

*NIWC Response to
Independent International Commission on Decommissioning Questions (Received 22nd
June 99)*

1. Does your party agree that decommissioning of all paramilitary should take place by 22nd May 2000 as set forth in the Good Friday Agreement, and in the context of the implementation of the overall Agreement?

The NIWC does agree that decommissioning should take place by May 22nd, 2000, as set forth in the Good Friday Agreement and in the context of the implementation of the overall Agreement. Without prejudice to this position we do not believe that there should be an automatic sanction applicable post May 22nd 2000 if decommissioning has begun but 'all' paramilitary arms have not been put beyond use. The NIWC is concerned that it is difficult to quantify 'all paramilitary arms' and believes that the IICD is best placed to define and verify that decommissioning has happened to its satisfaction.

Further, we note that the Good Friday Agreement is not the only document of this peace process that comments on the decommissioning of paramilitary arms. Specifically we note that all participants in the Multi-Party Talks (1996-1998) have subscribed to the six principles outlined in the Report of the International Body on Decommissioning (Jan 22 1996). It may be appropriate to highlight two of these principles at this time¹:

That participants affirm their total and absolute commitment:

- b. To the total disarmament of all paramilitary organisations; and
- c. To agree that such disarmament must be verifiable to the satisfaction of an independent commission.

2. Are there any areas of implementation of the overall Agreement that would demonstrably facilitate the decommissioning process?

Yes. We do not feel it is particularly helpful if parties discuss confidence-building (the purpose of decommissioning) solely in terms of paramilitary arms decommissioning. There are a number of areas within the Agreement, and also outwith the Agreement that would help facilitate this process. We recognise as key in this regard the establishment of an executive and the transfer of power to be shared amongst the executive acting collectively and inclusively. We believe that a collective commitment to implement the GFA in all its aspects would be useful. There are some specific components of the implementation process that might be helpful. These would include the publication of an overall strategy towards as early as return as possible to a normalisation of security arrangements and practices. Additionally, having the two working commissions (on the review of Policing and the Criminal Justice system) report as soon as possible would also contribute to the overall implementation of the Agreement. The establishment of the

¹ Principles (a) and (d) are incorporated in the Declaration of Support for the Good Friday Agreement, and (a) is again incorporated in the Ministerial Pledge of Office.

Civic Forum by the First and Deputy First Ministers would enhance public confidence in and increase public ownership of the political peace process – a much needed stabilising resource, particularly during the summer months.

3. The Commission is aware of a number of public statements by paramilitary groups since 10 April 1998 regarding decommissioning. Can your party assist the Commission in determining the willingness of paramilitary organisations to decommissioning their weapons by 22nd May 2000? If so:

(a) **Is the paramilitary group willing to give the Commission a firm basis for expecting that decommissioning will take place within the timescale set forth in the Good Friday Agreement?**

(b) **While we believe we have general agreement on schemes to be used for - decommissioning, when can we expect to receive – or else conduct negotiations to define – confirmation of the practical modalities (e.g. weapons and in what order, location of decommissioning events, general time parameters?)**

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The NIWC believes that decommissioning will take place in the context of overall implementation of the Good Friday Agreement. The NIWC will use its influence to bring about the decommissioning by May 2000.