



# An Chartlann Náisiúnta National Archives

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## SECURE FAX COVER SHEET

**TO: Mr. Paddy Teahon, Secretary, Department of the  
Taoiseach.**

**FROM: Ted Barrington, Ambassador, London**

**DATE: 30 May, 1997.**

**NUMBER OF PAGES INCLUDING COVER SHEET: 5**

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30 May, 1997.

Mr. Seán O hUiginn,  
Second Secretary,  
Anglo-Irish Division,  
Department of Foreign Affairs,  
St. Stephen's Green,  
DUBLIN 2.

4E  
3/5 PST; PSS; Messrs. Teahon,  
Donlon & Dalton;  
Ambassadors London &  
Washington: Joint Secretary;  
Counsellors A-I

Dear Secretary,

**President Clinton's Visit to London**

You will have seen the transcript of the President's and the Prime Minister's remarks at their joint press conference yesterday in relation to Northern Ireland (copy attached for ease of reference). I spoke this morning to John Holmes the PM's adviser on international affairs who confirmed that the points made in the private discussion mirrored very much what was said in public.

Holmes said that the discussion between Clinton and Blair on Northern Ireland had taken place before lunch and had lasted for about 15 minutes. It was more analytical and philosophical in tone and content than immediately operational. Clinton had made clear his concern on the issue and had emphasised its importance for him. He said he was committed to a resolution and that he hoped for early progress. He was encouraged by what the new Government had done and wanted to be helpful. According to Holmes he had at one point said "tell me what to do and I will do it" or words to that effect.

The question of specific dates for Sinn Féin's entry had not been discussed. Decommissioning had not been considered in any detail although the word had been mentioned during the course of the conversation.



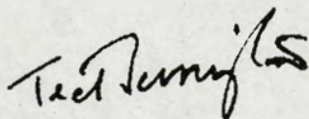
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Clinton had been particularly concerned to hear from the Prime Minister whether a long term settlement was achievable and the British side had responded positively although recognising that they "might lose some of the participants along the way" such as Paisley. But Blair had said that he hoped for an agreement that all could live with even if it were unpalatable to some such as Sinn Féin and the DUP.

The British side had asked the US if they could use their leverage on Sinn Féin on the parades issue and Clinton had undertaken to think about it. The President had said that the US does have possibilities to influence Sinn Féin and that they had "certain debts they could call in". They would also maintain their contacts with Trimble.

On the British position Holmes said that the Prime Minister had spoken in terms very similar to his conversations with the Taoiseach in London and the Netherlands.

Yours sincerely,



Ted Barrington  
Ambassador

# FAX TRANSMISSION

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**To:** Anglo-Irish  
Press  
Secretariat  
Embassy, Washington

**Date:** 29 May 1997

**Fax Nr.:**

**Pages:** 2, including this cover sheet.

**From:** Helen Blake

**Subject:** Clinton Visit - Joint Press Conference with Prime Minister Blair- Northern Ireland aspects

**COMMENTS:****Introductory remarks by President Clinton**

..... We discussed Northern Ireland. As all of you know when I visited Northern Ireland eighteen months ago I was profoundly moved by the palpable desire of people in both communities for peace. I applaud the Prime Minister's initial efforts in this regard. There is a sense of hope and reassurance that has been conveyed here. I know that he is committed in partnership with the Irish Government to bring about a lasting resolution to the conflict.

The goal of this peace process is inclusive talks because they are the ones most likely to succeed. But I have said before and I would like to say again, that can only succeed if there is an unequivocal ceasefire in deed and in word. Again I urge the IRA to lay down their guns for good and for all parties to turn their efforts to building the peace together.....

**American Journalist** Sir you told us this morning that the Northern Ireland peace process is an article of faith in your life. Given that, is there anything else the US can do to nudge the process along?..

**President Clinton** Let me say first of all we have a new British Government that has taken what I think were wise and judicious steps, and made statements that I think are clear, unequivocal and appropriate. There is about to be an election in Ireland. I have restated what the poll-stars of our position are today - an unequivocal ceasefire, inclusive talks. But I think before I say or do anything more, as with every peace this is a peace that has to be made with the parties themselves and we need to let this unfold a little. But we will be there active and involved along the way.



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**Robin Oakley (BBC)** Mr President, you've appealed again strongly today for the IRA to call a ceasefire. How soon after the calling of an IRA ceasefire would you want and expect Sinn Féin in inclusive talks? How long a verification process would you see as being correct - would this be a matter of months, weeks or days?

**President Clinton** I don't believe that I should make a public comment on that at this moment. Tony Blair's government has just come into office, as I've said I think they've taken some very impressive and appropriate steps. There's about to be an Irish election. I think at this moment for the American President to start specifying that level of detail would be inappropriate.

**Ken Reid (UTV)** Prime Minister, what role do you envisage the President playing in furthering the peace process? And Mr President, you were obviously very disappointed when the IRA ceasefire collapsed, do you think the other parties should now move forward without Sinn Féin if another ceasefire is not forthcoming?

**Prime Minister** The United States has played, and I have no doubt will continue to play a helpful role and we obviously are carrying forward the process. We want to make sure that we can get into all party talks. We have laid down the conditions for that and I know that the United States is fully behind that, and I think that is always helpful.

I remember too the visit that President Clinton made some eighteen months ago when the huge optimism and hope that he ignited there in the province was tangible. We want that back again. We want that sense that peace in Northern Ireland, and ensuring that we get a lasting political settlement that endures is what the vast majority of people in Northern Ireland want. This is the great burning frustration of it, we are so keen to make sure that the voice of that majority, that wants a lasting settlement, that doesn't want to do it by anything other than democratic means, is heard. Now I believe its possible that we can move this process forward, but its got to be done with care. I am sure as they played a helpful role before the United States will play a helpful role again.

**President Clinton** Obviously I think that Sinn Féin should participate in the talks and I think the IRA should meet what I think has to be the precondition. You can't say we'll talk and shoot, we'll talk when we're happy and shoot when we're not. Every political process in the world is a struggle for principled compromise which means when its over no one is ever 100% happy. So that is a decision all of them will have to make, but the people there do not want to be lead in a destructive path anymore. I'm convinced the Catholics don't, I'm convinced the Protestants don't, I'm convinced the young are more insistent than the old. And to trap people in the prison of those past patterns... we talk about changing economic policy, a far greater tragedy is to move into the wonders of the twenty-first century with the shackles of what can only be characterised as almost primitive hatred of people because they are of different religion than you are.

End.