

An Chartlann Náisiúnta
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Secret

21 FEB 2000

Mr Griffin
Already seen by the Taoiseach

1.2.2000

Meeting with Fr Reid

Fr Reid considered decommissioning was possible only in the longer term. He mentioned that the President had organised a meeting in January between Fr Reid and the British Ambassador to discuss the decommissioning issue. Fr Reid was favourably impressed with his understanding and believed that he would like direct contact with Adams and McGuinness, but they were reluctant to open up yet more lines of communication.

Fr Reid also mentioned the existence of a group which included a retired quartermaster general of the Irish army and Cllr Harvey Bicker (an Ulster Unionist and former UDR officer), who is very pragmatic. Their proposal, which was put to a Republican leader whom Fr. Reid would not know in the very recent past, was to dismantle as opposed to destroy offensive weapons (e.g. rapid fire machine guns), by disconnecting vital parts. Weapons would remain under IRA control, but the integrity of the arms dumps would be jointly monitored with the International Commission. The Army Council had the power to do this, whereas only a convention could decide to decommission.

The Army Council might support some move on decommissioning, whereas a convention at present would not. At least two years would be required from December 1999 for decommissioning. I argued a much more immediate and certainly a more definite time scale would be required.

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Fr Reid was unhappy about the handling of the disappeared. Further precise detail had been furnished. Several months had lapsed from the first day, which was too long. He felt some of the gardaí disagreed with the whole operation. They did not want to take instructions from the IRA, or appear fools.

31 January 2000.

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