



# An Chartlann Náisiúnta National Archives

**Reference Code:** 2021/49/177

**Creator(s):** Department of Foreign Affairs

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**The International Body**  
**Membership and Work to date**

**Setting up and role of the Body**

1. The setting up of the International Body was jointly announced by the Taoiseach and Prime Minister Major in the Joint Communiqué of 28 November 1995 launching the 'twin track' process. The Body has been asked by both Governments "to provide an independent assessment of the decommissioning issue" and "to report on the arrangements necessary for the removal from the political equation of arms silenced by the virtue of the welcome decisions taken last Summer and Autumn by those organisations that previously supported the use of arms for political purposes".

2. In particular, the two Governments have in the Joint Communiqué asked the Body to:

- identify and advise on a suitable and acceptable method for full and verifiable decommissioning; and
- report whether there is a clear commitment on the part of those in possession of such arms to work constructively to achieve that.

3. It will be for the International Body to determine its own procedures. The two Governments expect it to consult widely, to invite relevant parties to submit their analysis of matters relevant to the decommissioning issue and, in reaching its conclusions within its remit, to consider such evidence on its merits.

4. In establishing the Body, the British and Irish Governments reaffirm their willingness to continue to take responsive measures, advised by their respective security authorities, as the threat reduces.

5. The two Governments have asked the Body to submit its report to the two Governments by mid-January 1996. Neither Government, nor any other party co-operating with the work of the Body, is bound in advance to accept its recommendations, which will be advisory. The two

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Governments will consider carefully any recommendations it makes and give them due weight on their merits.

### **Membership of the Body**

6. The Body is comprised of three members. The Joint Communique announced that former US Senator George Mitchell had been invited to chair the Body. The other two members subsequently announced are Mr. Hari Holkeri (former Prime Minister of Finland, who now serves on the Board of the Bank of Finland) and General John De Chastelain (Chief of the Defence Staff for Canada and former Canadian Ambassador to the US).

### **Senator George Mitchell**

7. Senator Mitchell, a lawyer by profession, had for sometime been thought likely to be the Chairman of any independent body which might be asked to examine this issue. The Senator has already played a significant role in the peace process in his capacity as President Clinton's Special Adviser for Economic Initiatives in Ireland. Mitchell was tasked to spearhead the efforts of all US Government agencies to promote economic development in Northern Ireland in the post-ceasefires situation. Senator Mitchell took up this post on 10 January 1995.

From 24-26 May 1995 Senator Mitchell supervised the White House Conference for Trade and Investment in Ireland. As a follow-up to the Conference he visited Ireland from 30 June to 6 July last and had meetings with senior members of the Government.

During his 14 years in the Senate, Senator Mitchell was a member of the "Friends of Ireland" group. In November 1993, he in association with other Senators, signed a solemn appeal to 'those who have relied on bullets and bombs in the past - lay down your arms'. He was also signatory to a letter circulated by Senator Kennedy in January 1994, supporting a visa for C Adams. Mitchell spent the 18 months prior to his retirement one year ago as Senate Majority Leader.

**General John de Chastelain**

8. General de Chastelain, a career soldier, is due to retire at the end of the year as Chief of the Defence Staff for Canada - a position he has held since 1989 with the exception of a 10 month stint as Canadian Ambassador to the United States. Romanian-born, he spent his early years in Scotland before emigrating to Canada.

Ambassador Ottawa reports that the General has told him that he has some understanding of the British and Irish military mentality from having worked under both a British and Irish commanding officer, the latter being the Irish UN commander in Cyprus. De Chastelain knows Senator Mitchell from his time as Ambassador in Washington and remarked that he was unable to persuade him on some trade matters. His parents were members of MI6. This was reported prominently in last Sunday's Sunday Tribune under the heading "General's parents were British spies" (article included in this Section).

**Harri Holkeri**

9. Holkeri is a member of the Board of the Bank of Finland. His background is in politics. He was leader of the Kokoomus (Conservative) Party from 1971-79 and a member of Parliament from 1970-78. Since 1978 he has been a member of the Board of the Bank of Finland. In 1987 he was invited to form a coalition government with the Social Democrats which he led from 1987 to 1991 returning to the Bank after a change in Government.

More detailed background information on all three members, including reports from relevant Embassies are attached.

**Operational Arrangements**

10. The Body will have offices in both Dublin and Belfast. Support staff have been seconded from the public services of the members sponsor Governments. The Irish and British Governments had been prepared to provide staff from within their public services, but felt that to do so might have been perceived as impairing the independence of the Body or as being to the detriment of the Body's duty of confidentiality. The practical arrangements for the Dublin office

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which is located in Dublin Castle have been made by the Department of Justice. The operational costs of the Body - other than the cost of the refurbishing and fitting out of office equipment - will be met equally by both Governments. An estimated provision of £200,000 has been included in the 1996 Estimates for the Department of Justice Vote. The Belfast Office is located in Windsor House, Bedford Street.

### Submission to the Body

11. The Body issued a press release on 6 December announcing that it would meet in Belfast and Dublin from 15-18 December to allow the Body to receive submissions from the two Governments as well as other relevant parties. Members of the public who wish to provide testimony to the International Body were invited to make written submissions to the Body to its Belfast and Dublin offices. The Body issued letters of invitation to all political parties, North and South, to provide written submissions by Friday 15 December. It was announced that all meetings of the Body would be closed.

12. The Body is to hear a submission from the British Government in Belfast on Friday 15 December. We understand that the Government will be represented by Secretary of State Mayhew and Ministers Ancram and Wheeler. The Irish Government submission will be made by the Tánaiste and the Minister for Justice in Iveagh House on Monday 18 December. (It is understood that Sinn Féin will make its submission to the Body in Dublin).

13. Senator Mitchell has indicated that the members of the Body will return to Ireland for meetings for 2 days before 10 January. His aim is that the Body will have its report finalised on or by 10 January to comply with the reporting deadline set by the two Governments. If work is not completed by this time, the members will return some time after 15 January, if necessary. (Senator Mitchell has a commitment in the Middle East on 15 January.)

Anglo-Irish Division

15 December 1995

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