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Ms Griffin
For file
25.5.99

Wally Kirkwood

TAOISEACH SEEN

Statement from UUP Assembly Group

Ulster Unionist PARTY

25 May 1999

The UUP Assembly Party today reviewed the current political situation.

Members deplored the continuing failure of Sinn Fein/IRA to honour their obligations under the Good Friday Agreement to commence a credible process of decommissioning.

We are now more than halfway through the period set aside for decommissioning to take place and so far no progress has been made - despite the fact that almost 300 terrorist prisoners have been released. Indeed two of the principle paramilitary organisations, the IRA and the UDA have shown contempt for the International Commission under General de Chastelain by refusing to appoint authorised persons to negotiate on their behalf.

The Ulster Unionist Party has done everything it can to advance the implementation of the Agreement. We have ensured that all the political work needed to prepare for devolution has been carried out - but those responsible for implementing the decommissioning section of the Agreement have done absolutely nothing. They have done nothing to build confidence in the community.

If Sinn Fein/IRA is seeking Ministerial positions in the new Executive what does it need surface-to-air missiles for? Why does it need semtex explosives and machine guns?

There is no prospect of a Government in Westminster or in Dublin including Sinn Fein Ministers in a Cabinet whilst the IRA remains fully armed. It is completely irrational and undemocratic to expect the Unionist community, that has suffered for 30 years at the hands of the IRA, to have any faith in Sinn Fein's peaceful intentions when neither Prime Minister Blair or Ahern would share power with Sinn Fein without decommissioning.

An Executive that includes Sinn Fein members without decommissioning will be inherently unstable and unworkable.

The Assembly Party calls upon the Republican movement to immediately accept that it has an obligation to decommission within the time scale set out in the Agreement. This would provide an essential confidence building measure for the whole community, and could unlock the door to immediate progress.

The Members note that Martin McGuinness says that Sinn Fein cannot deliver decommissioning. We reiterate today that we cannot deliver an Executive without a credible and verifiable start to a process of decommissioning illegal weaponry. This position will remain the same both during and after the European elections.

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