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THE WHITE HOUSE
WASHINGTON

May 17, 1999

5-18-99

ACTION

MEMORANDUM FOR THE PRESIDENT

OK AD
EB

FROM: SAMUEL BERGER 
LARRY STEIN 

SUBJECT: Letter to Senator Helms on IRA Decommissioning

Purpose

Respond to a letter from Senator Helms on the Northern Ireland peace process.

Background

Senator Helms wrote asking, implicitly, that in the absence of decommissioning and renunciation of violence you threaten Gerry Adams and other Northern Irish leaders with denial of entry to the United States and access to the White House. Separately, his staff has floated an amendment to the State Department Authorization bill that would prohibit the entry of any person linked to a list of Northern Irish paramilitary organizations, including the IRA, that have not decommissioned.

In your response, you note your agreement with the goal of eliminating politically inspired violence and illegally held weapons from Northern Ireland. You also acknowledge Helms' disagreement with your policy of granting visas and access to the White House to Gerry Adams and others, but state that this policy enjoys Blair's and Ahern's support, has contributed to the cease-fires and the Good Friday Accord, and gives us leverage to influence movement towards decommissioning and other goals of the Accord. You cite your public statements on decommissioning from last December, and restate your pledge to support the Northern Irish leaders as long as they continue to take risks for peace. In closing, you restate your position that you will not tolerate a return to violence by any party.

RECOMMENDATION

That you sign the letter at Tab A.

cc: Vice President
Chief of Staff

THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

Dear Mr. Chairman:

Thank you for your letter on the Northern Ireland peace process. I share your concern about the continued lack of progress on eliminating illegal weapons. I have stressed the importance of this issue in both my public comments and in my meetings with the party leaders this St. Patrick's Day.

The Northern Ireland peace process continues to be a top priority for me, and I am actively working with Prime Ministers Blair and Ahern in seeking complete implementation of the Good Friday Accord. Last year's murderous bombing in Omagh and this year's spate of attacks on nationalists, including the tragic murder of human rights advocate Rosemary Nelson, demonstrate the urgent need to move the Good Friday Accord forward in every area, including the elimination of guns from Northern Irish politics.

We have achieved significant progress towards this end, working with the Irish and British governments to secure the permanent end of paramilitary violence. The current IRA cease-fire has been in effect for nearly two years and has been accompanied by clear commitments by Sinn Fein representatives to use exclusively peaceful means as they participate in the political process.

Sinn Fein made an important contribution last September in restating its 1997 commitment to the Mitchell Principles of non-violence and appointing a representative to the decommissioning commission. These were actions essential not only to fulfill Good Friday undertakings, but to deepen public confidence in the overall process of making peace a reality in Northern Ireland.

The Good Friday Agreement embodies a balanced set of obligations. Successful implementation will require that all of the parties live up to all of their commitments, including their commitments with respect to the renunciation of violence and on decommissioning. I assure you that I will not tolerate a return to violence by the IRA or any of the paramilitary organizations with political representatives in the new Assembly.

Sincerely,

A
Bill Clinton

The Honorable Jesse Helms
Chairman
Committee on Foreign Relations
United States Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510-6225

JESSE HELMS, NORTH CAROLINA, CHAIRMAN

RICHARD G. LUGAR, INDIANA
PAUL COVERDELL, GEORGIA
CHUCK HAGEL, NEBRASKA
GORDON H. SMITH, OREGON
ROD GRAMS, MINNESOTA
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United States Senate

COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN RELATIONS

WASHINGTON, DC 20510-6225

March 15, 1999

The President
The White House
Washington, DC 20500

Dear Mr. President:

The upcoming visit of the key leaders in the Northern Ireland peace process provides an opportunity for you to insist upon implementation of the agreement, especially the decommissioning of arms.

I sincerely hope that you will inform all parties that the decommissioning of arms and a broad renunciation of violence in Northern Ireland will henceforth be the standard for: (1) receiving entry to the United States; and (2) an invitation to the White House.

Mr. President, while the British and Irish Governments are to be commended for fulfilling their obligations in the peace process, many Americans are troubled by the refusal of the Irish Republican Army (IRA) to begin a process of disarmament as required by the Good Friday Accord. In essence, the IRA, and its political wing Sinn Fein, are stating that despite the risks and concessions others have taken for peace, terrorist violence will still remain an option for them in the event that peaceful negotiations and democratic processes produce an unsatisfactory result.

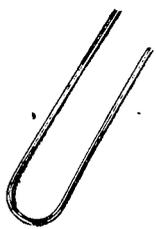
This position is contrary to U.S. foreign policy interests and places innocent civilians, including American citizens, at risk in Great Britain and Ireland.

Less than a year ago, in Omagh, an IRA-splinter group demonstrated through an atrocious act of terror the critical need to begin decommissioning of arms. Mr. President, it is imperative that you lend your voice, now, to the need for meeting this obligation.

Sincerely,



JESSE HELMS



5-18-99
(date)

TO RECORDS MANAGEMENT FOR DISPATCH.

COPY OF OUTGOING ONLY TO:

- **Eugenie Bisulco** (2nd Floor, East Wing).
- **Nancy Hernreich** through **Phil Caplan**.
- _____
- _____

bb
(initials)

THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

May 19, 1999

Dear Mr. Chairman:

Thank you for your letter on the Northern Ireland peace process. I share your concern about the continued lack of progress on eliminating illegal weapons. I have stressed the importance of this issue in both my public comments and in my meetings with the party leaders this St. Patrick's Day.

The Northern Ireland peace process continues to be a top priority for me, and I am actively working with Prime Ministers Blair and Ahern in seeking complete implementation of the Good Friday Accord. Last year's murderous bombing in Omagh and this year's spate of attacks on nationalists, including the tragic murder of human rights advocate Rosemary Nelson, demonstrate the urgent need to move the Good Friday Accord forward in every area, including the elimination of guns from Northern Irish politics.

We have achieved significant progress towards this end, working with the Irish and British governments to secure the permanent end of paramilitary violence. The current IRA cease-fire has been in effect for nearly two years and has been accompanied by clear commitments by Sinn Fein representatives to use exclusively peaceful means as they participate in the political process.

Sinn Fein made an important contribution last September in restating its 1997 commitment to the Mitchell Principles of non-violence and appointing a representative to the decommissioning commission. These were actions essential not only to fulfill Good Friday undertakings, but to deepen public confidence in the overall process of making peace a reality in Northern Ireland.

The Good Friday Agreement embodies a balanced set of obligations. Successful implementation will require that all of the parties live up to all of their commitments, including their commitments with respect to the renunciation of violence and on decommissioning. I assure you that I will not tolerate a return to violence by the IRA or any of the paramilitary organizations with political representatives in the new Assembly.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Bill Clinton". There is a small mark above the signature, possibly a checkmark or a flourish.

The Honorable Jesse Helms
Chairman
Committee on Foreign Relations
United States Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510-6225

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NATIONAL SECURITY COUNCIL

ID 9901902

REFERRAL

DATE: 20 MAY 99

MEMORANDUM FOR: WH STRIPPING DESK

DOCUMENT DESCRIPTION: TO: HELMS, JESSE A

SOURCE: PRESIDENT

DATE: 19 MAY 99

SUBJ: LTR TO SEN HELMS ON IRA DECOMMISSIONING

REQUIRED ACTION: FOR DISPATCH

DUE DATE: 21 MAY 99

COMMENT:


 FOR

JOHN W. FICKLIN

NSC RECORDS MANAGEMENT OFFICE