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SEC 14 JUL 1999
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Mr. Dr. Anley
Mr. McGinness
Jacqueline

FROM: JACKIE SEAR
IPL
9 JULY 1999

PS/Secretary of State(L)

See copy distribution below.

116/98

**CODEL: MEETING WITH THE SECRETARY OF STATE -
8 JULY**

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Dr Mowlam met members of a US Congressional Delegation in the Executive Jet Centre at Aldergrove Airport on 8 July. Ms Scholefield, Mr Lindsay, Mr Perry and Mrs Sear were also present. Members of Congress present included:

Ben Gilman
James Walsh
Peter Stark
William Goodling
Connie Morella

Nancy Pelosi
Thomas Ewing
Peter King
Jim Mica
Ciro Rodriguez

Summary

2. After an untidy start, in a light-hearted and lightweight meeting, the Secretary of State was questioned about her own political future, the future of the Good Friday Agreement the marching issue and her decision to talk to the prisoners in 1998.

Detail

3. The meeting did not get off to a good start. The Secretary of State's party walked into a private meeting between Mr Hume, Mr Walsh and Mr Gilman. A meeting scheduled to take place the previous day between Mr Hume and Mr Walsh in Londonderry had been cancelled because Mr Hume had to travel to Brussels. Mr Hume had been eager to meet Mr Walsh and the meeting at Aldegrove was arranged. However, the remaining members of the Delegation joined the private meeting when they arrived from Parliament Buildings. Mr Hume was then pressed into addressing the group and answering questions. Mr Hume reluctantly did so but was very embarrassed and also very conscious that this was not his party. In the meantime, the Secretary of State and her

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officials were waiting on the sidelines. As a result, the meeting scheduled to start at 1.45pm, for which Dr Mowlam was available from 1.40pm did not begin until 2.05pm. In addition, the Secretary of State had to address the entire party including partners, staffers and Doctor. In view of the time available Dr Mowlam offered to take questions.

4. Dr Mowlam praised Mr Hume and all who had worked to reach the point we were at now. This included politicians and those who worked behind the scenes whose efforts would never be known. Dr Mowlam added that while politicians could change structures, attitudes were the hardest to change. We had come a long way and there was a long way to go.

5. Mr Gilman asked about Dr Mowlam's own political future and asked for her prognosis of the current situation. Dr Mowlam briefly explained that a Minister's destiny was not necessarily in his or her hands. Turning then to the political situation, Dr Mowlam said there was a good chance of success but there needed to be movement on all sides. Trust and confidence were needed. Ordinary people wanted to see progress; but courage was needed.

6. Mrs Morella told Dr Mowlam about a meeting the Delegation had had with the Orange Order, one of whom said that the Parades Commission was not listening to them. The Member had further suggested that judgements of the Parades Commission would be better informed if there was a representative from the Orange Order on the Commission.

7. Dr Mowlam explained the background to the Parades Commission and the steps that had been taken after the election. Some members had left the Parades Commission because the pressure on them had been too much. Parades were part of the Protestant culture. The right to march and assemble was an important one as was the right to be free from fear. Rights brought responsibilities; an accommodation on the most sensitive marches was possible. Dr Mowlam concluded this part of the meeting by explaining that many in Northern Ireland chose to take their annual holiday at this time of year to avoid the marching season.

8. Mr King commended Dr Mowlam for her courage and asked how long it would be before ordinary politics set in in Northern Ireland. Dr Mowlam said that there was no reason why this could not start now;

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progress could be phenomenal. There already was co-operation between the parties on a number of local issues. Dr Mowlam stressed the importance of having fully functioning Assembly and all of the bodies set out under the Good Friday Agreement fully operational. However, it would probably take a generation before the political scene was dominated by day today issues.

9. Mr Walsh asked if the Secretary of State had any regrets about going into the prisons in 1998. Dr Mowlam said she had no regrets about this, her experience was that risks had to be taken for the sake of progress. It had been vital to explain her position direct to the prisoners. Dr Mowlam also thanked Mr Walsh publicly for his "Irish Peace Process Cultural and Training Program Act of 1998"-known as the Walsh Visa Program. (The Secretary of State had already thanked the Congressman privately. For his part, Mr Walsh thanked the Secretary of State for her press release welcoming the programme on 7 July). Dr Mowlam concluded her response to Mr Walsh by saying that thousands of lives had been damaged by the troubles; the process had to rise above politics.

10. Mr Mica asked Dr Mowlam how she judged the decommissioning issue. Dr Mowlam said that in the end, decommissioning was about confidence. It was not a pre-condition. On the other hand, one year on from the Good Friday Agreement the IRA had not decommissioned any arms. The "Way Forward" document issued by the Prime Minister and Mr Ahern on 2 July sought to produce a mechanism through which an Executive exercising devolved powers could be established and decommissioning of all paramilitary arms could take place by next May.

11. The final question came from Nancy Pelosi who asked what was going to happen on the 15 July. Dr Mowlam said; "We will run D'Hondt".

12. The Secretary of State left the meeting at 2.20pm.

Conclusion

13. This is a meeting that will be remembered for the wrong reasons.

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It was both embarrassing and awkward for the Secretary of State to be kept waiting the best part of 30 minutes, to brief a Delegation who seemed a little unfocussed.

Jackie Sear

JACKIE SEAR
International Unit
Ext: 0236
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cc PS/Mr Murphy (L,B&DFP)
PS/Mr Ingram (L,B&DED)
PS/Mr Pilling (L&B)
Mr Jeffrey
Mr Watkins
Mr Bell
Mr Ferguson
Mr Kelly
Mr Stephens
Mr Leach
Mr Beeton
Mr Brooker
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