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TO IMMEDIATE DUBLIN  
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INFO IMMEDIATE WASHINGTON, BIS NEW YORK  
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INFO IMMEDIATE WELLINGTON

PS/SOSNI  
PS/MINISTER OF STATE  
PUS  
① SIR K BLOOMFIELD 7/2  
MR STEPHENS DUS(B)  
MR MASEFIELD  
MR WOOD  
MR A P WILSON  
MR MILES  
MR HEWITT  
MR MCCONNELL  
LIAISON X 2  
RUC  
RECEIVED.....070289  
② Mr. Spence 7/2

③ Ps/Sir Kenneth

NORTHERN IRELAND: TALKS BETWEEN THE POLITICAL PARTIES (DUISBURG TALKS)

1. BBC REPORTS ON 2 FEBRUARY OF SECRET MEETINGS BETWEEN POLITICAL PARTIES IN NORTHERN IRELAND ARE EXAGGERATED. WE ARE AWARE THAT REPRESENTATIVES OF THE FOUR PARTIES DID MEET AT DUISBURG AND HAVE BEEN IN CONTACT SINCE THEN. THEY DISCUSSED A FORMULA WHICH WOULD INVOLVE A STAGE-MANAGED PAUSE IN MEETINGS OF THE ANGLO-IRISH INTERGOVERNMENTAL CONFERENCE TO ENABLE PARTY TALKS TO TAKE PLACE. THERE WAS NO AGREEMENT ON THIS FORMULA.
2. INITIAL RESPONSES BY THE PARTIES TO THE LEAK HAVE BEEN CAUTIOUS WHICH MAY SUGGEST THEY DO NOT WISH TO DESTROY ANY PROGRESS THAT MAY HAVE BEEN MADE. UNTIL THE PARTIES CONCERNED CONFIRM THAT HMG WERE MADE AWARE OF THE TALKS, WE NEED TO CIRCUMSPECT IN RESPONDING TO ANY QUESTIONS.  
LINE TO TAKE
3. IF REPORTS OF CONTACTS/MEETING BETWEEN THE NI PARTIES ARE CORRECT THE GOVERNMENT WOULD WELCOME THEM. HMG HAVE SAID FOR SOME TIME THAT THE PARTIES NEED TO GET TOGETHER.
4. (IF THE PARTIES CONFIRM HMG KNEW OF THE TALKS) HMG WERE AWARE OF THE DISCUSSIONS BUT WERE NOT INVOLVED. NO PROPOSALS HAVE BEEN PUT TO THE SECRETARY OF STATE FOR NORTHERN IRELAND BUT HIS DOOR IS ALWAYS OPEN.
5. THE GOVERNMENT REMAIN FIRMLY COMMITTED TO THE ANGLO-IRISH AGREEMENT BUT HAVE SAID THEY WOULD BE PREPARED TO OPERATE THE AGREEMENT FLEXIBLY IN THE CONTEXT OF PARTY TALKS.
6. PARAGRAPHS 3-5 ABOVE MAY BE USED FREELY IN ANSWER TO QUESTIONS.
7. WASHINGTON, PLEASE PASS TO SUBORDINATE POSTS.

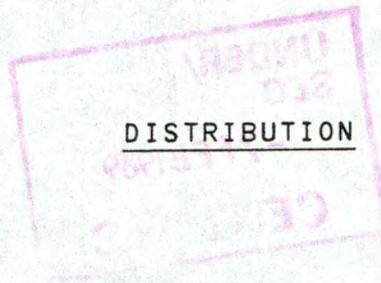
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