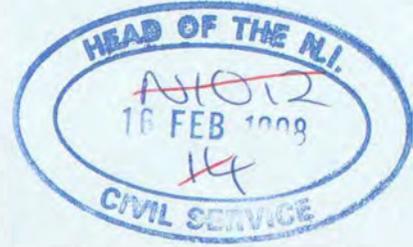


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Date: 13 February, 1998

- cc PS/Mr Murphy (B&L)
- PS/Mr Ingram (B&L)
- PS/PUS (B&L)
- PS/Mr Semple
- Mr Steele
- Mr Thomas (B&L)
- Mr Bell
- Mr Leach
- Mr Ray
- Mr McCusker
- Mr Stephens
- Mr Brooker
- Mr Ferguson
- Mr Hill (B&L)
- Mr Maccabe
- Mr Perry
- Mr Johnston
- Mr Warner
- Mr Whysall (B&L)
- Mr Clarke, Dublin
- Mr Fergusson, RID, FCO
- Mr Holmes, No 10

M
19/2

as Mr Watters

PS/SECRETARY OF STATE (B&L)

MEETING WITH THE UDP, 12 FEBRUARY

Mr Murphy had a meeting by VCR with a delegation from the UDP yesterday afternoon to discuss their re-entry to the Talks process. The UDP were represented by Gary McMichael, David Adams and John White. The Minister was accompanied by Mr Stephens, Mr Hill, Mr Crawford, Mr Warner and Mr Whysall.

Summary

A long meeting, in which we indicated a willingness to issue a statement that the two Governments would now review matters with a view to considering whether the UDP might enter talks by the

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end of February – with the possibility of their coming in the week before. The UDP were firm though calm. They maintained that restraint by the UFF in the face of the murder of Mr Dougan was sufficient indication of the unequivocal nature of the ceasefire. They were willing publicly to clarify that the statement issued on 23 January was a restoration of the ceasefire: they indicated they would try and persuade the UFF to issue an improved statement, but thought it unlikely they would succeed. We agreed to access to Castle Buildings from next week (subject to clearance with the Irish).

Details

Mr Murphy welcomed the UDP reassuring them that both Governments wanted to see them back in the process. **Mr Murphy** thanked them for their efforts in recent days in curbing violence, though cautioning that any retaliation for Mr Dougan's death would have direct and unavoidable consequences for the prospects of their re-entry.

The UDP were good humoured but firm throughout the meeting. **Mr McMichael** underlined that they would oppose violence in all circumstances. He said that the absence of any violence attributable to the UFF since the 23 January was an indication of the 'bona fide' nature of the ceasefire. The recent progress in the talks increased the urgency of the UDP's return; they wanted to play a part in the process and did not want to return to simply rubber stamp an agreement. They were looking for a firm and early date for re-entry.

Mr Murphy said that the determination on the 26 January made reference to 'words and deeds'; as to deeds things seemed to be going well, but the language of the statement of 23 January left doubt about the unequivocal nature of the ceasefire. But the Governments were prepared to announce that a review of the UDP

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position would begin shortly with a view to considering whether the necessary conditions had been met to enable the UDP to re-enter talks at the beginning of March. Their return could be earlier than that, depending on the way the conditions were met.

Mr McMichael said this would give the UDP difficulties. The beginning of March would be interpreted by the media as the 1 March, 5 weeks from the announcement of the ceasefire. The current environment was very unstable. The longer the UDP were out of the Talks and the more the Talks progressed, the less influence they would have on the eventual outcome.

Mr Stephens clarified that 'by the beginning of March' did not necessarily mean 1 March. The UDP/UFF had it in their hands to secure an earlier return date. *(A copy of the draft statement – as earlier circulated by Mr Hill – was distributed at this point).*

The Statement

Mr McMichael was unenthusiastic. He reiterated previous comments; the environment was currently turbulent; he believed that republicans wanted the UDP out of the process; the longer the UDP were out of the talks the more difficult it would be to influence any agreement; the first of March was too far away.

Mr Stephens commented that if the UFF ceasefire was so fragile that a delay of an additional week could cause its collapse then this cast doubt on the unequivocal nature of the ceasefire.

Mr Adams accused the Government of double standards. He contrasted the Government's insistence on an unequivocal ceasefire from the UFF with the equivocal PIRA ceasefire. The UDP had received no help in terms of what language they should use to expedite their return whilst Sinn Fein could draw on the language laid

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out in 'Ground Rules'. If the UDP were not allowed to return soon, then matters might reach a point when they decided that it was not worth returning at all.

Mr Murphy said that they could leave the meeting with knowing that they had triggered the mechanism for their re-entry. They could not expect to go to Dublin next week, so in effect they would only have to wait one more week. **Mr Stephens** added that the Government could not draft statements for parties. We had given the UDP an indication of where the ambiguity lay; the requirement was for an 'unqualified ceasefire demonstrated through words and deeds'.

Mr McMichael said that no other organisation had been requested to declare an unqualified ceasefire, to do so would suggest permanence. **Mr Stephens** noted that the statement at present could be translated into 'if you hit us we retain the right to hit you; these 'words' had been translated into 'deeds' in the recent past.

Mr White said that the statement issued on 23 January had used the same 'no first strike' language as that issued by the CLMC in 1996. The UDP had used up any influence it had: he did not think that another UFF statement was likely. **Mr McMichael** pressed as to what would happen if there was not a further statement. He added that the determination made by the two Governments was based on an inaccurate text. He reiterated that it was on the basis of the CLMC no first strike statement that the UDP had been invited to join the Talks. The policy was stated in order to enhance the permanence of the ceasefire; 'we will not strike unless PIRA does so first'.

Mr Murphy said that the parameters of what language would be acceptable were defined by the determination by the two Governments which concluded that the statement was not good enough. **Mr Stephens** made clear again that the judgement on

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eligibility for re-entry would be based on words as well as deeds. In recent times we had been forcefully reminded of the qualification contained in the CLMC ceasefire.

Mr McMichael said that there were two types of military action, initiative and reactive. PIRA were engaged in both whilst the UFF were only involved in the latter – which position was worse? It appeared to him that a further UFF statement would probably only make a week's difference to the date of their return to talks. **He** asked if the correct wording of the statement had been circulated to the Irish Government and the parties (only the Irish had seen the correct wording).

Mr McMichael said that the Government was asking the UFF for a form of words that it had not asked from PIRA. **Mr Stephens** reiterated it was not simply a matter of words, deeds were relevant.

Mr Warner said that there was a practical, on the ground, problem with the current UFF statement. There was no INLA ceasefire, under INLA provocation the UFF could return to violence under the current conditional statement. **Mr Adams** noted that the PIRA ceasefire was also conditional, on the talks process going at a speed and in a direction that PIRA wanted. **Mr Warner** asked whether it was the view of the UDP that the current ceasefire statement equated to that released by the CLMC in 1996. **Mr White** said yes, adding that the people of Northern Ireland were more concerned about 'deeds' than 'words'. A leading loyalist had been murdered and there had been no reprisal: this was an indication of the nature and quality of the ceasefire.

The meeting was getting confused and repetitive and at Mr Murphy's suggestion it adjourned for a 30 minute break.

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When the meeting reconvened **Mr McMichael** reiterated that another statement from the UFF was unlikely. But they suggested that the UDP state that the UFF statement represented an unequivocal restoration of the original ceasefire.

Mr Murphy said that having listened to the UDP's points, he was prepared to change the date in the statement released after the meeting from 'by the beginning of March' to 'the end of February'. [This, and one other small change to the draft, had in fact been clear with the Irish and No 10 during the break]. **Mr Stephens** confirmed that words from the UDP itself might be helpful.

Access to Castle Buildings

Mr McMichael asked when the UDP could have access to their offices in Castle Buildings. He added that UDP supporters would see their return to Castle Buildings as significant. **Mr Murphy** said it could possibly be as soon as after the weekend: we would need to consult the Irish, but he foresaw no problem.

Sinn Fein

Mr McMichael commented that he felt that Sinn Fein should be subject to the same rules and procedures as the UDP were. **Mr Murphy** assured the UDP that Sinn Fein would be subject to the same procedures if there was conclusive evidence of their involvement in the recent murders. The Governments would be consistent.

Statement and UDP doorstep

A copy of the statement issued to the press after the meeting is attached. **Mr McMichael** talking to the media outside said 'The UFF statement speaks for itself, it represents an unequivocal restoration

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of the 1994 ceasefire'. He repeated the thought several times. He also said he was optimistic of being back in talks before the end of February.

Robert Travis

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MEETING WITH THE UDP, 12 FEBRUARY

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12 February 1998

PAUL MURPHY MEETS THE UDP

1. Paul Murphy MP, Minister for Political Development in the Northern Ireland Office, today met a delegation from the Ulster Democratic Party at their request to discuss the circumstances in which the UDP might be invited to rejoin the negotiations.
2. Paul Murphy drew their attention to the determination issued by the two Governments on 26 January. That determination concluded that the UFF statement of 23 January left room for doubt as to how unequivocal the restored ceasefire was.
3. The determination also said that, "If over a period of weeks a complete, unequivocal and unqualified UFF ceasefire were demonstrated, and established through word and deed to have been fully and continuously observed, the Governments would consider the possibility of the UDP rejoining the negotiations".
4. The Minister welcomed the fact that events on the ground were consistent with a cessation of terrorist activity by the UFF but warned that any evidence to the contrary would have direct and unavoidable consequences for the UDP's prospects of being invited to rejoin the negotiations.
5. He confirmed that in the light of the points made at the meeting the Government would now, in consultation with the Irish Government, begin to review the UDP's eligibility to participate in the negotiations with a view to considering whether the necessary conditions have been met in order to enable the UDP to re-enter the process by the end of February.

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