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From: Donald A Lamont
Republic of Ireland Dept

Date: 15 February 1996

cc: PS/Secretary of State
PS/Michael Ancram
PS/PUS
PS/Sir David Fell

Mr Thomas
Mr Leach
Mr Watkins
Mr Bell
Mr Hill
Mr Stephens
Mr Maccabe
Mr Currie
Mr Beeton
Mr Webb
Mr Hallett, RAD
Mr Westmacott, Washington
- by fax

Ms Checksfield

Handwritten notes:
1. Mr Mc... 19/2/96
2. Mr...
LD 20/2
by [signature] 16/2

UNDER/ SEC 689/2
15 FEB 1996
CENT SEC

CONTACTS WITH SINN FEIN: FOREIGN GOVERNMENTS AND EMBASSIES/HIGH COMMISSIONS IN LONDON

1. The Japanese Embassy contacted the Head of our Far East and Pacific Department yesterday evening to seek guidance about a meeting with Sinn Fein, arranged before last Friday's bomb, due to be held today. Mr Fry and I agreed that the Japanese should be advised to indicate that the timing of a meeting was now inappropriate. I suggest that this be the line we take, until further notice, with any other Embassy or High Commission which seeks our advice on the matter.

2. We need also to consider what instructions we should send our posts. High-level visits by the Sinn Fein leadership have had a largely propagandistic role. We have, in recent months, not sought to block such meetings. Lower-level meetings may have had some educational effect on Sinn Fein. The case of the Belgians is a striking example of the way in which these exchanges have exposed Sinn Fein to some tough questioning from long-established practitioners of democratic government. There is, arguably, some loss if that kind of exchange is reduced.

3. Nonetheless, our immediate goal is the re-establishment of the ceasefire. Other Governments are most likely to be able to promote that aim by signalling to Sinn Fein that they cannot expect to continue a dialogue as if the London bomb and the IRA's end to the ceasefire had not happened. I therefore propose to recommend to the Foreign Secretary that we instruct posts to indicate to host governments that this is our view of how they can best contribute to an early resumption of the ceasefire.

4. Washington is, perhaps, a special case. The Irish are apparently urging the Administration to align their own behaviour with the position of our two governments (Dublin Telno 58). My inclination is that we should take advantage of

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the pressure from that quarter, speaking in support only if necessary. The Irish appear, of course, to be concentrating only on high-level, public meetings. To argue for the breaking of all contact in Washington is likely to prove unproductive at this stage. I should, however, welcome Peter Westmacott's view on what seems desirable and feasible in the Washington context.

(SIGNED)

Donald A Lamont

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