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PAB/DGMCN/RG

FROM: D G McNEILL, PAB
DATE: 28 DECEMBER 1990

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cc PS/Secretary of State (B&L) [1&2]
PS/PUS (B&L) [3&4]
Mr Pilling [5]
Mr Ledlie [6]
Mr Alston [7]
Mr Deverell [8]
Mr Thomas [9]
Mr Petch [10]
Mr Marsh [11]
File [12]

NOTE FOR THE RECORD**POLITICAL MOVEMENT AND THE PROVISIONALS: MAZE CHAPLAINS**

1. I met the two Reverends Murphy on 27/12/90 to discuss the Provisionals Christmas ceasefire.

2. They told me that they had met two PIRA/SF men on Christmas Eve. These were not the two PAC men with whom they have been having a continuing dialogue. The two men they met on Christmas Eve are men who have been used in the past as messengers when the PAC men are not available (as was the case on Christmas Eve when the meeting was arranged urgently).

3. The meeting was arranged at the request of the Chaplains who passed on the information that Government was taking the Christmas ceasefire seriously and that the Fermanagh PVCs were to be opened not publicly linked to the ceasefire but in fact so linked.

4. The two messengers said that this would be passed on to the PAC contacts on Christmas Day and the messengers told the priests that the ceasefire was called partly to show Government that if a cessation of violence were called for by the PAC it would hold and partly as an exercise to reassure the PAC that the PIRA organisational machinery was able to deliver a ceasefire.

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5. I did learn from the priests that following a meeting with me a few weeks ago in which I had raised the possibility of a Christmas ceasefire on a personal query basis they had mentioned this possibility to their PAC contacts when they met them shortly after saying that it would be a useful signal to Government. The PAC contacts had not responded to that suggestion and may have been intending calling a ceasefire in any event. However it is possible that their ceasefire was linked to this suggestion.

6. We agreed to keep in touch. No further meetings between the priests and their PAC contacts are in the immediate pipeline.

The Secretary of State chaired a meeting in the Conference Room, Whitehall on Monday morning, 24 December. The meeting was attended by the GOC, Deputy Chief Constable McAtee, Mr Ledlie, Mr Beverell, Mr Wood, Mr McNeill and Mr Millar.

(SIGNED)

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- (a) what further action, if anything, might be taken in addition to his statement on the ceasefire the previous evening;
- (b) the publicity implications of any further action.

3. There was a general consensus that the PIRA declaration was not operationally significant, since historically there had been a low level of activity in any event over the Christmas period, and that in many respects PIRA were making a virtue out of necessity. It was also acknowledged that the ceasefire was not binding on other groups, such as the UVF or INLA.

4. In further discussion, the Secretary of State agreed that while vigilance generally by the security forces continued to be necessary, there was nevertheless a case for relaxing control at PVCs. This had already begun the previous evening, with local operational commanders being given discretion to allow passage on demand after dark rather than only in an emergency; and it was proposed to extend this arrangement by leaving the barriers open

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