



# An Chartlann Náisiúnta National Archives

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Secretary: Counsellors A-I.

**Secure Fax: 1118**

14 November 1996

No of pages including this one: 1

COPY TO:

To: HQ  
For: Second Secretary O hUiginn

From: Belfast  
From: Joint Secretary

- MR O'DONNELL
- MR. HICKEY
- MR BROSAN
- MR FAY
- MR CALLAGHAN
- MR. ROUGHNEEN

**Subj: Letter from Secretary of State to Senator Mitchell**

1. I attach a copy of a letter, just received, which the Secretary of State has sent to Senator Mitchell and whose contents are self-explanatory.
2. I gather that the background to this is a claim made by Paisley in the Forum last Friday (minutes not yet to hand) that there was a paper "on the Secretary of State's desk" which suggested that there had been contact between Martha Pope and Sinn Féin/IRA.
3. I asked why the Secretary of State should feel any obligation to respond to mischievous claims of this kind from the DUP leader.
4. I was told that, because of the reference to a report which was made to him, Sir Patrick feared that the British Government would be presented by Paisley as having colluded in some way in this alleged contact. Since his own traumatic experience in the controversy arising from the Observer revelations three years ago, he is allergic to any claims of secret negotiations between the British Government and the IRA and wished, therefore, to kill off any suggestion that Martha Pope might have been engaged in such contacts as a proxy for the British Government.
5. Senator Mitchell had contact with Sir Patrick this week, following Paisley's claim, and, I am told, made clear his own concern to have this claim refuted.
6. It is worth mentioning that Peter Bell reported back a remark made by Martha Pope, when she joined us for dinner in the Secretariat last week, to the effect that, while she knew a number of Sinn Féin people, she had had no recent contact with them.



Northern Ireland Office  
Stormont Castle  
Belfast BT4 3ST

Senator George J Mitchell  
Office of the Independent Chairmen  
Castle Buildings  
BT4 3SG

13 November 1996

*Dear George :*

As you know, some of the participants in the Talks raised questions about possible contacts between your staff and Sinn Fein. More recently Dr Paisley has repeated this suggestion, saying in addition that there is a security report indicating that there has been some such contact. Your staff raised this with my office yesterday morning.

Perhaps I could say at the outset that I regard the question of what contacts you, your colleagues and your staff make as entirely a matter for your judgement and discretion. As you know, we have suggested no stipulations about this.

In plenary you volunteered, when the matter was raised, that neither you, your colleagues nor your staff have met representatives of Sinn Fein or the IRA since your present appointment.

I fully accept your assurance and I am happy to make clear that I know of nothing which should lead me to conclude otherwise.

I am sending copies of this letter to General de Chastelain, Prime Minister Holkeri and to the Irish Government delegation to the Talks.

*Sincerely,  
P. Keogh*

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