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20 NOV 1992  
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FROM. PS/SECRETARY OF STATE  
20 NOVEMBER 1992

ASST SEC 23 NOV 1992  
mm  
CENT 544/11 SEC

cc: PS/Secretary of State (L&B)	- B
PS/Mr Hanley (L,B&DENI)	- B/T
PS/PUS (L&B)	- B
PS/Mr Fell	- B
Mr Thomas	- B
Mr Ledlie	- B
Mr Bell	- B
Mr Watkins	- B
Mr Alston	- B
Mr Archer, RID, FCO	- B
HMA Dublin	- B
Mr Powell, Washington Embassy	- T

*1. in the Renwick msg*  
~~2. in the...~~

*Ms Murphy*

Mr Brooker - B

MEETING WITH SIR ROBIN RENWICK: 20 NOVEMBER

The Secretary of State was grateful for the briefing which you provided for his discussion with Sir Robin Renwick this morning. PUS and I were also present for the discussion which lasted about half an hour.

2. The Ambassador reported on the work which was being done behind the scenes in Washington to wean the Clinton team away from the stance adopted in the very unhelpful letter which had been drafted for Mr Clinton's signature during the election campaign by two of Edward Kennedy's staffers. Mr Foley and Mr Seitz were being very helpful. The Ambassador noted, however, that he took a slightly different view on handling from Mr Seitz. He thought that the Prime Minister should mention Northern Ireland in his first meeting with Mr Clinton, not in order to go into detail but to stress the efforts which we were putting into securing a political solution and emphasizing the importance of the new administration consulting HMG before launching any Northern Ireland initiatives.

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3. The Secretary of State welcomed the Ambassador's advice on handling. While he had understood Mr Seitz's preference for things being allowed to simmer he agreed that it would be curious if the Prime Minister were not to mention Northern Ireland at his meeting with Mr Clinton.

4. On the question of a possible envoy the ambassador confirmed that our first aim should be to head off the idea. The chances of doing this were much stronger while a political process was continuing. Our fall-back would be to persuade the Americans to send someone on a fact finding mission.

5. The Ambassador agreed with Mr Chilcot that the influence of the Irish Government on the new administration would be important. The first St Patrick's day statement from the White House would be a significant moment and we would be well advised to work hard on the new Dublin administration before then.

6. More generally the Ambassador noted the massive improvement which there had been in American perceptions of Northern Ireland over the past ten years. The Anglo-Irish Agreement had been a major stabilizer of opinion. The launch of the talks process had been a further help. Life was bound to be more difficult now with a Democrat administration and our information effort would need to remain at a high pitch. The Ambassador spoke warmly of the quality of the material provided by the NIO.

7. The Ambassador said that it would be important for the Secretary of State to visit the States, probably at Easter or Whitsun. The Embassy could set up a programme at quite short notice (glossed, to me in the margins of the meeting, as anything down to about 10 days). The important thing was to try to time the visit for a moment when things were moving on the political front, otherwise the Secretary of State would find himself on the defensive.

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8. In a brief discussion with me after the meeting the Ambassador said that he thought more was to be gained by a couple of short visits of three or four days each than by trying to put together a long and tiring programme. I noted that we would almost certainly be driven by events to confining any visit to a few days given the constraints imposed by the Maastricht Bill and the consequent impossibility of making a trip other than during a recess.

9. The rest of the discussion was taken up with a general exchange on the political talks and the Secretary of State's own assessment of the various participants.

Signed

W R FITTALL  
PS/Secretary of State  
OAB Extn 6462  
20 November 1992

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