



An Chartlann Náisiúnta National Archives

Reference Code: 2021/99/20

Creator(s): Department of the Taoiseach

Accession Conditions: Open

Copyright: National Archives, Ireland. May only be reproduced with the written permission of the Director of the National Archives.

2

Cap

PSM, PSMS, PSS,
S/S Ó hUiginn, Counsellor
A-I, Mr Teahon, Mr Dalton
Dr Mansergh, Ambassador
London & Washington, Joint
Secretary, Section, Box

859/
25

Secure Fax: 859 - IMMEDIATE

29 August 1997

No of pages including this one: 1 + 2

To: HQ
For: David Cooney

From: Belfast
From: Kieran Dowling

Subj: Statement by the Secretary of State

I attach copy of the final version of the Press Release to be issued on the announcement to be made by the Secretary of State at 10am that she has decided to invite Sinn Féin to enter the Talks process. It differs somewhat from the version sent down late yesterday afternoon.

Tavisearh

This statement is satisfactory from the Irish Government standpoint.

[Handwritten signature]

29. 8. 97

P59/2

29 August 1997

STATEMENT BY THE SECRETARY OF STATE

The Secretary of State, Dr Marjorie Mowlam MP, announced today that she has decided to invite Sinn Fein to enter the Talks process.

Dr Mowlam said: "I have reached this decision after careful consideration of all the circumstances, following the announcement on 19 July of an unequivocal restoration of the ceasefire of August 1994 by the IRA.

"In reaching it I have considered carefully all of the evidence available to me about the restoration of the IRA ceasefire and about Sinn Fein's commitment to exclusively peaceful methods and their wish to abide by the democratic process.

"Among other things I have:

- reviewed the position on the ground with the Chief Constable, the GOC and my other security advisers;
- following an initial preparatory meeting by officials, met Sinn Fein face-to-face myself;
- consulted the Irish Government, as my predecessor indicated would be done during the second reading of the Bill;
- and observed over this period a consistent pattern in word and deed;
- noted the absence of IRA activity on the ground.

The Secretary of State stressed that in taking her decision she is acting in accordance with the legislation setting up the negotiations:

"Against the background of the legislation, I have now decided that Sinn Fein meets the requirements. I will accordingly invite its nominating representative to nominate a team to participate in the negotiations.

P59/3

"I know that the road ahead will not be easy. There will be differing views around the table. However, I trust that there will now be a significant step forward when the substantive talks begin on 15 September and that all participating parties will commit themselves to negotiate a settlement based on consent.

"I would like to reiterate the words of Tony Blair on his first visit to Northern Ireland as Prime Minister in May last. I am convinced that the time is right finally to put the past behind us and meet the deep thirst of the people of Northern Ireland for peace, normality and prosperity'."

Notes for Editors

Sinn Fein was one of the parties which succeeded in gaining representation in the election held in May last year under the Northern Ireland (Entry to Negotiations, etc) Act 1996, when they received 16% of the vote. By virtue of Section 2(2) of that Act the Secretary of State is obliged as soon as practicable to invite the nominating representative of each party for which delegates have been returned in accordance with Schedule 1 to nominate, from among those delegates, a team to participate in the negotiation.

However by virtue of Section 2(3) the Secretary of State is to refrain from inviting nominations from the nominating representative of a party, and shall exclude delegates already nominated from entering into the negotiations, if and for as long as she considers that the requirements set out in paragraphs 8 and 9 of Command Paper 3232 are not met in relation to the party.

Paragraph 8 of that Command Paper makes clear that the negotiations will involve all those political parties which achieve representation through the electoral process and which "as set out in the Communiqué of 28 February 1996, establish a commitment to exclusively peaceful methods" and which have shown that they "abide by the democratic process". Paragraph 9 recalls the agreement of the British and Irish Governments that Sinn Fein's participation in negotiations requires the unequivocal restoration of the ceasefire of August 1994.

2

Copy

PSM, PSMS, PSS,
S/S Ó hUiginn, Counsellor
A-I, Mr Teahon, Mr Dalton
Dr Mansergh, Ambassador
London & Washington, Joint
Secretary, Section, Box

858/1 (4)
(25)

Secure Fax: 858 - IMMEDIATE

29 August 1997

No of pages including this one: 1+11

*Mr Nolan
Not handed
in - not.*

To: HQ
For: David Cooney

*for Tariqulhasan keeping a copy
level - 1 for the
presence.
19.8.97*

From: Belfast
From: Kieran Dowling

Subj: Secretary of State's announcement on the ceasefire

I attach material as follows (the latest versions as of this morning) on the ceasefire announcement, as provided in confidence by the British side:

- Ceasefire announcement: speaking note.
- Tab A: lines to take.
- Tab B: Q&A general (including defensive lines, for use if pressed).
- Tab C: IRA activities since the ceasefire - lines to take (cleared with the RUC).
- Tab D: De-escalatory measures - lines to take.

CONFIDENTIAL

858 / 2

CEASEFIRE ANNOUNCEMENT: SPEAKING NOTE

We have always made clear we want to see fully inclusive talks.

Equally, all the parties must be around the table on the same basis - sharing a commitment to exclusively peaceful methods and the democratic process.

In particular, in Sinn Féin's case this requires an unequivocal restoration of the IRA ceasefire.

These are the requirements for entry into the negotiations - agreed with the Irish Government and set out in statute by the last Government.

We have also made clear that we would need time - some 6 weeks - to assess a ceasefire and would look for consistency in word and deed.

Since the IRA restored its ceasefire on 20 July, I have been carefully considering the evidence of word and deed.

I have reviewed the position on the ground with the Chief Constable, the GOC and my other security advisers. I have had a meeting myself with Sinn Féin. I have also consulted the Irish Government and heard the assessment of their security advisers.

We have always stressed that the evidence of events on the ground is crucial. For obvious reasons I do not intend to go into the detail of all the information which I receive on these matters. However, I am satisfied that there has been a cessation of IRA attacks. Moreover, there has been no evidence of active targeting or of paramilitary assaults which can be directly attributed to the IRA.

I have assessed carefully all the information relevant to whether the requirements set out in statute have been met. I have decided that Sinn Féin meets those requirements. So I have written today to invite Sinn Féin to nominate its negotiating team.

CONFIDENTIAL

APDL/132

CONFIDENTIAL

858 / 3

Sinn Féin will formally enter the negotiations on 9 September when the plenary resumes. Like all the other parties, they will then need to make clear their total and absolute commitment to the six Mitchell principles of democracy and non-violence.

These fundamental principles bind all the parties in the negotiations:

- to democratic and exclusively peaceful means;
- to the total disarmament of all paramilitary organisations verified by an independent commission;
- to renounce for themselves and oppose any effort by others to use or threaten force to influence the negotiations;
- to abide by any agreement reached in the negotiations and to use exclusively peaceful methods in seeking to alter it;
- to take effective steps to prevent punishment beatings.

We will continue to monitor events on the ground. We will look at the actions of republican and loyalist paramilitaries on the same basis. If any party demonstrably dishonours its commitment to the Mitchell principles, they cease to be eligible to participate in the negotiations.

The Prime Minister said in Belfast in May: "I am convinced that the time is right finally to put the past behind us and meet the deep thirst of the people of Northern Ireland for peace normality and prosperity."

The substantive negotiations which will start on 15 September offer the way forward. They can now take place on a fully inclusive basis and in a peaceful environment. The

CONFIDENTIAL

APDL/132

CONFIDENTIAL

858 / 4

International Commission on Decommissioning will be fully operational alongside the negotiations on 15 September.

There are deep and difficult issues yet to resolve. Trust and confidence needs to be built on all sides.

But the only way forward to overcome these problems is to talk together. The guarantee that any outcome must command the consent of both unionists and nationalists means that no one's fundamental interests can be threatened.

Everyone wants lasting peace. The people of Northern Ireland have had a taste of it over the last six weeks. The change in atmosphere is clear. The loyalists have played an important part. Now we must build on this.

We are determined that substantive political dialogue will start on 15 September. People in Northern Ireland want their representatives to engage in presenting their views in those negotiations.

We expect tough talking on all sides. No one can be forced to agree if they do not want to. But it is only by talking that the parties can see if can work out together a settlement, based on consent, acceptable to all.

CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

858/5

TAB A**LINES TO TAKE**

- * We said in the Aide Mémoire that we hoped to make a decision after a period of some six weeks following a restoration of the IRA cease-fire.
- * I have been assessing the situation following the announcement on 19 July that the IRA had ordered an unequivocal restoration of its cease-fire of August 1994.
- * Having considered all the relevant information available to me, I have now decided that Sinn Féin meets the requirements set out in legislation.
- * Under the legislation I must therefore now invite its nominating representative to nominate a team to participate in the negotiations.
- * The Government is strongly committed to pressing ahead now with the talks.
- * I very much hope that all people of goodwill will rise to the challenge and put all their efforts into making these talks a success.
- * We are looking forward to substantive talks on 15 September.
- * I am glad that Sinn Féin will be there - this represents NO risk to anyone's fundamental interests: the principle of consent remains paramount.
- * We want EVERYONE there.

CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

88 / 6

TAB B**Q&A - GENERAL*****What factors did you take into account in making your decision?***

In reaching my judgement I have considered carefully all the evidence available to me about the restoration of the IRA's ceasefire and about Sinn Féin's commitment to exclusively peaceful methods and its wish to abide by the democratic process.

Among other things I have:

- * reviewed the position on the ground with the Chief Constable, the GOC and my other security advisers;
- * following an initial preparatory meeting by officials, met Sinn Féin myself;
- * consulted the Irish Government, as my predecessor indicated would be done during the second reading of the Bill; and
- * observed over this period a consistent pattern in word and deed.

Why didn't you consult the other parties?

I was required by law to make a decision based on factual information. I did not believe that the other parties could provide any relevant evidence over and above that provided by the Chief Constable, the GOC and my other security advisers. All parties knew the timetable and could have offered relevant information about incidents at any time. None did so.

Does this mean that Sinn Féin will now be at the Talks in September?

Having decided that the legal requirements had been met, I must, under the legislation, immediately invite Sinn Féin to nominate a team to participate in the talks. Once they have done this, both Governments will issue invitations to the participants. Once in the talks, of course, Sinn Féin will, like all participants, have to make a commitment to the six Mitchell principles of democracy and non-violence.

CONFIDENTIAL

858 / 2

CONFIDENTIAL***Does this mean that the talks will proceed without the unionist parties?***

The two Governments have made clear their determination to make progress towards inclusive substantive negotiations from 15 September. I very much hope that the unionist parties will be there. The UDP have already indicated that they intend to be and I hope that others will follow their example.

What if the IRA return to violence?

Once Sinn Féin have entered the multi-party talks and committed themselves to the six Mitchell principles of democracy and non-violence they will, like all the other parties, be subject to the Rules of Procedure which specify a process for dealing with any party which dishonours its commitment to those principles.

What do you think is the future for the Talks?

As I have said, the Government is fully committed to making the talks a success. We are looking forward to resumption of the talks process in Plenary on 9 September and, ultimately, to wholehearted commitment and participation by all of the parties to constructive political discussion with consent as the guiding principle.

CONFIDENTIAL

858 / 8

CONFIDENTIAL

DEFENSIVE LINES

(use if pressed)

Why is this announcement being made before 6 weeks is up?

We said we would make an assessment within "some six weeks" - we made no commitment to wait until exactly six weeks were up and I see no reason to do that, particularly as all the indicators are pointing in the same direction.

Does this mean that you judge this ceasefire to be permanent?

I don't think it is possible to say for certain that anything is permanent. What is possible is to make a judgement as to whether or not there has been an unequivocal restoration of the August 1994 cease-fire. On the basis of the information available to me, I believe that to be the case.

The 1994 cease-fire broke down. Does this mean you think the current cease-fire is merely tactical?

We asked for an unequivocal restoration of the 1994 cease-fire and, as I have said, I believe that is what we have got.

CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

258/9

TAB C

**IRA ACTIVITIES SINCE THE CEASE-FIRE
LINES TO TAKE (Cleared with the RUC).**

What does the Government know from intelligence about IRA activities since the ceasefire?

For obvious reasons intelligence is an issue on which the Government needs to be reticent. Such information must remain confidential. However, on the basis of the information available to him, the Chief Constable has told me that IRA members have to date heeded the instruction which they were given to cease operational activities from 20 July.

What about involvement in punishment beatings?

Let me repeat what I have said. To date there has been no evidence of operational activity by the IRA. My understanding, based on discussions with the Chief Constable, is that since the ceasefire no punishment beatings can be directly attributed to the IRA.

(If pressed) I acknowledge that there have been a number of punishment beatings in nationalist areas of the Province since the ceasefire. But I repeat that, on the basis of the available information, they cannot be directly attributed to the IRA.

What about targeting and preparations for future attacks?

The Chief Constable has told me that in the period since 20 July there has been no evidence that the IRA has been actively involved in targeting or other preparations for future attacks.

[Background - not for use: The word "actively" is important. Some targeting information may have come by chance into the IRA's possession, and the RUC has warned some individuals on this basis.]

CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

858/10

What about weapons? Where are the weapons now?

There has been no evidence of the use or movement by the IRA of its weaponry within Northern Ireland since the start of the ceasefire.

(If pressed) Clearly such weaponry remains available to the IRA. That is a matter of continuing concern to the Government. But thankfully there is nothing at present to suggest an intention to use such weapons. The RUC will continue with its efforts to seize illegal weapons. I have already explained how the Government believes the decommissioning of all paramilitary weapons can best be taken forward.

What about the consignment of handguns seized in Dublin on 25 July?

The information available indicates that this attempt to procure weapons was not carried out by the IRA. It would not be sensible to go into further details.

What about the bomb factory discovered in Co Cavan /the rifle seized in Ballymurphy?

Investigations are currently under way into these incidents and I cannot therefore make any detailed comment. However, the indications I have so far received do not call into question the judgement I have reached about the ceasefire. What these finds do clearly demonstrate is that the security forces on both sides of the Border are continuing their vigorous efforts to seize illegal arms and explosives. Where there is evidence of involvement in criminal activity by members of any paramilitary organisation, they will continue to be subject to the full rigours of the law.

What about the future?

On the evidence available to date, an unequivocal restoration of the IRA ceasefire has been set in place. There is nothing to suggest that the IRA is making plans to mount further attacks. Obviously, the RUC will continue closely to monitor the security situation in Northern Ireland and will take all appropriate steps to counter any resurgence in the terrorist threat.

CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

858 / "

TAB D

DE-ESCALATORY MEASURES**Lines to Take**

Shortly after PIRA's July reinstatement of their ceasefire, I met the Chief Constable and GOC to discuss the security implications. We were keen to take advantage of the new situation to lessen the impact of intrusive security measures on the people of Northern Ireland, but without dropping our guard. You will be aware that groups such as the INLA, RSF/CAC and LVF have not declared a ceasefire and the security forces will continue to maintain a high level of vigilance.

In the past 5 weeks the lower level of threat has enabled the RUC and Army to respond positively and imaginatively to the new situation. In just a few weeks security has been scaled down to levels which were not reached till months into the previous ceasefire.

Amongst the de-escalatory measures already taken are:

- * a very significant reduction in the level of army support for the RUC across Northern Ireland, with an end to routine military patrolling in Belfast city centre and elsewhere;
- * a reduced number of security force patrols across the Province; a relaxation of physical security measures in a number of town centres and in other areas;
- * a reduction in helicopter activity and the use of military vehicles;
- * soldiers no longer wear helmets; and
- * body armour is no longer routinely worn by police officers or soldiers.

The scope for further moves towards normality, and the implications for force levels and other issues, are kept continually under review.

CONFIDENTIAL

858 / 12

CONFIDENTIAL

In addition, many of the de-escalatory measures taken during the previous ceasefire had not been re-introduced: for example, none of the 104 re-opened border roads were closed, none of the security force bases and sangars which had been removed were reinstalled, and few of the traffic restrictions and control zones in town centres were re-activated, and Army patrols were not increased to pre-August 1994 levels.

This Government is committed to a return to complete normality as soon as possible, and we will continue to respond as positively and swiftly as the security situation allows.

CONFIDENTIAL