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FROM: ANITA BHARUCHA
IPL Division
20 May 1997

5/24/97

ASST DC 340/S
SEC 21 MAY 1997

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- cc PS/Mr Murphy (L&B)
- PS/PUS (L&B)
- Mr Thomas
- Mr Steele
- Mr Stephens
- Mr Bell
- Mr Watkins
- Mr Wood
- Mr Brooker
- Mr Hill
- Mr Maccabe
- Ms Jude
- Mr Gibbons
- Mr Warner
- Mr Haire - DED - F
- Mr Whittaker, NAD - F
- Mrs Vineall, RID - F
- Mr Cary, HME Washington - F

PS/Secretary of State (L&B)

VISIT TO THE US

This minute aims to set the scene on the Secretary of State's visit to the US (I am grateful to colleagues for their contributions). A briefing folder, which includes the programme, follows separately. A list of points to make for the CNN interview is attached to this minute.

2. The objectives for the visit might be:

- to demonstrate to the Administration that we value their support and co-operation (and in particular Senator Mitchell's contribution to the talks) ;
- to set out HMG's clear policies on the peace process and the talks, and to show that HMG is actively pursuing these;
- to ensure that the economic and social strand of HMG's policy is understood;
- to win support for these policies from the Administration and more widely;
- to make contact personally with key members of the Administration and other important opinion formers;

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- to secure US pressure on Sinn Fein to declare a ceasefire; and commitment to the proposition that the talks should if necessary move into substance (perhaps in September) without Sinn Fein if they have not rendered themselves eligible to participate by then;
- to encourage the US to exert influence on the Irish to support a sensible interpretation of the Mitchell compromise as a means of unlocking the door to substantive negotiations.

3. The Secretary of State might want to reassure the Americans of the new government's commitment to addressing the needs and concerns of the whole community; and to close co-operation with the Irish government (plus commitment to the Anglo-Irish Agreement, Joint Declaration and Frameworks).

4. The Secretary of State will also want to point to the Prime Minister's significant speech in Belfast last week, which emphasised the centrality of the principle of consent as the way forward in Northern Ireland, and authorised meetings between Sinn Fein and officials. President Clinton has welcome the speech: the Secretary of State might want to encourage the Administration to continue to support the approach which it set out; to recognise that there is a genuine opportunity for Sinn Fein to enter the democratic process if they really wish it; and, if Sinn Fein refuse to meet this challenge, to support HMG if we then have to move the process forward decisively without them.

5. The Administration will be interested to hear our plans for the resumption of talks on 3 June. The Secretary of State might explain that she intends to kick-start the process by signalling a decisive attempt to crack the decommissioning issue (on lines consistent with the Mitchell Report) and secure a firm date - perhaps in September - for the launch of substantive negotiations. She might explain that we have given the Irish Government a paper setting out our best estimate of what might secure sufficient consensus support: anything the Administration could do to persuade the Irish to tackle the issue seriously would be welcome. If the two Governments are agreed on a reasonable set of propositions there would be some hope of putting the UUP in a position where they would be under real pressure to go along with a sufficient consensus on the decommissioning issue.

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6. There would also be merit in looking beyond political and security issues in the meetings (and interviews) which the Secretary of State has: this is a good opportunity for the Secretary of State to put on record HMG's appreciation for the economic support which the US government brings to Northern Ireland - through their contributions to the IFI which helps to create jobs where they are most needed, and through the promotional US conferences and missions facilitating trade and investment in Northern Ireland.

The Administration: Background

7. The 'US dimension' to the handling of Northern Ireland issues is a significant one because of the close interest taken by the Clinton Administration and members of Congress from districts with substantial Irish communities. This interest is encouraged by the Irish government and by Nationalist parties who see US involvement as a way to keep up pressure on HMG. While in the past US reaction to HMG policies has been strongly influenced by the reaction of the Irish government and the SDLP, there are signs that, although this influence remains strong, the situation has changed in the light of Washington's experience with the peace process. Relations between the two governments are very strong at present, with the US government agreeing with and publicly supporting, for example, the fundamental principle that there must be an unequivocal restoration of the ceasefire before Sinn Fein can enter talks. When the US Administration has disagreed with some aspects of the approach (for example, on the setting of a date for Sinn Fein entry to talks) they have respected HMG's views and have showed restraint in their reaction.

8. The Embassy will provide the Secretary of State on her arrival with more detailed briefing on current issues and on the people she is to meet.

The Administration: their objectives for the visit

9. The initiative for a visit by the Secretary of State now has come partly from Sandy Berger, the National Security Adviser, who is keen to prepare the ground on Northern Ireland issues before the President's visit to London on 27 or 29 May. Berger and others will be keen to learn how the new government will approach the immediate issues of the resumption of the

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talks and decommissioning, and the marching season. The Secretary of State might also want to reassure them that Northern Ireland will remain a high priority for the government - as demonstrated, for example, by the Prime Minister's early visit to Northern Ireland.

Visa for Gerry Adams

10. Berger may also wish to probe for our views on the granting of a visa for Adams, should an application be made. The two new factors in their view will be the fact that he has been elected, and that the Prime Minister has authorised meetings between officials and Sinn Fein. The Administration will want to see how the meetings with officials progress and would consult us before taking any decision. Should the matter be raised - either by Berger or in the other meetings - the Secretary of State may wish to draw on the following points, agreed with the FCO:

- the question of a visa is a matter for the US government;
- despite the fact that Adams has been elected an MP and that meetings with Sinn Fein at official level can take place, the fact remains that there has not been an unequivocal restoration of the IRA ceasefire;
- sure that the US will want to keep up pressure on that point;
- understand that the Administration will probably want to keep the question of a visa under review and consult us again before any decision is taken.

Briefing the Media in advance of the visit

11. Information Services are exploring the options for briefing London-based US correspondents before the visit. A press release to be issued in advance will be forwarded separately: this, in conjunction with any interviews which the Secretary of State is giving immediately before the visit, will be a good opportunity to draw the Northern Ireland media's attention to the visit and to get across the points which we wish to make, namely:

- delighted to accept the invitation from the US government;

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- President Clinton will visit London soon - Secretary of State's visit is an opportunity to brief the Administration on Northern Ireland matters in advance of that;
- will set out the government's priorities on a whole range of issues - political, security, economic and social. US audience's breadth of interest in Northern Ireland matters;
- will be meeting key people in the Administration and more widely - aim is to ensure they understand the government's position and to urge them to support it.

(Signed:)

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ANNEX A

CNN INTERVIEW: POINTS TO MAKE

General

- delighted to have the opportunity to visit Washington so soon after my appointment as Secretary of State;
- wanted to visit at an early stage, and the invitation from the Administration, therefore, couldn't have come at a better time;
- in my meetings with members of the Administration and other key opinion formers, have been setting out our policies on a wide range of issues on the political, security and economic and social fronts.

US Contribution

- encouraged by the support, knowledge and goodwill of those whom I have met;
- very much appreciate the close interest that the American people as a whole take in Northern Ireland matters, particularly in the search for a lasting peace;
- the US makes a significant contribution to Northern Ireland in a whole range of ways, which we are very grateful for;
- to take a few examples - Senator Mitchell's skilful and sensitive chairmanship of the talks process; the economic benefits which US companies have brought to Northern Ireland; contributions to the IFI, which creates jobs where they are most needed (important also to remember that employers in receipt of IFI support are subject, as are all employers, to the toughest fair employment legislation in Europe); and through US conferences and missions aimed at facilitating trade and investment in Northern Ireland.

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NI is a high priority for this government

- believe my visit here will have shown people that Northern Ireland is a high priority for this government;
- clearly shown by the fact that Tony Blair visited Northern Ireland last Friday - his first official visit outside London since he became Prime Minister ;
- committed to working - with all the parties at the talks, with the Irish government, and with the people of Northern Ireland themselves - to making progress on the issues which have divided Northern Ireland for so long;
- bringing forward a programme of action to overcome violence and prejudice, and build confidence through progress in the talks; combating terrorism; action on human rights; parades; policing; the economy and fair employment;
- close relationship exists between political issues and social and economic conditions: will give a high priority to strengthening Northern Ireland's economy: will work to attract more inward investment to NI; increase the skills of the workforce; give particular attention to the problems faced by the long-term unemployed.

Sinn Fein/IRA

- hope that the people here will continue to send the strong message that there can be no room for terrorism in a democratic society;
- any justification for violence which terrorists might once have claimed has long ago disappeared;
- Tony Blair has said that we will respond quickly to genuine moves to achieve peace - which is what we and the vast majority of people want;
- the Republican movement must choose negotiations once and for all;
- we want to see them at the talks - but we will move ahead without them if necessary;
- want to hear what Sinn Fein have to say - officials will meet them to ensure that there is no misunderstanding, provided event on the ground do not make meetings impossible.

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