bit out at the moment because I'm in Donegal and I have no phone and I will have to travel a wee bit to get to a phone. I am actually using a mobile but its secure enough but the bloody thing does not work well.

T: I will meet you on Saturday.

GA: First class, thanks Bertie, good luck to you.

T: Bye, Gerry.