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Mr. J. McConnell ⑤

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FATHER ALEX REID

The Secretary of State may wish to see the attached account of Mr. McConnell's discussion with Father Reid last week - in particular his comments on the Provisionals' approach.

Father Reid clearly has a direct line to Provisional leaders, but our assessment is that he is independent of them.

I have therefore told Mr. McConnell that he should continue to accept telephone contact from Father Reid; there could be some risk, however, that face to face contact might arouse suspicion that Father Reid is acting as a go-between between us and the Provisionals; we should be able to minimise this by having meetings on NIO premises but have told Mr. McConnell that in the event of proposals for a further meeting, Mr. McConnell should (as he did this time) seek instructions at the time.

(signed)

I.M. BURNS
17 March 1988
VP2556

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